

Anna Bączkowska (Ed.)

Unveiling Emotions in Discourse Across Media and Natural Encounters

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Unveiling Emotions in Discourse Across Media and Natural Encounters

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Edited by Anna Bączkowska

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Preface

This volume is devoted to exploring the relationship between language and emotions, expressed in diverse contexts and through various linguistic and multimodal (pictorial) markers. It showcases how emotions are conveyed, constructed and interpreted across a myriad of communicative situations.

Emotions in language are examined by resorting to qualitative or mixed research methods, deploying such data types as interview transcriptions (Kamila Ciepiela), lexicographic data (Petra Storjohann), court case documentation (Jurate Ruzaitė), online data, e.g., YouTube videos and comments (Tomasz Ciszewski; Danuta Stanulewicz & Konrad Radomyski), online news and comments (Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Sviatlana Höhn; Tamara Kunić & Matija Mato Škerbić; Monika Tosik), and digital cartoons (Damian Guzek, Jan Słomka & Emma Cieślik). Conversely, there are several chapters which rely heavily on quantitative studies performed with the aid of corpus linguistics tools (Joanna Redzimska; Aleksandra Tomaszewska & Anna Jamka) as well as by applying computational tools such as machine learning sentiment analysis (Dagmara Solska; Erika Lombart & Louis Escoufflaire), and topic modelling (Dagmara Solska; Anna Bączkowska). Software for the analysis of acoustic parameters in turn (Audacity, PRAAT) is employed to measure emotional language parameters (Tomasz Ciszewski).

The contributions can also be divided according to another criterion, namely the predominant topic. Five chapters revolve around political issues, such as election campaigns in the USA (Tomasz Ciszewski; Dagmara Solska), Poland (Aleksandra Chmarzyńska), Albania (Ardita Dylgjeri), and Germany (Hanna Pułaczewska). Four chapters are devoted to linguistic analyses of emotions (Petra Storjohann; Tomasz Ciszewski; Joanna Redzimska; Jurate Ruzaitė). Two papers explore positive emotions (happiness, joy) in non-verbal communication on Facebook (Erika Lombart & Louis Escoufflaire) and Tinder (Anna Bączkowska). Along with these, there are also contributions revolving around the following themes: ridiculing religious authorities (Damian Guzek et al.), Turner syndrome identities (Kamila Ciepiela), parental discourse (Elena Negrea-Busuioc & Florența Toader), climate change and ecological crisis (Danuta Stanulewicz & Konrad Radomyski), and domestic violence towards female victims (Tamara Kunić & Matija Mato Škerbić). Whilst the variety of topics touched upon in the chapters is wide and original, they all share a common denominator, revolving around exploring various kinds of emotions underlying communication.

Yet another possible criterion of grouping the studies is according to the mode of communication, and thus, while the majority of papers deal primarily with verbal communication, there are three contributions which focus on multimodal/ pictorial messag-

es, such as digital cartoons (Damian Guzek, Jan Słomka & Emma Cieślík) and emoji (Erika Lombart & Louis Escoufflaire; Anna Bączkowska).

The theoretical frameworks deployed in this volume comprise (critical) discourse analysis, hermeneutics, grammatical categories, morphosyntactic analyses, conversational grammar, impoliteness and incivility theories, acoustic analyses, persuasive strategies and discursive strategies. Various linguistic categories are elaborated, for example, hate speech (Jurate Rusaite; Tamara Kunić & Matija Mato Škerbić), avoidatives (Joanna Redzimska), neologisms (Petra Storjohann), swearing (Tamara Kunić & Matija Mato Škerbić), among others.

A selection of emotions is presented in the contributions, such as pride and anger in relation to identity search (Kamila Ciepiela), hostility and anger (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Höhn; Monika Tosik; Jurate Rusaite), fear (Joanna Redzimska; Dagmara Solska, Danuta Stanulewicz & Konrad Radomyski), disappointment (Dagmara Solska); joy and happiness (Anna Bączkowska, Erika Lombart & Louis Escoufflaire) or a mixture of a number of emotions explored by other authors.

The volume will be of interest to researchers and students of linguistics and computer science who explore Natural Language Processing techniques, as well as to psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists seeking patterns of affective communication online and offline.

Gdańsk, Anna Bączkowska

PART I

Linguistic aspects and social contexts of affective communication

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Neologisms and emotions in discourse and their lexicographic treatment

This paper examines the interplay between neologisms and emotions in German public discourses. Utilising a corpus-guided approach grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis, the study scrutinises how new lexical items, though not overtly emotional, carry significant evaluative weight and influence societal perspectives. By analysing recent terms such as *Klimakleber*, *Doppelwumms* and *Rückführungspatenschaft*, this research explores the mechanisms through which language not only reflects but actively shapes different emotions. The findings indicate that neologisms can provoke diverse responses, often serving to unify or divide public opinion based on their connotations. Furthermore, this study challenges traditional lexicographic practices by advocating for a meaning description and representation that encompasses both

the discursive and emotional contexts of neologisms when attested in public language use. By applying complementary corpus methods where necessary, the paper explores and interprets the close relationship between words, meaning, emotions, and discourse with the help of illustrative examples. These demonstrate how a newly developed German neologism dictionary approaches emotionally charged lexical units by exploiting traditional investigations of concordances and collocation patterns with word-embedding analyses. Overall, the examination presented here highlights the importance of considering emotional undertones in understanding the societal impact of new words, contributing to an enriched lexicographic and linguistic comprehension.

Keywords: neologisms, emotion-laden new words, emotivity, critical concepts, emotions in discourse, lexicographic documentation, emotions in dictionaries, lexicographic style labels

1 Introduction

In German, current public debates and discussions are full of new lexical items that, while not directly expressing emotions, carry significant emotional or evaluative weight. These emotionally laden new words (Pavlenko, 2008) serve various purposes and distinctly affect communication. The emotional semantic component in some neologisms is continually shaped by social interactions, making it an integral part of everyday communication. Thus, when analysing the emotional content of new expressions, the focus extends beyond mere lexical meaning to encompass considerations at the discourse level. The formation of most German neologisms occurs through morphological processes or language borrowing, with emotions occasionally expressed morphologically

(Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson, 2022). Recent German neologisms such as *Doppelwumms* (“double boost”) and *Rückführungspatenschaft* (“repatriation sponsorship”) illustrate how language morphologically conveys emotional and political stances and elicits specific associations. Here both words are intentionally devised to foster positive feelings. There are also mechanisms used to shape an emotion-infused reality in certain contexts, where terms are coined to attach a stigma, as for instance with the labelling of environmental activists as climate terrorists (*Klimaterroristen*). Overall, the use of these new words in critical discourses (such as the climate crisis, immigration crisis, or socio-political changes) evokes an array of feelings, including affection or antipathy, hope or fear, all depending on individual political and societal perspectives.

This paper adopts an applied, corpus-guided perspective with a lexical focus and follows the methodology of Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Baker, 2006; Partington et al., 2013; Collins & Baker, 2023) to explore the intersection of neology, language use and emotions. Corpus analyses reveal that neologisms can provoke divisive responses to both the word itself and the concept it represents. Despite their pervasive influence, the emotional dimensions of neologisms are often overlooked in dictionaries. This study challenges traditional dictionary representations by proposing an expanded lexicographic approach that includes emotional and discursive contexts. Their significance has often been interpreted as extra-linguistic or non-essential to their core meanings, receiving attention only through conventional stylistic labels that highlight connotative elements. Such usage or style labels (e.g. TABOO, DEROGATORY, COLLOQUIAL, FORMAL) often apply to swear words, colloquial expressions, terms loaded with expressive value, and clearly euphemistic language. In German, usage notes (often abbreviations) are a common feature across various dictionaries, including the German Dictionary of Neologisms (Neologismenwörterbuch, 2006ff.). However, the usefulness of these has been called into question (cf. Schnörch, 2008). Hence, this chapter will contribute to alternative lexicographic representation of the complex interplay between meaning, discourse, and society, including the critical emotive nuances associated with some neologisms.

2 Corpus and methods

In this chapter, the focus is on emotion-based judgments about social realities or positions, as outlined in corpus-guided studies of three new German words. A language-critical examination of central neologisms with emotive connotations offers important insights into the collective experience of a speech community and its involvement in current public socio-political debates. Thus, this work adopts the approach that discourse is a social practice (Teubert, 2006), with three central emotion-laden neologisms (Pavlenko, 2008) from recent discourses as the discourse objects. The expressive force of these new words is negotiated dialogically: it manifests through communicative acts and changes through its continuous use by the language community. Generally, the following examination adopts a lexical-semantic focus on discourse and emotion, utilising a mixed-method approach where quantitative and qualitative corpus analyses and interpretations are combined. To uncover associated emotionality, ideally the focus is on identify-

ing statistically significant contextual co-occurrences that indicate the construction and representation of positions, perspectives, identities, relationships, and patterns of thought (cf. Partington et al., 2013; Baker & McEnery, 2015). This can be achieved, for instance, through the analysis of computer-generated collocation patterns. Collocations provide a systematic approach to identifying frequent and significant linguistic patterns.

While frequency and distribution are quantitative indicators of how established new terms are, concordances and collocation networks, along with their (qualitative) interpretation, uncover discourse markers, usage patterns, and discursive structures that represent knowledge structures and constructions of reality, in some cases also constructions of sentiment and affectivity. These will subsequently be filtered out for the three neologisms in question, as detected in public language use in newspaper texts. For this purpose, the underlying corpus includes broadsheets, major national newspapers such as *Die Zeit*, *Der Spiegel*, *Focus*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and *taz*, as well as smaller regional papers, e.g., *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Hamburger Morgenpost*, *Rhein-Zeitung*, *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, *Mannheimer Morgen* and others, all of which cover the years between 2020 and 2023.¹ The underlying sources illustrate an extract of the discourses in question, and the results explained here should be seen in connection with their corpus data only. The choice of corpora is also a result of testing “how newspapers construct society and the identities of their readers” (Baker et al., 2013, p. 6). In media coverage, we learn about common topics associated with new concepts and new words. The corpus data is publicly available as a virtual corpus from DeReKo (the German Reference Corpus) and can be accessed through the analysis tool COSMAS II (Belica, 1995).²

Additionally, the examination will make use of distributed word embeddings, as this approach also takes word relations into account. While collocation analyses investigate significant contextual co-occurrences and extract words that frequently appear together – usually words from all word classes – word embeddings detect semantically related terms with similar collocation profiles, and thus typically identify words of the same semantic paradigm and word class (Fankhauser & Kupietz, 2019). It detects semantically similar terms illustrated by interactive visualised networks, which function as linguistic indicators for contextualisation as well as for domain and discourse-specific usage. Word embeddings use distributional models to place words in a continuous vector space where words with comparable meanings are positioned closer to one another (cf. Bubenhofer, 2020). This method can be applied through the use of DEREKOVECS, a method adapted for exploring DeReKo by Fankhauser and Kupietz (2019). While in some cases one method sufficiently explores the semantic potential of a word, in other cases both methods are employed as complementary approaches to the contextual (particularly lexical) analysis of neologisms.

1 The corpus also comprises Austrian and Swiss texts, as these are part of the German-speaking community.

2 DeReKo, the German Reference Corpus, comprises 57.6 billion words (January 2024).

3 Examples from different critical discourses

Critical discourse, neologisms, and emotivity are intricately linked, as some public discussions nurture an atmosphere of evaluation and heightened emotionality. Such debates are charged with a spectrum of emotions – from discontent, resentment, and indignation to approval and joy – reflecting the evaluative nature of discourse. In this paper, critical discourse analysis follows an applied approach as established by Baker (2006), Teubert (2006) and Partington et al. (2013), using techniques deeply grounded in corpus linguistics and which have established the field of Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This means that discourse is a social practice where meaning, positions, and arguments are constantly negotiated through communicative acts, constructing linguistic reality. Through the employment of computer methods, the investigation of language can reveal social problems, evaluation, discrimination, and disempowerment as continuously produced and perceived through communication and as represented by texts in corpora. Overall, critical discourse analysis “examines how ideologies and power relations are expressed in language” (Baker et al., 2013, p. 20). It is shown here how some linguistic phenomena, such as sentiment expressions and argumentation strategies, are used to represent specific ideological stances attached to words, phrases, constructions, and texts.

In German, compounding is a highly productive method for coining new words and attaching emotive content, enabling the emergence of terms that encapsulate complex emotional assessments. For example, the neologisms:

- *Klimakleber* (“environmental activist who glues him/herself onto the road as a form of protest”) (since 2022, discourse of the climate crisis),
- *Doppelwumms* (“double bang/bam/boost”) (since 2022, discourse of the energy crisis),
- *Rückführungspatenschaft* (“return sponsorship”) (since 2020, immigration discourse).

These new words serve as examples to illustrate varying degrees of approval or disapproval, thus mirroring positive or negative emotional tones. Although they originate from different discourses, they share a common trait: they provoke controversial debates about the concepts they represent. The emotions involved pertain to both the lexical items and the underlying concepts. As will be demonstrated, they are metalinguistically reflected upon by the speech community. This means that these lexical items might be propagated or ignored, stigmatised or approved, used or avoided accordingly. Additional neologisms that follow similar patterns within the same discourses are provided for further illustration.

3.1 The discourse of the climate crisis: *Klimakleber*

New terms for environmentalists include labels such as *Klimakleber*, which describes individuals who glue themselves to objects or roads during protests. *Klimakleber* is primarily associated with the environmental protection movement “Last Generation”, the German counterpart to “Stop Oil Now”, founded in December 2021. At first sight, *Klimakleber* may not seem to evoke specific emotions when interpreting the semantically transparent components: *Klima* (“climate”) and *Kleber* (“person who glues”). However, since early 2022, organised activists have been employing methods of civil disobedience

#	LLR	kumul.	Häufig	Kookkurrenzen	syntagmatische Muster
1	1346	125	125	Letzten	die Klimakleber der Letzten Generation
2	1160	172	47	Generation	Die Klimakleber der Gruppe Letzte Generation
3	724	277	105	Aktionen	die Aktionen der Klimakleber
4	659	356	79	sogenannten	die sogenannten [...] Klimakleber
5	594	420	64	blockieren	Klimakleber blockieren Straßen
6	382	472	52	Strafen	härtere Strafen für Klimakleber
7	319	498	26	Straßenblockaden	zu den Straßenblockaden der Klimakleber
8	307	527	14	blockierten	Berufsverkehr blockierten [die] Klimakleber auch
9	301	541	14	Räucherfigur	hat einen Klimakleber als Räucherfigur ins Programm
10	301	553	12	...	jetzt diese Klimakleber [...]
11	254	571	17	Störaktionen	den vergangenen Störaktionen der Klimakleber zeigt
12	244	581	10	Klimakleberinnen	tun die Klimakleberinnen und Klimakleber der Sache
13	216	587	6	Letzte	Klimakleber ... Letzte
14	201	594	7	Denkmalschmierer radikalisierte rundweg	Gesellschaft durch radikalisierte Klimakleber und Denkmalschmierer rundweg
15	200	595	1	Denkmalschmierer	Klimakleber ... Denkmalschmierer
16	200	613	18	Gendern	nicht von Klimaklebern Veganern [und Linken Grünen vom Gendern
17	193	636	23	Aktivisten	das Wort Klimakleber sind [für keine Aktivistinnen und Aktivisten
18	192	647	11	Protestform	würde den Klimaklebern empfehlen über ihre Protestform nachzudenken
19	182	660	13	Präventivhaft	Kritik an Präventivhaft für Klimakleber
20	176	673	13	Luftsicherheit Startbahn gelungen	die Luftsicherheit dass es den Klimaklebern gelungen ist auf die Startbahn
21	176	770	97	Polizei	die Polizei [...] die Klima-Kleber
22	160	838	68	Berlin	Klima-Kleber [...]in] Berlin
23	159	839	1	härtere	härtere [...] Klimakleber
24	153	858	19	kleben	lustig über Klima-Kleber [kleben und] kleben lassen schimpft
25	152	889	37	Straßen	mit den Klimaklebern gemeinsam die Straßen und Flughäfen
26	147	907	18	Proteste	Proteste [...] der] Klimakleber berichten von
27	148	937	19	technologieoffen Sozialtourismus	Auch Klimakleber Sozialtourismus und technologieoffen kamen unter
28	147	953	11	Nötigung	Land Falle haben der Klimakleber inzwischen denen wegen [...] Nötigung verurteilt

Figure 1. Extract of collocations of the term *Klimakleber*

– particularly by gluing themselves to places and objects using superglue or expanding foam – to protest against political decisions and government actions regarding climate protection. The tactics of climate activists, to draw attention to the climate crisis, are seen by some as extreme measures. Through their confrontational actions, protestors directly challenge the existing political and economic systems that they hold responsible for the climate crisis. This form of protest can disrupt daily life, leading to disapproval among some people. Their use led to widespread discussions about the acceptability of these kinds of public actions, particularly in media reports, which contributed to a wider public perception. Within a short period of time, all forms of protest by these activists faced growing media rejection. As a result, the new lexical item has begun to reflect growing public dissatisfaction with individuals who opt for more conspicuous forms of action to demand greater political engagement on environmental issues.

A closer look at press texts in the DeReKo corpus quickly confirms a semantic environment in media coverage that articulates numerous emotion-laden phenomena, as

represented by co-occurrences (see Figure 1).³ Figure 1 shows co-occurrences as arranged by log likelihood ratio (LLR), together with their cumulative number of corpus hits and their probability of occurring in a specific syntagmatic frame (see heading ‘syntagmatische Muster’).

For instance, adjectival collocates directly reference climate activists as *ungeliebt* (“unloved”), *radikalisiert* (“radicalised”), *rücksichtslos* (“reckless”), *fehlgeleitet* (“misguided”), and *militant* (“militant”). Verbs that co-occur regularly with the search term typically express actions and behaviour outside social norms, such as *stören* (“disturb”), *blockieren* (“block”), *versperren* (“obstruct”), *gefährden* (“endanger”), and *lahmlegen* (“paralyse”). This picture is completed by their actions being described as *Störaktionen* (“disruptive actions”), *Nötigung* (“coercion”), *Straßenblockaden* (“road blockades”), and *mutwillige Sachbeschädigung* (“wilful damage to property”). Generally, press reports focus on the effects, effectiveness, and acceptability of protests through civil disobedience and its impact. But the collocates above point to biased reports and convey climate activists as having the potential to destroy and disturb everyday life.

More specifically, opponents consider the actions of climate activists to be senseless and disruptive. They argue that the protests severely restrict road traffic, leading to delays in emergency transport services, among other consequences, thus posing dangers. Typical criticism also includes the view that these bold actions constitute a disturbance of public order and inconvenience bystanders or road users. *Klimakleber* are portrayed as the opposite of the police (*Polizei*), the enemies of car drivers (*Autofahrer*) and adversaries of the average citizen (*normal*). Politically, especially from a conservative perspective and often echoed by politicians from opposition parties, people referred to as *Klimakleber* are grouped together with supporters of green politics (*Grüne*), the left wing (*Linke*), vegans (*Veganer*), those who embrace wokeness (*Wokeness*) and who use gender-sensitive language (*Gendern*). German broadsheets collectivise these groups allegedly as a danger to democracy, claiming they polarise and divide society (see corpus example (1)).

- (1) Für 44 Prozent der Befragten gehört die zunehmende Polarisierung durch Debatten in den sozialen Medien zu den grössten Ärgernissen. [...] Sotomo folgert, im neuen Kulturkampf stünden nicht mehr Migration und Aussenpolitik im Fokus, sondern *Klimakleber*, Gender und Wokeness. (Basler Zeitung, 06.07.2023)
(translation: For 44 percent of respondents, increasing polarisation due to debates on social media is among the greatest annoyances. [...] Sotomo concludes that in the new culture war, the focus is no longer on migration and foreign policy, but on climate activists [that glue themselves to objects], gender, and wokeness.)

In many contexts, these terms serve as key elements in political rhetoric primarily employed by very conservative or right-leaning political forces, especially by the party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). When political figures criticise activists or condemn their methods, their views echo throughout society. Their rhetoric includes terms such

3 The search includes *Klimakleber* and its spelling variant *Klima-Kleber*. The settings of the analysis include typical co-occurrences within a span of five words either side.

as *Extremismus* (“extremism”) to describe these actions, which helps solidify a public perception of environmentalists as outside the bounds of acceptable political or social behaviour. Hence, a second discourse prosody concerns the view of *Klimakleber* acting in a similar way to Islamists (*Islamisten*) or members of the Identitarian movement (*Identitäre*) (example (2)), again being collectivised and differentiated from the norm.

- (2) Alexander Van der Bellen warnte gar vor einem „Zerbrechen der Gesellschaft“. Nehammer hält im Video – es hatte bis späten Nachmittag mehr als 600.000 Aufrufe – dagegen und erklärt, wer nicht „normal“ sei: Extremisten wie *Klimakleber*, Identitäre oder Islamisten. (Kurier, 22.07.2023)
(translation: Alexander Van der Bellen even warned of a “fracturing of society”. In the video – which had received more than 600,000 views by late afternoon – Nehammer counters and explains who is not “normal”: extremists such as climate activists [that glue themselves to objects], Identitarians, or Islamists.)

Klimakleber is just one term in a series of similarly coined items that can be interpreted as a scale expressing an increasing semantic intensity of unacceptable social activities, ranging from *Klimachaot* (“climate slob”) to *Klimarebel* (“climate rebel”), *Klimaterrorist* (“climate terrorist”), and culminating in *Klima-RAF* (equating activists with the left extremist terrorist group “Red Army Faction”). These names have been created through compounding, enabling speakers to incorporate specific features, in these instances, attitudinal connotations. Nouns like *Terrorist*, *Chaot*, *RAF* evoke rejections and conjure up associations with extremism, terrorism, and radicalisation. Consequently, these labels cast climate activists in a light that portrays them as individuals who operate outside the bounds of legality and conventional social norms, effectively criminalising them. This view of criminalised activists is also reflected in the notion of frequent collocates such as *Kritik* (“criticism”), *Strafen* (“penalties/sentence”), *Bestrafung* (“punishment”), *Präventivhaft* (“preventive detention”) and *Haftstrafen* (“prison sentences”), all of which refer to the legal consequences of criminal acts.

Of course, any personal judgment about the activists’ actions is shaped by one’s own views of activism, environmental protection, and the climate crisis. Many view *Klimakleber* as committed activists willing to go to extraordinary lengths to highlight the urgency of the climate crisis. Supporters of their actions problematise the media conceptualisation and note that more radical forms of protest are better suited to drawing the attention of both politicians and the general public to the climate crisis and prompting them to take action. Overall, this can sharpen public awareness of the climate crisis. It is argued that the dramatic actions of the activists highlight the need for urgent measures; they encourage society to think critically and initiate discussions about climate change, environmental protection, and sustainable living. Certain collocates, such as *Protestaktion* (“protest”) and *Aktion* (“action”), can also reflect a purely descriptive narrative.

- (3) Herbert Grönemeyer bezeichnet sich selbst als „Autonarr“, hat aber kein Problem mit Protestaktionen der „*Klimakleber*“. „Wenn ich deshalb im Stau stehe, ist das völlig in Ordnung“, sagte der 66-Jährige dem privaten Rundfunksender

Hit Radio FFH in Bad Vilbel. Obwohl er „großer Achtzylinder-Fan“ sei, führe für ihn kein Weg am Aus für den Verbrennungsmotor vorbei. „Grundsätzlich emissionsfreie Autos sind die einzige Lösung“. (Welt Online, 26.03.2023) (translation: Herbert Grönemeyer describes himself as a “car fanatic”, but has no problem with the protests of the climate activists. “If I end up stuck in traffic because of it, that’s perfectly fine”, said the 66-year-old to the private radio station Hit Radio FFH in Bad Vilbel. Although he is a “big fan of V8 engines”, he sees no alternative to phasing out combustion engines. “Basically, emission-free cars are the only solution”).

Additionally, co-occurring terms such as *Anliegen* or *Ziele* (“concern/aim”) are collocates that also indicate more neutral and explanatory contexts, where the objectives of climate activists are clarified without judgment.

Overall, judgmental and dismissive emotions prevail in the attitudes of the press. Media representations have fostered a hostile tone towards protestors and are dominated by pejorative references to them. Their stances on green advocates result in debates that are controversial and emotional, which semantically have ‘rubbed off’ onto the word *Klimakleber*.

3.2 The discourse of the energy crisis: Doppelwumms

Doppelwumms is a word coined by Olaf Scholz on 29th September 2022, during a speech about gas and energy price caps. This onomatopoeic word describes a fiscal stimulus package, financed through credit and valued at 200 billion euros, aimed at boosting the German economy and mitigating energy prices in Germany. It quickly entered German as part of the discourse on the energy crisis. *Wumms* is a word that mimics the sound of a big bang or a powerful impact, often used in comics. It suggests a significant and effective boost or impact. The term *Wumms*, also used by Scholz, gained popularity during his tenure as Finance Minister and later as Chancellor of Germany, especially in relation to economic measures designed to counteract the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic challenges. *Doppelwumms* should surpass this and it implies a set of measures or stimulus that is twice as powerful. *Doppelwumms* has become a symbol used to indicate the speed and power of political measures intended to accelerate the country’s transition towards a more digital and environmentally sustainable economy. The word is laden with emotion in two distinct ways. Firstly, emotion is an integral component of the word’s semantics itself. In an interview, linguist Annette Klosa-Kückelhaus referred to this new word as an “Emotionswort” (emotion word).

Bei Doppelwumms handelt es sich laut Klosa-Kückelhaus um so ein „Emotionswort“. „Doppelwumms ist ein Ausdruck, der nicht neutral ist. Er löst etwas bei uns aus.“ (from Buzzfeed News Deutschland, 30/09/2022: <https://www.buzzfeed.de/news/doppelwumms-wumms-olaf-scholz-gaspreisbremse-energiepreisbremse-gasumlage-energiekrise-mediale-aufmerksamkeit-91823504.html>)

(translations: According to Klosa-Kückelhaus, “*Doppelwumms*” is such an “*Emotionswort*” (emotion word). “*Doppelwumms* is an expression that is not neutral. It triggers something in us.”

Secondly, attitudes vary regarding the use of onomatopoeic terms by politicians such as Olaf Scholz. In corpus texts there are numerous metalinguistic attestations where users complain about the appropriateness of such terms being used by high-ranking public figures. *Doppelwumms* may not be considered the appropriate style for a politician to use when speaking colloquially to the public (see (4)). Thus, a word intended to be positive turns into a word that is being rejected by parts of the public.

- (4) Da hat es wieder viel Häme gehagelt. Der Ausdruck „*Doppelwumms*“ des Kanzlers sei infantil und unangemessen, hieß es da und dort, angesichts des 200-Milliarden-Euro-Hilfspakets ein Armutszeugnis für die Regierung. Tatsächlich erwartet man von Politikern einerseits Klarheit im Ausdruck, gerne auch mal Pathos, aber gleich Comic-Sprache? Da war manchen schon der „Wumms“ zu viel, mit dem Olaf Scholz, damals noch Finanzminister, zu Beginn der Pandemie sein Konjunkturpaket umschrieb. Ist *Doppelwumms* nicht doch ein bisschen viel Bummsfallera? (Süddeutsche Zeitung, datiert vom 30.09.2022)

(translations: There has been a lot of scorn once again. The Chancellor's expression “*Doppelwumms*” was called infantile and inappropriate here and there, especially in light of the 200 billion euro aid package, a poor testament to the government. Indeed, while people expect politicians to provide clarity in expression, and sometimes even pathos, comic book language? For some, even the “*Wumms*” was too much, which Olaf Scholz, then still Finance Minister, used to describe his economic stimulus package at the beginning of the pandemic. Isn't *Doppelwumms* just a bit too much fanfare?)

Metalinguistic comments are visible throughout many contextual instances in the underlying corpus. Automatically retrieved, statistically relevant collocates such as *Begriff* (“term”), *Spruch* (“expression/slogan”), *Wortschöpfung* (“word creation”), *rhetorisch* (“rhetorical”), and *Trommelwirbel* (“drum roll”) point to the manifold reflections on the introduction of the newly created word. According to Klosa-Kückelhaus (in BuzzfeedNews Deutschland 2022), using this word makes the audience listen to and reflect on Scholz's words more intently than any other choice of words, potentially astonishing everyone in a positive way. Additionally, media reports on the style of the word support its dissemination and generate even greater attention. Although negative opinions as to its style and appropriateness are widespread, the term also triggers positive emotions, as part of its meaning includes a promise of tremendous effectiveness of the package, see (5).

- (5) Schließlich hat Bundeskanzler Olaf Scholz mit seinem *Doppelwumms* akustische und sprachliche Maßstäbe gesetzt. Denn das klingt besser als „200-Milliarden-Abwehrschirm zur Dämpfung der Energiepreise“. So viele Nullen kann sich in einem Land, wo Grundschüler nicht rechnen können und Politiker mit

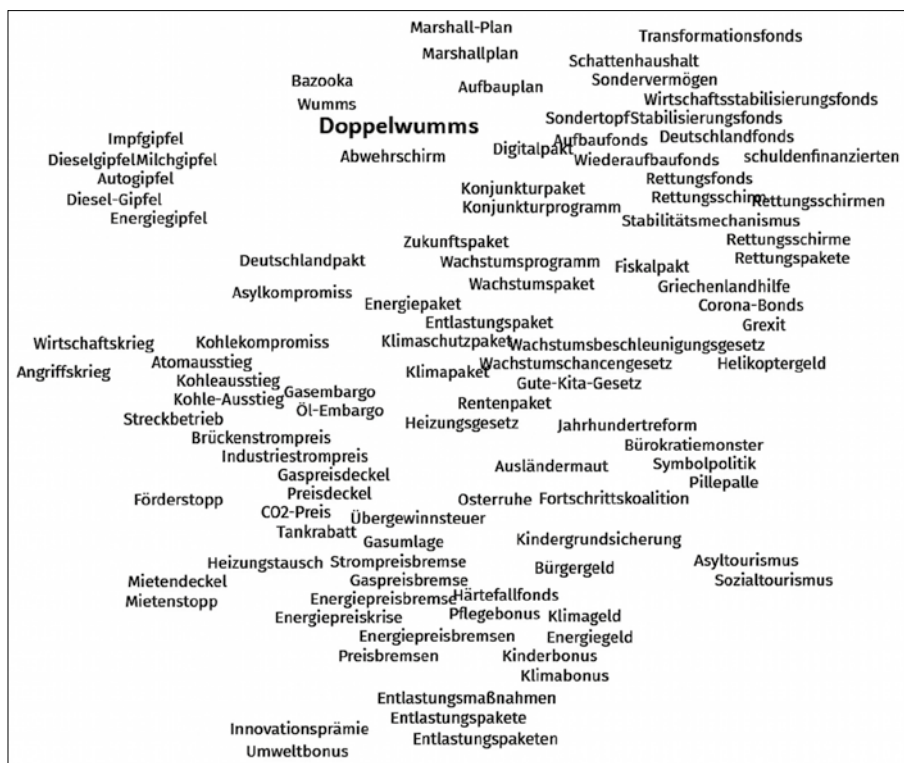
nichts rechnen, ohnehin niemand vorstellen. *Doppelwumms* dagegen ist knackig für Hinz und Doppel-Kunz. Und es kann das Geräusch beschreiben, wenn der Bürger beim Öffnen der Gasrechnung sich erst an die Stirn schlägt und dann vor Schreck vom Stuhl fällt. (Kreis-Anzeiger, 31.10.2022)

(translation: Ultimately, Chancellor Olaf Scholz has set acoustic and linguistic standards with his Doppelwumms. After all, it sounds better than a “200-billion defence shield to dampen energy prices”. In a country where primary elementary school students can’t count and politicians count on nothing, nobody can imagine so many zeros anyway. Doppelwumms, on the other hand, is catchy for every Tom, Dick, and Harry. And it can describe the sound when a citizen, upon opening the gas bill, first slaps their forehead and then falls off the chair in shock.)

Doppelwumms is also semantically related to the emotionally charged term *Bazooka*, which refers to a powerful rocket launcher and is a word also used by Scholz. *Bazooka*, a buzzword in 2020, referred to the comprehensive and robust financial measures that the German government implemented to counter the economic impact at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like *Doppelwumms*, the metaphor *Bazooka* was intended to convey the strength and magnitude of the government’s response, aiming to provide significant financial support to businesses, employees, and the broader economy to ease the challenges of the pandemic. With the help of word embeddings, it is possible to visually detect the semantic closeness of these two neologisms (see Figure 2). Word embedding is a linguistic distributional method developed by Mikolov et al. (2013)⁴ as a technique to process natural language. It represents lexical networks visually in a continuous vector space by capturing semantically similar words around a search term. Similar words have similar vector representations, meaning they are close to each other in this space. Larger distances in the vector representation suggest a lower level of similarities between the words. As a consequence, it is possible to identify words with similar meanings (often synonyms or paradigmatically related terms) by finding vectors that are close in the embedding space. These specific vectors are computer-generated and they capture semantic meanings, syntactic properties, and relationships between words. The visualisations of lexical semantic relations are based on their usage in large corpora, in our case DeReKo (see Fankhauser and Kupietz (2019)).

Figure 2 also shows *Doppelwumms* is closely connected to other economic and political terminology, e. g., *Konjunkturpaket* (“boost package”), *Abwehrschirm* (“defense shield”), *Aufbaufond* (“recovery fund”), *Wachstumspaket* (“growth package”), *Zukunftspaket* (“future growth package”). The power of word embeddings lies in their capacity to capture semantic commonalities in meanings. Such investigations of lexical semantic relations aid in the critical semantic analysis and help contextualise the term within its domains, here the economic-political domain. They also reveal levels of sentiment, thus becoming an essential tool in sentiment detection (cf. Rudkowsky et al., 2018). As

⁴ Mikolov et al. (2013) developed the word2vec algorithm that estimates the vector representations for words, producing word embeddings.



can be seen in Figure 2, *Doppelwumms* is also semantically close to terms such as *Marshall-Plan* (“Marshall Plan”), *Aufbauplan* (“recovery plan”), *Konjunkturpaket* (“stimulus package”), *Sondertopf* (“special fund”), *Wiederaufbaufonds* (“economic reconstruction fund”), *Stabilisierungsfonds* (“stabilisation fund”), and many more. All these terms describe political support measures that are effective in fostering economic growth and providing a stimulus for economic prosperity. Each of these stimulus plans ignites hope for an economic boost, and hope itself is an emotion-rich phenomenon, a fundamental feeling tied to optimism. The visualisation here confirms an overall sense of positivity. While *Doppelwumms* may not be universally appreciated as the most pragmatically appropriate term in public and political discourse, it nevertheless leaves a positive impact and remains in the mental lexicon as a word associated with positive feelings.⁵

3.3 *The discourse of the immigration crisis: Rückführungspatenschaft*

The immigration and asylum debates have generated new words and terms, reflecting the evolving challenges and policy changes. Some encapsulate complex semantic notions on social, political, and legal changes signalling acceptance, empathy, support, and chances. One such term, *Rückführungspatenschaft* ("return/repatriation sponsorship"), emerged in 2020 amid discussions about plans to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS)⁶. A key element of this reform is the introduction of a solidarity mechanism, which allows member states to either accept refugees, provide financial contributions, or deploy staff to build capacity. Moreover, member states have the option to select the form of contribution they prefer. The concept of return sponsorship suggests that countries either unable or unwilling to host asylum seekers could alternatively assist and fund the repatriation of rejected asylum applicants to their home countries. The creation of this neologism serves a deliberate purpose in a contentious discussion. It aims to evoke positive emotions regarding the urgent need for a reformed and universally accepted European asylum solution, thereby influencing public opinion through the use of lexical elements with significant emotional impact. The term *Patenschaft* ("sponsorship") suggests a form of aid, support, assistance, partnership, or backing, where the sponsor assumes a degree of responsibility for the success, well-being, or needs of the person being sponsored. Typically, this notion has a positive connotation. Sponsorship is considered mutually beneficial: the sponsor contributes to a cause and may enhance their reputation or visibility, while the person being sponsored gains the necessary support to achieve their objectives, be it through financial aid, resources, or mentorship. *Rückführungspatenschaft* glosses over the complexities and challenges inherent in developing effective and unified solutions to European migration politics and solidarity commitment.

The initially positive association intended for the term turned into one perceived as cynical. The notions associated with this word contributed to it being designated as one of two "*Unwörter des Jahres*" ("miswords of the year").⁷ The German term *Unwort* ("misword") refers to a word that is considered inappropriate, undesirable, or offensive within a specific context, often because its use is seen as politically incorrect, misleading, discriminatory, or euphemistic. It is employed in language discussions to spotlight words that stir controversy or are deemed harmful in public dialogue. In Germany, a panel of linguists and experts annually selects a word that has adversely affected public discourse. This initiative aims to promote awareness and sensitivity about language use among the language community. In the case of *Rückführungspatenschaft*, the jury criticised the term for its presumed intent to mask a contentious regulatory practice. They argued:

Bürgergeld, a compound of *Bürger* ("citizen") and *Geld* ("money"), suggests a closer connection to the recipients of the benefits.

6 In September 2020, the European Commission unveiled the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, featuring a range of proposals to revise the European asylum and migration system. In June 2023, the interior ministers of the EU member states reached a consensus on a joint position to reform the CEAS.

7 See <https://www.unwortdesjahres.net/unwort/kriterien-und-auswahlverfahren/>.

Dies als „Rückführungspatenschaften“ zu bezeichnen, hält die Jury für zynisch und beschönigend: Der ursprünglich christlich geprägte, positive Begriff der Patenschaft steht für Verantwortungsübernahme und Unterstützung im Interesse von Hilfsbedürftigen. In der Zusammensetzung mit dem – ebenfalls beschönigend für „Abschiebung“ gebrauchten – Wort „Rückführung“ wird suggeriert, „dass Abschieben eine gute menschliche Tat“ sei. (from <https://www.unwortdesjahres.net/unwort/das-unwort-seit-1991/2020-2029/>).

(translation: The jury considers calling these “Return Sponsorships” cynical and euphemistic: the originally Christian-influenced, positive term of sponsorship stands for taking responsibility and providing support in the interest of those in need. When combined with the word “return” – also used euphemistically for “deportation” – it suggests “that deporting is a good human deed”).

The “Unwort des Jahres” campaign is eagerly anticipated by the language community and the media reports extensively on the results each year. While some corpus samples show the contextual use of the neologisms as an established and above all official word for a new concept, most corpus attestations show how the linguistic campaign raises awareness of the inappropriateness of the chosen lexical item to the public. Metalinguistic reflections clearly dominate among all instances and collocates such as *Begriff* (“term”), *Unwort* (“misword”), *Konzept* (“concept”), and *Wort* (“word”) illustrate the extensive journalistic accounts of the new term. As can be seen in Figure 3 in concordance lines, *Rückführungspatenschaft* is often flagged. Flagging is a method of signalling typographical or lexical marking and serves various functions. Quotation marks, for example, are commonly used to introduce an unfamiliar, newly coined or slang/technical term, or to indicate that a word or phrase is being used ironically or sarcastically. They may also refer to the notion of an official name of a new concept. Metalinguistic elements can “enhance the accessibility of lexical borrowings” (Winter-Froemel, 2023, p. 345), as these can present formal and content-related challenges. In the case of *Rückführungspatenschaft*, the flagging specifically highlights a key term under discussion. However, flagging is less frequently used to emphasise semantic peculiarities or the official status of a word. Flagging may also reflect the user’s sympathies or antipathies towards specific words or phrases. Additionally, flagging elements include the use of signal words such as *solche* (“such”) and *sogenannt* (“so-called”), which regularly appear in press texts (Figure 3).

In this case, both positive and negative connotations are entrenched in this neologism, which is what cause controversies. On the one hand, positivity is inherently expressed by *Patenschaft*, which conveys a humanitarian approach to a difficult matter. On the other hand, the euphemistic use reveals negative aspects behind the concept and the intention to hide specific polarising aspects of the new regulations.

Semantically contentious words from this domain also include *Chancenaufenthaltsrecht* (“chance residence permit”) or *Spurwechsel* (“lane change”),⁸ which denote a new

8 *Spurwechsel* (“lane change”) is used metaphorically, resulting in a new sense describing the possibilities of a fairly easy switch from the asylum path to a regular immigration pathway for asylum

Als grösster Zankapfel dürften sich die «Rückführungspatenschaften» herausstellen. Dabei sollen sich EU-Länder verpflichten, für ablehnen, könnten solche «Rückführungspatenschaften» attraktiv sein. Konkret sieht das Konzept der Kommission ein in, der Staaten eine sogenannte Rückführungspatenschaft auferlegen kann.

materielle Hilfe leisten oder «Rückführungspatenschaften» übernehmen wollen – sich also verpflichten, abgelehnte EU-Migrationspolitik Die Illusion von den Rückführungspatenschaften und die Versuchung für Frontex, sich an Push-Back-Aktionen zu "für europäischen Lebensstil") sogenannten Rückführungs-Patenschaften ausgedacht. Mitgliedstaaten sollen wählen deren Ländern materielle Hilfe leisten oder "Rückführungs-Patenschaften" übernehmen – sich also verpflichten, abgelehnte neue Asylpaket der EU sieht unter anderem "Rückführungspatenschaften" vor. Wird hier Solidarität ganz neu nämlich gleich zwei Wörter gewählt: «Rückführungspatenschaften», ein Begriff aus der EU-Migrationspolitik,

Eines hört auf den Namen "Rückführungspatenschaften", und ich musste zunächst googlen, um zu erahnen, was gemeint Das Wort "Rückführungspatenschaften", so die Jury, bezeichne einen von der EU-Kommission vorgeschl festgelegt: Es waren die beiden Wörter "Rückführungspatenschaften" und "Corona-Diktatur". Sören Kittel des Jahres» sind «Corona-Diktatur» und «Rückführungspatenschaften», wie die Jury am Dienstag mitteilte.

Wörter geprägt und verwendet wurden. «Rückführungspatenschaften» sei ein Begriff der EU-Kommission, mit dem neue Mechanismen Unwörter-Paar 2020: «Rückführungspatenschaften» und «Corona-Diktatur» (Foto - aktuell) Die Corona-Pandemie des Jahres sind «Corona-Diktatur» und «Rückführungspatenschaften», wie die Jury am Dienstag mitteilte. Das vergangene

Figure 3. Extract of corpus citations illustrating flagging of neologisms

migration strategy, where non-EU citizens can obtain the right to receive a permanent residence and work permit if they fulfil certain criteria. These comprise a high degree of integration, employment prospects, participation in qualifications, and knowledge of German. Including lexical components such as *Chance* instantly evokes an affirmative position and official recognition of a well-deserved status. The term reflects a policy approach that focuses on potential opportunities for both the individuals and the host country. So far, both terms refer only to a political proposal and have been subjected to critical coverage in the press.

4 Emotional-laden neologisms in dictionaries

In this paper, we have examined the role of emotivity as a semantic element in the meaning structure of new lexical items. Understanding the full meaning of neologisms and their subtle semantic nuances is a crucial goal for dictionaries. However, the influence that these new words exert on conversational practices, discourse, and emotions is frequently overlooked. The emotional significance of these terms is often considered marginal or irrelevant to their core meanings, and is only inadequately addressed by conventional style tags, status labels or usage notes. In current lexicographic practice, such widespread labels are e.g. TABOO, OBSOLETE, DEROGATORY, SLANG, COLLOQUIAL, OFFENSIVE, IRONIC, HUMOROUS, and INFORMAL/FORMAL etc.⁹ Notes provide additional information and call attention to specific usage features, serving either as instructions or as supplementary details (Atkins & Rundell, 2008). However, there are no widely accepted standards for usage labelling, nor is there any consistency in their application.

seekers with good integration prospects (such as employment).

⁹ See also Landau (1989) for categorisation of dictionary labels.

As Fedorovka (2004) states: “each dictionary has its own criteria of marking words with style and usage labels” (p. 266).

Dictionary notes/labels codify semantically complex linguistic information that cannot be fully decoded without any contextual, situational, genre, register- or domain-specific, evaluative, or referential comments. Although they have repeatedly faced criticism over the years for their shortcomings in capturing the nuances of language use (cf. Püschel, 1989, Stachurska, 2018), dictionary notes/labels are still often used by lexicographers to highlight specific connotative aspects and to signal pragmatic subtleties in swear words, informal phrases, expressions rich in expressive value, and overtly euphemistic language use. As such, they have also been used in the German online dictionary *Neologismenwörterbuch* (2006 ff.). Schnörch (2008) highlights the need for lexicographic work to go beyond these labels to offer thorough insights into the discourse and emotional contexts of certain words. This challenge was taken into account when developing a new lexicographic resource documenting German neologisms.

At the Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS), a new resource for documenting neologisms (*IDS Neo²⁰²⁰⁺*) that have emerged since 2020 has recently been developed (Storjohann, 2024). It will be launched in 2024 and its goal is to incorporate affectivity when triggered by controversial debates involving critical concepts and their lexical units. Specific usage features observed in discourse, as represented by the underlying corpus, are an essential component of the usage description for each term. This is achieved by narratively commenting on all observations, such as the emotions elicited by new words. If emotions are evoked by a new term, they are often closely linked to how the media presents it, which in turn shapes the narrative of the discourse. This influences the semantic spectrum of the new word and necessitates descriptions when it is recorded in a dictionary. Therefore, explanations are crucial for understanding the symbiotic relationship between the word, its meaning, the context, the discursive framework, and any tendencies in evaluative use or emotive perspectives.¹⁰ In *IDS Neo²⁰²⁰⁺*, details on style are implemented in the definition and evaluative aspects and discourse are integrated in narrative comments elucidating emotive usage or effects (see Table 1).¹¹

The new dictionary incorporates a dedicated section on historical background, in some cases an interactive chart detailing significant events that have influenced the usage of a new word. It also covers the domains where neologisms frequently appear, the thematic focus across different genres, and the linguistic varieties where a new word is predominantly used. Additionally, information about discourse, especially focusing on positions and evaluation, are part of an entry.

¹⁰ Please note, the example does not illustrate its actual visual presentation in the online dictionary but only lists the specific details found in the entry.

¹¹ The actual entry also contains corpus examples illustrating the information provided.

Table 1

Information about domain and historical context for headword *Klimakleber* in IDS Neo2020+

Klimakleber

Themenbereiche Der Ausdruck wird oft im Zusammenhang mit folgenden Themenbereichen verwendet: POLITIK KLIMAWANDEL VERKEHR <i>Klimakleber</i> ist Teil des Diskurses <i>Klimakrise</i> .	Subject areas The term is often used in connection with the following subject areas: POLITICS CLIMATE CHANGE TRANSPORT <i>Klimakleber</i> is part of the <i>climate crisis discourse</i> .
Thematische Schwerpunkte in Textsorte/Varietäten In allen drei Textsorten wird im Allgemeinen über die Aktionen und das Befestigen von Mitgliedern der „Letzten Generation“ auf Straßen und öffentlichen Plätzen berichtet. Aber besonders in Presstexten wird auffällig negativ über die Proteste als öffentliche Störungen und Gefahren im Verkehr und die Benachteiligung Unbeteiligter berichtet.	Thematic focus in text types/varieties All three types of text generally report on the actions and the gluing of members of the “Last Generation” (“Stop Oil Now”) to streets and in public places. Especially in press texts, there is a noticeable tendency to report negatively on the protests, describing them as public disturbances and traffic hazards, and highlighting the disadvantage to those who are not involved.
Historischer Zusammenhang Der Ausdruck <i>Klimakleber</i> wird vor allem mit der Umweltschutzbewegung „Letzte Generation“, die im Dezember 2021 gegründet wurde, in Zusammenhang gebracht. Die organisierten Aktivist:innen nutzen seit Anfang 2022 Mittel des zivilen Ungehorsams (vor allem Festkleben an Orten und Objekten mittels Sekundenkleber oder Bauschaum), um Protest gegenüber politischen Entscheidungen und Maßnahmen von Regierungen zum Klimaschutz zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Anfang 2024 verkündete die Gruppierung, dass sie künftig andere Formen des Protests wählen möchte.	Historical context The term <i>Klimakleber</i> is primarily associated with the “Last Generation” environmental movement, which was founded in December 2021. Since the beginning of 2022, organised activists have been using means of civil disobedience (mainly sticking things to places and objects using superglue or construction foam) to protest against political decisions and government measures on climate protection. At the beginning of 2024, the group announced that it would choose other forms of protest in future.

Tables 1 and 2 illustrate these elements using *Klimakleber* as an example, showcasing its lexicographic descriptions of discourse, domain, background, and evaluation.¹²

¹² Both tables form a distinct dictionary section, so that information can be consulted together. Each entry goes beyond the details listed here and also includes a definition, grammar, frequency, development, word formation products, integration in system, examples, and typical constructions.

Table 2

Information about discourse and emotions for headword *Klimakleber* in IDS Neo²⁰²⁰⁺*Klimakleber*

Öffentliche Diskussion/Brisanz		Public discussion/controversies	
Die Bewertung der Aktionen von Klimaklebern hängt von der persönlichen Perspektive auf Aktivismus, Umweltschutz und Einstellungen zur Klimakrise ab. In der öffentlichen Diskussion geht es vor allem darum, wie sinnvoll die Art des Protestes durch zivilen Ungehorsam ist (z. B. durch Festkleben an Straßen, Beschmutzen von Kunstwerken/Gebäuden etc.) und wie viel sie bewirkt.		The evaluation of the actions of climate activists depends on personal opinions of activism, environmental protection, and attitudes towards the climate crisis. In public debate, the main focus is on how meaningful the form of protest through civil disobedience is (e.g. by sticking things to streets, smearing artworks/buildings, etc.) and how much impact it has.	
Befürworter:innen	Gegner:innen	Proponents	Opponents
Befürworter:innen der Aktionen hingegen merken an, dass radikalere Protestformen besser dafür geeignet sind, sowohl Politik als auch die allgemeine Öffentlichkeit auf die Klimakrise aufmerksam zu machen und sie zum Handeln zu bewegen. Die teils spektakulären Aktionen der Klimakleber unterstreichen die Dringlichkeit des Handelns, sie fordern die Gesellschaft zum Nachdenken und zu Gesprächen über Klimawandel, Umweltschutz und zukunftsfähige Lebensweisen heraus. Insgesamt kann so das öffentliche Bewusstsein für die Klimakrise geschärft werden.	Gegner:innen halten die Aktionen der Klimakleber beispielsweise für „sinnlos“ und „störend“. Sie argumentieren z. B. damit, dass die Proteste den Straßenverkehr stark einschränken, was u. a. zu Verzögerungen bei Transporten im Rettungswagen etc. führt und somit Gefahren birgt. Typische Kritik schließt auch die Auffassung ein, dass die Aktionen der Klimakleber eine Störung der öffentlichen Ordnung darstellen, bei der Unbeteiligte belastet werden. Letztendlich haben die Handlungen Auswirkungen auf die Öffentlichkeit und Aktivisten werden häufig negativ bewertet.	Supporters of the campaigns welcome more radical forms of protest as they are better suited to drawing the attention of both politicians and the general public to the climate crisis and encouraging them to take action. The sometimes spectacular actions of the climate activists emphasise the urgency of action; they challenge society to reflect and engage in discussions about climate change, environmental protection, and sustainable lifestyles. Overall, this can raise public awareness of the climate crisis.	Opponents, for example, consider the climate activists' actions to be “pointless” and “disruptive”. They argue, for example, that the protests severely restrict road traffic, which leads to delays in ambulance transport, etc. and therefore harbours risks. Typical criticism also includes the view that the actions of the climate activists constitute a disturbance of public order in which bystanders are inconvenienced. As a result, the actions have an impact on the public and activists often receive negative comments and views.

The semantic documentation of controversial headwords causing ambivalent emotions is unconventional in the new reference guide IDS Neo²⁰²⁰⁺. Nevertheless, with regard to German lexicography, it is not new as such. In the context of historical discourse lexicography (cf. Kämper, 2006), the description of emotions has always played an important part. IDS Neo²⁰²⁰⁺ integrates specific elements of discourse lexicography, capturing aspects such as the lexicographic depiction of lexical discourse representatives, participants of discourse, the network of topically required semantic relationships, and social

and historic settings of contextual usage (Kämper, 2006, p. 350). However, so far these aspects have only been employed for historical keywords, not for neologisms.

Not every new word is a discourse-relevant or emotion-entrenched lexical item. But currently we face more crisis-related discourses and new terms that capture a range of views in societal dialogues across ideological, cultural, and political spectrums.¹³ The new resource incorporates both linguistic and extra-linguistic information, offering in-depth narrative commentaries for discourse-bound terms to interested users. As Potenko (2023) emphasises:

Emotions are fixed in memory and reproduced not arbitrarily, but together with those extra -linguistic phenomena that caused them. Emotions are connected with thinking, knowledge of the world (p. 19).

Emotions, which are ingrained in society and daily conversations, form an integral part of the collective linguistic consciousness and reality, and they are an important part of the lexical meaning and any adequate lexicographic description.

5 Summary and outlook

In this paper, we have explored the role of neologisms in encoding emotions across different societal discourses. By analysing three specific neologisms from climate, energy, and immigration discourses, we have demonstrated how new words not only reflect different emotions but also actively shape public dialogue and perception. Many more neologisms function accordingly, e.g. *Covidiot* (“covidiot”) and *Maskenmuffel* (“grumpy mask refuser”), examples from Covid discourse. The verb *scholzen* (“to scholz around”) is taken from current political debates. The verb *gender* (“to gender”) can cause outrage among some members of the speech community, and the discourse of the Russia-Ukraine War has led to a surge of emotion-laden words such as *Spezialmilitäroperation* (“special military operation”) and *Ruschist/Raschist* (“rushist/rashist”). Often, they reflect the disapproval or approval of speakers towards various objects, facts, and phenomena in the real world. Emotionality constitutes a semantic part of speech and through this, some new words can trigger unexplained and ineffable feelings amongst speakers. Most are not emotion terms, but words filled with emotions causing some sentiment when used or heard in conversations. These can be fully intended, coined by politicians to manipulate the public perception about a controversial issue. New lexical units are used to express disdain or benevolence, to show positive or negative sentiment. Alternatively, emotive aspects can gradually develop under the influence of a number of extra-linguistic factors and changing discourse narratives from different views on a subject. Neologisms can be affective, conveying or intensifying thoughts with language.

Different linguistic markers indicate emotiveness and sentiment. As such, the affective content and the interaction between social and linguistic dynamics can be detected and analysed in corpus data. Collocations, concordances are fundamental methods for com-

¹³ Neologisms of the 1990s for instance are less discourse-entrenched as many typically refer to technological advancements such as computers and the internet.

prehensive semantic analysis. Word embeddings is a novel method for exploring neighbouring clusters and semantic spaces within discourses. It can add to the usage-based construction of emotivity. Overall, corpus-guided and computational tools proved useful in the extraction of patterns that exhibit affectivity and semantically similar emotion-filled words. The results described here and received through corpora mainly draw on press texts. These show how attitudes towards some new concepts are being articulated. It would certainly be interesting to investigate other data sources, composed of a wider range of texts. Alternatively, social media texts or parliamentary speeches could also reveal some insights into preference of chosen sentiment with regards to new political key words.

This paper has argued and demonstrated that details on emotions are discourse-dependent and need to be included in the semantic description in lexicography. The intrinsic relationship between word, meaning, context, discourse, and emotion should be reflected in dictionary entries other than in abbreviations, short usage notes, or non-standardised style labels. Here, empirical approaches support lexicographers and online presentation allows for more innovative and emotion-inclusive documentations of meaning and discourse.

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Biased framing and opinion formation in persuasive emotional appeal

The focus of the paper is to study biased framing as a tool in persuasive appeal primarily of the emotional type. The research materials are Polish and English online newspapers reporting an event of fire in the House of Trade Unions in Odessa (Ukraine) on May 2, 2014. The first part of the paper introduces the concept of an Emotion Event (after Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson, 2013) as a frame of particular emotion expression to explicate the function of Aristotelian rhetorical persuasive appeals, in particular emotional appeal (Aristotle 350 BCE). The second part of the paper focuses on the notions of *opinions* (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk et al., 2023) and types of *bias*, explicated in Hoehn et al. (2023) with reference to linguistic biases

and indicates the position of emotional appeal among other bias instruments in discourse. The analytical part of the paper presents online newspaper texts in English and Polish, in the framing of the Odessa fire event and shows the position and function of persuasive emotional appeal both in the verbal and some visual framing of the articles. The conclusions show potential of persuasive *multimodal emotionality* (see Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Pęzik, 2021 for *persuasive emotionality*) to raise emotional arousal of, mainly negative, emotion valence type with reference to the main events and their personae as well as a formation of biased opinion judgments in the readership.

Keywords: bias, emotion, framing, multimodality, online press, opinion, persuasive emotionality, valence

1 Introduction

Biased media framing as a tool in persuasive appeals is primarily of the emotional type in a larger context of Emotion Events (after Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson, 2013). Such events typically function as a frame of particular emotion expressions serving to explicate the function of Aristotelian rhetorical persuasive appeals. Media article texts are of a dialectic character – they express *opinions*, typically public opinions of a segment of society, in the context of emotionally constructed Opinion Events on the one hand, (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk et al., 2023), and on the other, they impose and shape such opinions with the audiences. To prove effective, media opinionated texts are framed in terms of various biases (Hoehn et al, 2023). The present paper indicates the position of emotional appeal as one of the bias instruments in discourse in a dramatic fire event. The research materials are Polish online newspaper articles reporting on this event of

fire in the House of Trade Unions in Odessa (Ukraine) on May 2, 2014, and explicitly or implicitly indicating its causes and arsonists. The study identifies discourses which possess the appeal to emotions as persuasive tactics and discusses relevant *cognitive biases* insinuated in the examined media texts. The framing of the Odessa fire event thus shows the position and function of persuasive emotional appeal, particularly in the assumed affects of verbal data, but also making reference to the visual messages in the articles illustrated by what is claimed to be authentic visual materials.

In emotion studies, three components of emotions are traditionally distinguished: valence (the pleasantness of the stimulus), arousal (the intensity of emotion provoked by the stimulus), and dominance (the degree of control exerted by the stimulus).

The discussion is focused on potential of such persuasive *multimodal emotionality* (see Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Pęzik, 2021, used as *emotional persuasive tactics*), excerpting textual examples from the Polish and English reports to raise emotional arousal of, mainly negative, emotion valence type with reference to the main events and their personae as well as a formation of biased opinion judgments in the article readership.

2 The event in focus: research questions and methodology

The narratives about this event refer to a fire event on May 2, 2014 in Odessa (Ukraine), in which a number of people died in riots between Russia-oriented supporters of Ukrainian federation and West-oriented supporters of Ukrainian unity. Many people died in the House of the Trade Unions, which caught fire. The online articles analysed reported on this fact, providing their own interpretations of the event, taking one or the other side of the rioting crowds.

The original data were collected as a dataset of 68 online articles, distributed over nine years (2014-2022), in four languages spoken by four authors of our first publication connected with this event (Hoehn et al., 2023) – Russian, English, Polish and German.¹

The present study exemplifies the questions mainly in the Polish media texts, quoting the other sources for contrastive purposes.

3 Opinions

In the definitions of the concept of opinion what is emphasized are properties of *subjectivity* and *agency* as well as its relation to *truth* or *facts*. In Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk et al. (2023) we assumed a *Lakovian* (Lakoff, 1987) *radial category* approach to opinion, with a few prototypical members, all of which are interlinked by the relation of *family resemblance* (Wittgenstein, 1953). The cognitive mechanism of *construal of an object* in discourse from the point of view of the opinion holder (conceptualiser) is associated with an evaluative, often moral – *stance*, expressing an axiological position of the opinion holder towards the opinion target (Hunston, 2000, p. 5; Van linden, 2012, p. 43), hinging on the degree of possibility, probability or necessity.

¹ The whole dataset is available in Zenodo <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7322863> 562 Dripping the Poison

Opinions vary depending on an entire context. Therefore, it is not sufficient to define it as an expression of a stance. It should be perceived rather as a semiotic act, embedded in a social-cultural context, of expressing one's judgement on a subject, person, property or event (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk et al., 2023), identifiable through their characteristic lexical, syntactic, and semantic/pragmatic markers.

Due to their moral and epistemic characteristics, opinions are used as argumentation tools and serve the function of persuasion. Nevertheless, since they are often based on impressions, incomplete knowledge or faulty reasoning, they cannot be considered fully-fledged arguments. Instead, they belong to what Aristotle dubbed *persuasive appeals*, used as instruments in the case of somewhat differing or entirely opposite judgments, assessments, or beliefs, and are based either on conclusions and interpretations of objective facts (knowledge), on linguistic interpretations of factual or non-factual statements, or on personal or communal judgments, or else on preferences and biases, not based on or related to evidence. Opinions can be expressed verbally or multimodally via body language, behaviour; they can be expressed directly (explicit opinions) or via indirect ways (implicit opinions).

Both positive opinions that consider only good aspects or properties of a person, situation, and negative ones, identifying bad ones, can either be more objective, or can be *biased*, i. e., relying on an unreasonable or unjustified preference or dislike based on one's own or (an)other person(s)' judgments concerning particular targets. Opinions can be either expressed explicitly or else expressed in a way that is not obvious, i. e., implicitly.

What is also particularly important for the present study is the fact that opinions can be either individual or they can be communal – public – shared by or originated with members of a group or community, which is an aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about a particular topic, expressed by a significant proportion of a community.

In our case, we analyse different presentations of the same objective event – the Odessa fire. However, its interpretation, particularly answers to the questions of who set the fire and why, are the matter of individual opinions, insinuated or explicitly expressed in the online paper texts.

It is the authors of these articles in the publications addressed to the internet community, guided by the ideological preferences of their bosses that create the particular positive and negative targets and use persuasive appeals of different kind to transfer the preferred event interpretation: either anti-Ukrainian or anti-Russian. They create contexts of selected preferred conditions of the Odessa event to *frame* it in a preferred context and cause its particular interpretation., i. e., they call for such a basis of the background knowledge that is intended by the authors, and by involving a particular set of prior knowledge and definite cognitive biases with the readers, new knowledge is structured according to the preferred design. In other words, readers will identify or develop a particular framing (to use Goffman's 1974 terminology) coherent with the interpretation of the new information. Both the selection of (parts of) event, their explicit or implicit evaluation as well as emotional entourage, will cause the development of the imposed, seemingly logical and coherent, event interpretation. This is an unavoidable outcome, as

frame imposition makes the cognitive interpretative effort lower (Entman, 1993), thus what seems to be ‘commonsensical’. In this way, media, whether traditional mass media or social media significantly influence how we conceptualize conflict situations (Oliver & Wong, 2003; Stewart et al., 2011;).

On the other hand, the puzzle put forward already in the post-Odessa fire article headlines, namely ‘who set the fire?’, acts as an attractive eye-catcher, inviting the search for the answers in the context of human tragedy, threat, fear and aggression.

4 Persuasive appeals and emotions in the media opinion framing

Aristotle’s persuasive appeals (350 BC) present an intricate interplay between logic and emotion to sway an audience. Out of the three key appeals involving ethos, logos, and pathos, ethos, the appeal to credibility, establishes the speaker’s authority and trustworthiness, logos, the appeal to logic, employs reason and evidence to construct a compelling argument. However, it is pathos, the appeal to emotion, that often holds the greatest power to persuade. By evoking empathy, fear, joy, or anger, speakers can ignite a deep emotional response within their audience, making their message more salient. While a well-crafted argument grounded in logic is essential, it is the emotional resonance that transforms a mere presentation into a persuasive force. By putting together these three appeals, speakers can create persuasive messages that resonate with their audience and inspire action. Nevertheless, it is the appeal to emotions that plays the most conspicuous role in the persuasive act. In media too, where one of the major aims of media products is to attract a larger part of audiences and reinforce or change their stances concerning a particular person, event or properties, it is the emotionality raising with the audiences that play the essential role and is the focus of our analysis on the Odessa fire event reports in the present study.

In other words, to get support of a majority of the public in their pre-existing beliefs or change their existing *schemas* media impose a particular event framing, e.g., by changing its causal cognitive links. (Scheufele, 1999a) or by establishing new event schemata (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Such shifts result in attitudinal change both to more positive affect such as empathy towards some society parts or in some other cases they evoke distrust, fear, anger or eventually hate towards those they think are guilty of some undesired states of affairs.

As remarked in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk et al. (in press) in social media, where the identities of the writer and the audience are often fuzzy or indeterminate, the pathetic appeal plays a particularly significant role. The online article authors frame the content from their own perspective and activate in the readers particular culture-specific stereotypes. They appeal both to positive emotions of compassion, enhancing some wish to help the oppressed and, on the other, to complex negative emotions such as those of fear, hate, dislike, disdain, grief and sadness, which can be combined in clusters.

5 Clustering of emotions

As proposed in numerous publications on emotions (e.g., Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989, p. 85),

emotion research focuses on the identification of emotional experiences, the investigation of the concept of emotions and their experience, as e.g., in cognitive linguistics (semantics and pragmatics in particular), as well as on a description of how the emotion experiencer feels about a particular emotion or emotion cluster in terms of their arousal, appraisal, power to control it or expectedness (Scherer, 2013).

The clustering of emotions is a phenomenon in which two or more emotions cohere together in a group of emotions and have a relatively close conceptual proximity for the emotion experiencers, meaning that the discrete features of these emotions are more likely to co-occur and maybe influence each other in the emotional experiences (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson, *in press*). Such emotions as fear, induced by a threat, can be causally linked to the activation of other negative emotions, associated with it, such as panic, but also other neighbouring emotions such as anger, which might further lead to evoking the sense of dissatisfaction, hostility and hatred.

At the same time fear and hostility can co-occur with the emotions of compassion and empathy towards those who are perceived to be the victims of the act, injured by those who the experiencer started to fear and hate.

Such direct stimuli as reading the Odessa fire texts and, in a number of cases, seeing what is claimed to be authentic visual materials (pictures or video clips, (putative) quotations from real or fake interviews of direct witnesses of the Odessa events) act on the audiences. Those effects are both internally and externally manifested by means of the readers' physiological and physical symptoms accompanied by affective states (internally experienced emotion (cluster)), cognitive operations (conceptual embodiment, blending, metaphor) and possible experiencer's external reaction, called an 'exbodiment phase', in terms of both language as well as non-verbal bodily reactions. In the case of Odessa fire online media reports, the exbodiment phase would result in the state of the audiences being persuaded and convinced about the guilt attribution (Andersen, 1971; Bettinghaus & Cody, 1987) with respect to who set the fire in Odessa, which parties in the conflict are the victims and which are guilty of murder – the aim that has been reached by the authors of the media texts.

The interpretation of the effect of the negative pathos in such and similar contexts also includes the impact of emotions on the possible media framing effects and on the type of information processing. Negative emotions weaken the urge for a systematic, logical message processing, and activate more incidental and less orderly model of heuristic processing of information, promoting mental shortcuts and approximate solutions (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken et al., 1989). They tend to judge the likelihood of an event based on how well it fits the evoked stereotype, particularly most often used when the cognitive resources, as in the case of Odessa fire, are limited, and they are under the cognitive load to process some information that evokes fright, horror and fear. Such a

complex context exerts an impact on the audience's beliefs, judgments and evaluative preferences (Hunston & Thompson, 2000).

5.1 Emotional persuasion amplification

Threat is a forerunner of a number of clustered emotions such as fear, disgust, anger, and hate. Fear, on the other hand, is an after-reaction to a dangerous situation, so it is from a semiotic perspective and anticipative (discursive) construction of threats and other emotion clusters. It was observed by Lotmn (2009, p. 1219) that fear constitutes a specific and powerful type of semiosis, creating "new associations between things and signs, as well as between the signs themselves, and substantially alters existing meanings and structures". In a presentation at a Semiotic conference in Warsaw, Viidalepp (2024) proposed that as a result, in a situation of fear, societies can be more susceptible to associations, actions and conclusions based on logic and values differing from the ordinary. In such contexts, criteria of morality connect and interplay with epistemic stances and existential – truth-conditional – stances. These circumstances can lead towards unifying and organizing of social groups by means of the shared circumstantial and emotional properties.

5.2 Ideologization

As argued in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2022) some of the social media interactions can be considered an extension of the discourse concept of *dialogue*. Traditionally dialogue is considered to involve two individuals, while in the world of social media, apart from one-to-one exchanges, there are dynamically evolving communities of users who think and speak alike, and as a consequence, they behave in online discussions as *collective individuals*, who, reassuring one another in their beliefs and opinions, talk inwards with one another in *one* voice, often in analogy to a *monologic* fashion within one limited discourse space.

If such a community of online users happens to come across another one, voicing opposite views, both act as two collective agents, verbally confronting each other in an external, outwards way. The perspective then adopted in the present paper views interaction in terms of extended *dialogical thought*. Using language, either an individual or, more often, a *collective social subject* is engaged in an internal, inwards dialogue, or else in an outwards, typically confrontative one, with the other one. These subjects act in a community composed of the individuals "being experienced by each other one as self, and individuals outside the set, as other" (Gleicher et al., 2011, p. 381).

In the case of the Odessa fire, we witness a cognitive world construction and pragmatic intention conveyed by dialogic participants, interpreted in this sense of collective social subjects engaged in what can be considered varied dialogical exchanges. However, it is typically the case that either of them represents a confrontational, ideologized transfer of what each participant claims their 'world' to be 'a true report of the true events' (Dijk, 2003., Fairclough, 1992).

6 Analysis of the data

6.1 Context

Emotion (Pathos) Events are situated in a given event context. As argued above in section 6. (see (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson, 2013)), one cannot observe manifestations of a unitary emotion of single fear, joy, anger or sadness, but rather their complex clusters, with the particular variant experienced as products of the interaction of *core affect* and the *activation of conceptual knowledge by a specific context* (e.g., in terms of a particular Opinion Event), thus whole clusters of emotional experiences as a response to the original event, shared also by the readers of these articles.

6.2 Collective emotions

In Section 6.1. Viidalepp (2024) was quoted in connection with his proposal concerning the circumstances which may contribute to the development of social group collective emotionality as a result of experiencing fear. In his recent study Gerhard Thonhauser (2022) proposes that it is the dynamics of *mutual affecting* and *being affected* that *might couple individuals such that macro-level self-organization of a distributed cognitive system emerges*. The fact that such a collective emerges, and experiences the process of distributed affect, as the author concludes, the involved individuals are stimulated to enact emotions together.

Pascal D. König et al. (2022), basing their study on ratings made during the debate uncover that such groups might experience emotionality that have differing emotive valence depending on their party identity. Furthermore, multiple stances maintained by group participants (Du Bois, 2007), can integrate into a coherent blended viewpoint (Dancygier & Vandelotte, 2017).

7 Cognitive biases and their instruments

The concept of bias and a typology of bias instruments are varied and refer to various aspects of the language and discourse. In their thorough discussion of the evolution of cognitive biases Haselton et al. state (2015, p. 725): “The mind translates the properties of the world [...] into useful units of information. One of the most dramatic demonstrations of the role of the mind in our apprehension of the world is the existence of cognitive biases. [...] Where biases exist, individual draw inferences or adopt beliefs where evidence for doing so in a logically sound manner is either insufficient or absent.”

The analysis of the basically Polish media data performed in the sections to follow can be considered in terms of the instruments of bias originally developed in Hoehn et al (2023) and proceeds further to take into consideration cognitive biases that are likely to characterize the text receivers. In Diagram 1., cited from Hoehn et al. (2023), emotional persuasion is one of the possible forms of emotional biases, combining visual and lexical sources and having a number of other manifestations:

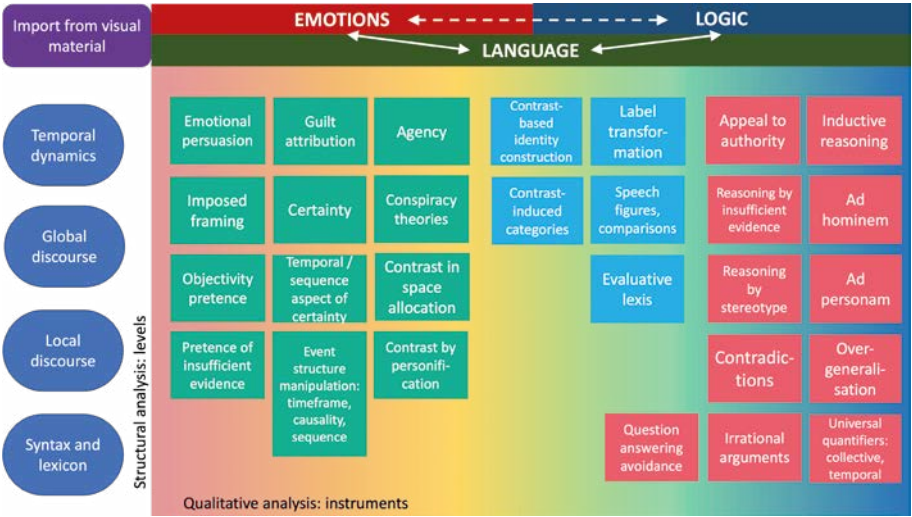


Figure 1. A typology of bias instruments (Hoehn et al., 2023)

Presented in Figure 1. is a typology of biases, in which emotional bias includes, apart from emotional persuasive strategies, also guilt attribution, as well as the imposition of the dimension of particular temporality and event sequences on some discursive materials to obtain a desired interpretation of facts.

Cognitive biases, as known in literature, can be of the unconscious (proper cognitive biases) and conscious types (Haselton et al., 2015; Lopez, 2021). The former are basically unintentional and are an outcome of our attempts to simplify the processing of information – they are part of heuristic thinking. However, they can be exploited by others to make information receivers interpret the message in a biased manner. Conscious biases on the other hand, positive or negative, are intentional – one is aware of them (Lang, 2019). In the present study we show cases in which online media authors of articles on the Odessa fire either make use of their own conscious biases primarily to deceive the readers as analysed in Hoehn et al. (2023). In other cases, some of the authors of journal articles, particularly the articles written in Polish, are likely to exploit the audiences’ unconscious cognitive biases (i.e., emotive ones) to persuade the readers towards the authors’ own interpretation of the events.

It is also relevant to mention here a relationship between emotion and cognition and the fact that emotional valence and intensity, combined with an evaluative assessment, most likely to exert an impact on the structure and dynamics of the argumentation patterns, can explicitly or implicitly influence the interpretation of events (e.g., Onyeador, et al., 2021). In this way, emotional valence and arousal shape and control personal beliefs and/or situations to achieve desired outcomes (Fairclough, 1989).

Such cognitive biases are systematic patterns of deviation from norm or rationality in judgment/opinions. They are also systematic errors in thinking that can affect our

perception, judgment, and decision-making. These biases can manifest differently in linguistic and visual contexts (Haselton et al., 2015), likely to be considered in the media context to influence the audience's cognitive and affective reactions, in the present case, to persuade the audiences to support the pro-Russian or anti-Russian, pro-Ukrainian position.

In this section what is presented is a repertory of possible biases likely to be present in the text authors in terms of conscious, controlled biases, as well as those of the cognitive unconscious type, characteristic of most of the message receivers.

(i) Framing effect:

The way a question or statement is phrased and meanings expressed, can significantly influence opinions

(ii) Availability heuristics:

Overestimation of the likelihood of events that are easily recalled or come to mind. This can influence our judgments based on language that evokes vivid imagery or strong emotions.

combines with bias (iii)

(iii) Lexical selection (word and phraseology) bias:

The use of particular words and phrases is likely to activate an emotional persuasive effect towards the active agents responsible for or involved in particular actions. The lexical biases can be a result of both intended, conscious biases characterising the text authors as well as constitute part and parcel of the receivers' repertory of cognitive biases of the emotional persuasive type.

Here are examples of the sentences and phrases from the analysed materials which can strongly resonate with the above bias types, as some words and lexical combinations are characterised by having inherent biases which cause higher emotional arousal (e.g., *murder*).

Some other words (e.g., *skoki* 'jumps' in (1) below) are only biased when they occur in a particular context and neighbourhood.

(1)

- Spaleni żywcem, zwęglone zwłoki, zginęło przez zaczadzenie
'Burned alive, charred corpse, died of carbon monoxide poisoning'
- Skoki z okien, krwawe rozruchy
'Jumping from windows, bloody riots'
- Gwałty na spalonych kobietach, Jesteśmy w stanie wojny
'Rapes of burned women. We are at war'
- Ludzie spłonęli, Zamieszki się nasilają
'People burned; Riots escalate'

- Zwisają głowa w dół, Skuleni na schodach
Hanging upside down, Crouching on the stairs
- Leżą przysypani zgłiszczami, zwęglone zwłoki, zginęli przez zaczadzenie
They are lying covered with ashes, charred corpses, died of carbon monoxide
- To jest krew naszych dzieciaków
'This is the blood of our kids'

The lexical values can be considered one of the strongest stimuli of the negative interpretation of the state of Odessa events. They can be considered biases if the attribution of such negative senses is unreflexively performed towards one of the sides, without solid arguments making reference to the actual state of affairs in Odessa in 2014. Together with the Anchoring bias referred to below, they might decide about a particular interpretation of the data and build a real of fictitious picture of the events.

(iv) Anchoring bias:

People tend to rely heavily on the first piece of information they encounter when making decisions. The articles headlines can thus impact how we interpret subsequent information:

- (2) 02.05.2014 Krew na ulicach Odessy. Wielu zabitych
'02.05.2014 Blood on the streets of Odessa. Many killed'

(v) Confirmation bias:

The Confirmation Bias is closely linked to the Lexical and Anchoring Biases. It refers to the information that confirms our existing beliefs and ignores or downplays evidence that contradicts them. This bias is connected with the world of reality the reader entertains prior to be exposed to the text. One type of such a preconception refers to various types of stereotypes and stereotypical beliefs, particularly of national, ethnic and cultural types in the present case.

Stereotyping involves preconceived notions about groups of people and can affect how we interpret language and assign meaning to words. This can lead to biased perceptions and communication breakdowns.

Some evidence of impact of the selection of particular lexis on the audience can be provided by the data in the form of affective values investigated by Bradely and Lang (1999) with regard to the lexis evaluated for dominance ratings for pleasantness, arousal, and dominance for each word rated in their ANEW list of English words, and averaged across all subjects. The word frequencies, quoted after Kucera and Francis (1967) norms, together with the means and standard deviations for the emotion features of pleasure, arousal, and dominance ratings for each word for male and female subjects bring about some support for the possible effect the vocabulary exerts on the English language users.

The lexis used in the Odessa event materials have high affective values for the English native speakers to quote just a few examples (Bradley & Lang, 1999):

Table 1. Affective norms for English words (Bradley & Lang, 1999, p. 4)

Description	Word number	Valence Mean (SD)	Arousal Mean (SD)	Dominance Mean (SD)	Word Frequency
burn	586	2.73 (1.72)	6.22 (1.91)	4.22 (1.83)	15
dead	588	1.94 (1.76)	5.73 (2.73)	2.84 (2.32)	174
death	100	1.61 (1.40)	4.59 (3.07)	3.47 (2.50)	27
invader	823	3.05 (2.01)	5.50 (2.40)	4.00 (2.60)	1
suffocate	418	1.56 (0.96)	6.03 (3.19)	3.44 (2.81)	1

The words *death* is associated with the lowest negative valence, *burn*, *suffocate*, *invader* and *dead* – with the highest arousal, while *dead*, *death*, (also having the highest frequency in the texts) and *suffocate* too – with the lowest degree of control (the criterion of dominance).

Each of these words presented in Table 1. shows also a high frequency of use in the English Odessa materials. The Polish words affective values (Imbir, 2015) provide similar values for such lexical forms. Furthermore, it is also proposed by Jarymowicz and Imbir (2015) that the lexical biases can be related to reflective sources of emotions, governed by readers' axiological standards. The readers' recognition of the indications of good (thrill, admiration, feeling noble) and evil (breach of rights, breach of human dignity) can be blurred in frightening and highly emotional contexts (such as the Odessa fire event) due to misleading indicators of the agents and victims' identity membership attribution and, in consequence, faulty evaluation of the state of affairs.

(vi) Visual exposure bias

Mere Exposure Effect: Repeated exposure to a stimulus can make it more appealing. This can influence our preferences for visual information, such as logos, images, or advertisements trustworthy.

There is a general opinion that visual information is stronger and more persuasive than verbal information. However, there is also some evidence leading to a more nuanced conclusion (Nagel et al., 2012). The authors present a perspective on such cases, based on their findings, which shows that the audience's' immediate impressions were mainly influenced by verbal communication, especially if the issues discussed and the argumentative structure used are solid and directly refer to the audience's wellbeing (such as in some political matters).

Nevertheless, both the verbal material and the correlation of the visual data with the language used, combined with the implications present in the text, are clearly an important joint stimulus towards development of the interpretation desired by the original authors of the media texts.

(vii) *Illusory correlation and dishonest substitution:*

- A relationship between two things that do not actually exist can be identified by the audience. This can influence the interpretations of both visual and verbal information.

Such dishonest substitutions, most clearly intended by the authors, can occur between the names of two, similarly sounding names of locations: *Katyń* and *Chatyń* -, the spelling of which is often transcribed in the languages using Roman alphabet as Khatyn, while the Katyn (Poland) massacre during the II WW is attributed to Russians, the Chatyn (Belarus) crime was performed by Nazi Germany.

(viii) *Trustworthiness illusion*

Connected with the dishonest substitution biases is the trustworthiness illusion, in which verbal information is supported by what looks like trustworthy visual materials, as in the examples in the present section below, or else it makes reference to often putative 'eye-witnesses', to the interviews with the named individuals or to reflections of 'well-informed' sources, whose identity or trustworthiness cannot be verified. Such a context can be seen in the below examples of references to pictures, video materials or interviews:

(3)

- *Poniższy film pokazuje świadków mówiących o ponad 100 ofiarach zabitych w Domu Związków Zawodowych.*
'The video below shows witnesses speaking of more than 100 victims killed at the Trade Union House.'
- *Według vlad-dolohov.livejournal.com liczba zabitych osób może wynosić około 300. Większość ludzi, szczególnie dzieci i kobiety zostały zaszlachtowane na śmierć toporami i pałkami w podziemiach Domu Związków Zawodowych.*
'According to vlad-dolohov.livejournal.com the number of people killed may be about 300. Most people, especially children and women, were slaughtered to death with axes and clubs in the basement of the Trade Union House.'
- *Liczba osób, które 2 maja zginęły w starciach w Odessie w pożarze w Domu Związków Zawodowych, przewyższa setkę i są wśród nich dzieci – twierdzi lider ruchu społecznego „Jugo-Wostok”, Oleg Cariow.*
'The number of people who died in clashes in Odessa on May 2 in a fire at the House of Trade Unions exceeds a hundred, and there are children among them – says the leader of the social movement 'Yugo-Vostok', Oleg Tsariv.'
- *Jak powiedział, ukraińskie władze robią wszystko, aby ukryć ślady swojego przestępstwa. „Odnosi się wrażenie, że ludzie byli zabijani – a patrząc na to, jak rozebrane są kobiety, możliwe, że były gwałcone – w całym budynku. I dopiero potem oblewano ich koktajlami Mołotowa i podpalano, dlatego ludzkie ciała spłonęły fragmentami” – powiedział Cariow.*

‘As he said, the Ukrainian authorities are doing everything to hide the traces of their crime. “You get the impression that people were killed – and looking at how the women are undressed, it is possible that they were raped – throughout the building. And only then were they doused with Molotov cocktails and set on fire, which is why human bodies burned in fragments,” Tsarev said’.

The techniques of *identification* and *self-referencing* (de Graaf, 2023), i. e., personalization of experiences such as e. g., *I personally saw this and can recognize these people*, seem to function as a successful instrument to reinforce the truthfulness conviction and add credibility in regard to the factual status of the presented materials.

The persuasive power of the input materials is not ‘objectively’ present in the visual data or does not need to be an objective presentation of the Odessa events. It emerges and develops, accompanied by the emotional persuasive tactics, and by the knowledge of the cognitive biases the audiences are likely to possess.

8 Discussion and conclusions

The stimuli in the form of the texts and visual materials are likely to exert a strong impact on the readers. The selection of lexis and visual materials, their affective values and the reliance on the readers’ cognitive biases have a strong potential to exert on the readers an impact desired by the authors.

The discussion centred on the strategic use of verbal and visual materials in online papers to mostly implicitly influence public opinion and align it with specific press ideologies, congruent with their views on Russia-Ukraine conflicting perspectives. The study explored how these elements can be manipulated to frame messages in a way that resonates with worldviews and biases.

Verbal framing techniques involve the careful selection of words and phrases to evoke specific emotions or associations. For example, using loaded language, such as “massacre” or “death,” can significantly impact how readers perceive a situation. Additionally, the reliance on presumed cognitive bases with the readers was considered to shape understanding and create persuasive narratives.

Visual framing, on the other hand, leverages the power of images to convey messages quickly and effectively. The choice of photographs, illustrations, and infographics can be highly influential. Carefully selected images can evoke strong emotional responses and reinforce a particular narrative. The strategic placement of visual elements within an article can also guide the reader’s attention and emphasize certain aspects of the story.

The discussion also touched on the importance of considering the target audience’s existing beliefs and values in terms of their confirmation biases. By tailoring the message to resonate with their worldview, online papers can increase the likelihood of influencing their opinions. This can be achieved using familiar cultural references, shared experiences, and appeals to common values. The use of more or less subtle persuasion tactics to promote a particular ideology, especially when it may not be entirely transparent to the reader, has been discussed emphasising the potential for these techniques to be used to spread misinformation and distort the truth, as can be concluded from a comparison

with the more objective media texts in the English and German online press in Hoehn et al. (2023) bias analysis.

The power of verbal and visual materials in shaping public opinion through online papers, though also for legitimate purposes, such as promoting social change or raising awareness, can also be misused to manipulate and deceive.

The conflicting data from articles in the other languages examined in Hoehn et al. 2023, (particularly in English and German), identify differences in the interpretation and guilt attribution with some other parties (e.g., police), which is often confirmed by independent observers. Therefore, one can propose that the ultimate intention of the analysed media sources in Polish, not always written by Polish authors, but translated from Russian or Ukrainian, as might be proposed on the basis of grammar and lexical inadequacies in the analysed texts, was not to present facts but rather to misinform the readers and persuade them about the credibility of the state of affairs descriptions, opinion stances and ideology represented in a particular article.

With time, the biases may be amplified (Hoehn et al., 2023), supported by further Odessa fire media reports, published online even decades after the Odessa fire event. In our study some of the authors manipulate the original Odessa data and manipulate the respective speakers' intuitions and feelings, creating the sense of threat, fear, hostility and rage. In the articles selected for the qualitative analysis in this study, the identification of those guilty of the fire, although impossible to perform, can be guided with the use of a number of techniques applied that can either be considered a fact, or can plausibly deceive the reader and lead them to faulty conclusions.

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Terror in Nairobi: (De)constructing salience, distance, and emotions in news discourse

In their selection of the events and issues to cover, journalists make assumptions as to what is newsworthy, and thus interesting, relevant, and emotionally engaging for the audience (Bell, 1991; Brighton & Foy, 2007; Bednarek & Caple, 2012). The news values attributed to these events are then enhanced verbally and visually, with journalistic choices of “what” to select and “how” to (re)present it being both ideologically motivated and ideologically constitutive (Kopytowska, 2015b). The present chapter focuses on the discursive construction of events and phenomena in the news, arguing that this process consists primarily in reducing various dimensions of *distance* between the audience and the reality represented (viz. spatial, temporal, epistemic, axiological, and emotional distance). The Media Proximity Approach drawing on the insights from Critical Discourse Studies, cognitive linguistics, and corpus linguistics, will thus be used here to revisit the notion of *newsworthiness* in the context of *distance*, *salience*, and *emotions* (Kopytowska, 2009, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2018, 2022; Tosik, 2024) and answer the following questions: (1) How are distance and salience encoded, transformed and manifested in the news discourse? (2) How are they related to the notion of newsworthiness? (3) How and what emotions are triggered depending on various dimensions of distance? The analyzed data encompasses 24 news articles from the *Sun*, 21 news reports from the *Daily Mirror*, and 16 articles from the *Daily Star* – the coverage of the Westgate shopping mall terrorist attack in Nairobi on 21 September 2013, which left 67 people dead. The qualitative and quantitative analysis covers lexical and grammatical contextual markers of proximization (as evidenced in keywords, concordances, and word sketches).

Keywords: *emotions, news, newsworthiness, salience, distance, proximization, Africa, terrorism*

1 Introduction

In the words of Thompson (1995, p. 216) “our experience of events which take place in contexts that are spatially and temporally remote, from strikes and demonstrations to massacres and wars, is an experience largely mediated by the institutions of mass communication”. Indeed, technological affordances of the media have significantly extended the reach and availability of events and phenomena beyond contexts of temporal and spatial copresence, enabling absent recipients to experience them indirectly in the comfort of their homes. The big challenge, however, that media outlets face as a result of general information overload and emotional overstimulation of contemporary public,

is how to make their audience interested and emotionally involved in the news they offer. Winning the attention war in an increasingly competitive and fragmented media landscape is highly contingent on maximizing the audience's engagement and retention.

Arguing that "[p]eople routinely survey their environment for things that are deviant or unusual because they pose potential threats", Shoemaker (1996, p. 32) links journalists' selection of deviant or bad news with this biological disposition. Due to the human brain's natural alertness to threats, information perceived as urgent and thus requiring immediate action or response becomes the primary focus for the audience. Accordingly, Baumeister et al. (2001, p. 323) argue that "bad is stronger than good", while Berger & Milkman (2012, p. 192) observe that content evoking strong emotions, whether positive (like awe) or negative (such as anger or anxiety), tends to be more engaging and viral.

Not surprisingly then, negativity is often referred to as "the basic news value" (Bell, 1991, p. 156) and "negative" vocabulary (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 48), also described as "disaster vocabulary" (Ungerer, 1997, p. 315), features prominently in the news. In their chronological analysis (2000–2019) of sentiment and emotion in 23 million headlines from 47 U.S. news media outlets, Rozado et al. (2022) show a growing proportion of headlines denoting anger, fear, disgust, and sadness and a decrease in emotionally neutral headlines (see also Soroka et al., 2015). Analyzing viral news stories, Robertson et al. (2023, p. 817) observe that negative headlines significantly boost consumption rates by increasing the click-through rate.

The present chapter posits that distance is a key factor within the interface between the negativity-, urgency-, and relevance-related stimuli and the audience's emotional involvement. Negative and urgent news stories are perceived as more relevant when they occur close to the audience due to their potential direct impact, which is well illustrated with another news value – proximity. With its geographical and cultural dimensions, proximity is related to Galtung & Ruge's (1965) concept of meaningfulness, cultural familiarity, and similarity of one country to another. The more remote a given event is, the more work has to be done to bridge the physical gap and make the distant feel more immediate, relevant, and relatable to the audience that might otherwise feel disconnected.

The coverage of Africa is a good example here, as the geographic distance between this continent and Western media consumers poses a challenge for making African stories feel relevant. Several decades ago, critics observed that, since the media tend to value conflict and crisis, in particular in the case of foreign news, it is only when serious crises or conflicts occur that the African continent receives any extensive coverage (cf. Fair, 1993; Sorenson, 1991; Hagos, 2000). Examining how Africa is depicted in Western media, these early critiques highlighted a prevailing tendency to portray the continent as beset by political and socio-economic turmoil, prone to violent conflicts (often depicted as irrational tribalism), afflicted by famine due to natural disasters, and reliant on Western humanitarian intervention (cf. Hawk, 1992; Benthall, 1993; Fair, 1993; Biko et al., 2000). Although there have been attempts to provide more contextually nuanced reporting, Western media still largely represent Africa in a negative light, relying on stereotypical and simplistic narratives that emphasize conflict and poverty-related crises (Wa'Njogu, 2009; Kopytowska, 2014; Bunce et al., 2016; Akinbobola, 2021; Chilwa &

Chiluwa, 2022). More recently, to capture the attention of international audiences, news stories about the continent emphasize urgent threats, such as terrorism, humanitarian crises (prompting population displacement), and health epidemics, framing these issues within a securitization discourse (Benton, 2017; Derradji & Madouni, 2022; Sakamoto, 2023). Depicted within “a discourse that carries within its core all forms of existential threat, such as promoting the threat of international terrorism” (Derradji & Madouni, 2022, p. 49), the continent thus emerges as a focal point for global (in)stability.

The present chapter examines the news-distance-emotions interface in the context of British media coverage of the Westgate terrorist attack in Kenya in 2013. Applying the Media Proximity Approach (Kopytowska, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2018, 2022; Tosik, 2024) to analyse the news articles published in the British tabloids – the *Sun*, the *Daily Mirror*, and the *Star* – we address the following questions: (1) How are distance and salience encoded, transformed and manifested in the news discourse about terrorism in East Africa? (2) How are they related to the notion of newsworthiness? (3) How and what emotions are triggered depending on various dimensions of distance? The analysis is preceded by three literature review sections. First of them focuses on the interface of newsworthiness and distance, discussing it from the perspective of the Media Proximity Approach. The second section is devoted to discursive strategies used by news outlets to capture audience attention and evoke emotions, ranging from lexical and grammatical choices in headlines to narrative structures. These will be linked to Ungerer’s (1997) principles and proximization triggers. The third section centres on the war on terror narrative within the context of Western media coverage of Africa.

2 Newsworthiness and distance

Since newsworthiness is not naturally inherent to events, news should be regarded as the end-product of a complex set of journalistic processes “which begin with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” (Hall, 1973, cit. in Fowler, 1991, p. 12). The news media select events for reporting according to a set of criteria of newsworthiness – news values (cf. Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Bell, 1991; Bednarek, 2006; Brighton & Foy, 2007; Bednarek & Caple, 2012). The term itself remains ambiguous, sometimes referring to selection criteria, sometimes to the standards of professional practice (e.g., balance, accuracy, and fairness), and sometimes to political or cultural norms promoted by news narratives (e.g., individualism). Hartmann & Husband (1976, p. 276) distinguished two kinds of characteristics that make events newsworthy. The first category includes conflict, threat and deviance, while the second is the potential of events and phenomena to be interpreted within a familiar framework or in terms of existing images, stereotypes and expectations. Importantly, while the way events are reported helps structure expectations, subsequent events conforming to these expectations are more likely to be selected than those that do not. Unusualness, seriousness, human interest and drama are also the factors determining the selection process.

The foundational study of news values by Galtung & Ruge (1965) has been revised and expanded by others. Drawing on their framework, Bell (1991), who added a number

of other factors making event newsworthy, distinguishes three groups of news values, the first related to the content of the news, the nature of events and actors, the second concerning the news process, and the third connected with the quality of the news text. Bednarek (2006; also Bednarek & Caple, 2012), who brings in another dimension – discursive construction of news values – argues that “[n]ewsworthiness is not inherent in events but established through language and image” (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 44).

Regarding distance as a notion that is central to news production, interpretation and effects, the Media *Proximity* Approach highlights the constituted and constitutive character of the distance-news values interface (Kopytowska, 2015b). While it is assumed that the salience of issues is contingent on distance in its physical and psychological sense (viz. spatial, temporal, epistemic, axiological, and emotional), proximization is defined the process of reducing the perceived distance between the audience and the news event.

Temporal distance, related to the news value of recency or timeliness, involves prioritizing recent events due to their immediacy and urgency (Roshco [1999/1975, p. 34]). Audiences are generally more interested in current events, which creates a sense of real-time engagement, both verbally and visually. Verbally, deictic expressions like “now,” “today,” and “currently” anchor the narrative in the present, while the use of present tense and progressive aspect suggests ongoing action, drawing attention to the unfolding nature of events. The perfective aspect bridges past events with their current relevance, reinforcing their ongoing significance. Lexical choices such as “breaking news,” “urgent,” and “crisis” further enhance temporal relevance by acting as proximization triggers. Kopytowska (2015b, p. 352) argues that an “ongoing present” (a concept introduced by Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2007, p. 37) is constructed by proximizing elements from the past (recency), present (currency), and future (imminence). Visual elements, including live broadcasts, countdowns, and real-time updates, complement these verbal strategies by providing continuous information, keeping the audience engaged and informed. Urgency heightens awareness, influencing how individuals process and prioritize information, often leading to stronger recall and more frequent discussions of such events.

Spatial distance refers to the geographical proximity of events and phenomena and Galtung & Ruge’s (1965) concept of meaningfulness, cultural familiarity and similarity between countries. Stories closer to the audience are often deemed more relevant, whereas distant events require additional framing to capture attention (e.g., emphasizing their global impact or potential threats). Epistemic distance (linked to cultural proximity) relates to the knowledge gap between audiences and events, where unfamiliar or complex issues are simplified through narrative techniques to bridge this gap (epistemic proximization). “Meaningful” can be understood as comprehensible and relevant within the cultural context of the audience. Hence, Cotter (2010, p. 49, as cited in Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 42) writes about prioritization of “local news” over “cognitively distant news”. Jungblut et al. (2024, p. 185) point to three types of factors behind country-level variation in news attention: logistical preconditions (such as presence of journalists or news agencies in a given location), event characteristics (location, deviance, significance, and conflict-related character), and factors derived from the homophily theory (McPherson et

al., 2001, p. 416) which can be understood in terms of “the degree of cultural, political, economic, geographic, and other types of proximity between the nation where a disruptive media event takes place and the nation in which a media organization is based”.

Proximity is closely related with the news value of relevance or impact, meaning that if it is to be newsworthy, a given event should be directly or indirectly related to viewers’ or readers’ situation. Relevance, which is thus about making the audience aware of the potential influence that the events covered can have on their lives (van Dijk, 1988, p. 122), may occasionally even take precedence over proximity (Fowler, 1991, p. 14). Occurring in a physically or culturally distant place an event may still be (presented as) carrying significant implications for the audience. This is where the notions of the epistemic (knowledge- and experience-related) and the axiological distance (value-related) come into play.

The consonance of a story can be understood as its compatibility with the audience’s preconceptions about the event, group or problem that the news narrative is about. “The more consonant the signal is with the mental image of what one expects to find, the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 68). Additionally, the audience’s understanding of an event is contingent on their ability to “incorporate” it into their “mental map”, that is culturally determined knowledge about the structure of reality (Hall et al., 1978), and interpret within the existing mental schemata (Hartmann & Husband, 1976, p. 276). For this reason, new events are often recontextualized so that they can be interpreted in the context of the old ones (epistemic proximization). Consonance, however, is also constructed in news discourse through language indicating expectedness, metaphors, comparison, and visual representations (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 67).

Axiological distance, related to Hester’s (1973) concept of “cultural affinity”, Shoemaker et al.’s (1991) notion of “ethnic similarity”, and McPherson et al.’s (2001) “homophily”, concerns the value systems and cultural differences between the audience and the subjects of news stories; media often align narratives with audience values to enhance relatability and interest (axiological proximization). This dimension is not only linked to the news value of (cultural) proximity but also eliteness, which is behind Western journalists’ prioritization of events concerning the “First World” (prominence for Bednarek & Caple, 2012, p. 65) over those taking place elsewhere (spatial and axiological distance).

Lastly, emotional distance pertains to the emotional engagement elicited by stories. The events which can be presented in personal terms (the news value of personalization) are more newsworthy than those concerning abstract concepts (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 68). Allowing for the simplification of complex processes, personalization is likely to evoke feelings of identification and empathy or, to the contrary, disapproval and detachment. Hence, emotional proximization is behind presenting events from the perspective of individual experience, which at the level of discourse brings forth personal narratives, direct speech as well as reported speech, used to relay feelings and opinions, and, visually, high frequency of close-up shots involving spatial proximization. Additionally, emotionally-loaded language can evoke strong emotional responses such as empathy, anger or fear.

It is due to its emotional impact that the news value of negativity, involving a number of concepts, such as damage, injury and death (making disasters and accidents newsworthy), as well as conflict between people, political parties and nations, ranks highly among other newsworthiness-triggering factors. Arguing that “[t]he more negative the event in its consequences, the more probable that it will become a news item” Galtung & Ruge (1965, p. 68) list several factors that make negativity so newsworthy. Taking less time, the negative satisfies the frequency criterion better. Secondly, it tends to be “more easily consensual and unambiguous” (*ibid.*) when it comes to interpretation. Thirdly, negative news appears to be more compatible with people’s expectations (as postulated by the cognitive dissonance theory). Fourthly, negative news is more unexpected than positive news, both in terms of frequency and predictability. Research on the negativity bias in emotional responses indicates that negative events elicit stronger physiological, cognitive, emotional, and social responses than positive emotions (Taylor, 1991; Cacioppo et al., 2000; Norris et al., 2010; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Finkenauer & Rimé (1998) pointed to a greater salience of events involving bad emotions in individuals’ minds, while Gilbert et al. (1998) observed that affective forecasting (people’s tendency to assess the impact of events on their lives) is stronger for negative events. The increased attention is linked to the fact that negativity automatically activates threat responses, enabling individuals to prepare for and avoid potentially negative experiences (Robertson et al., 2023, p. 812; see also Shoemaker, 1996; Öhman et al., 2001). For the same reason, negativity in news triggers physiological responses and increases users’ recall (Robertson et al., 2023, p. 812; see also Soroka et al., 2019; Meffert et al., 2006). In the words of Shoemaker (2023, p. 146), “[p]eople are innately hard wired to survey the environment and attend to threats”.

The news value of unexpectedness, indicating that the unpredictable and the rare is more newsworthy than the routine – “[t]he more unexpected the signal the more probable that it will be recorded as worth listening to” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 68) – is often (though not exclusively) linked to deviance (Shoemaker et al., 1991; Shoemaker, 2023). Shoemaker et al. (1991) pointed to three types of deviance: (a) normative deviance (involving the violation of formal norms), (b) statistical deviance (related to the frequency of an event compared to how common such events typically are in the world), and (c) potential for social change deviance (involving the threat to the political status quo, for example in the case of a terrorist attack). Seen from the perspective of the MPA, deviance can be linked to epistemic distance (defying expectations), axiological distance (triggering axiological urgency, see Kopytowska 2015c, p. 318), and, as a result, emotional distance. The news value of superlativeness, which refers to the size, scale, and volume of an event required for it to become newsworthy (as described by Galtung & Ruge, 1965, who used the term “threshold”), is related to deviance and various dimensions of distance. In the context of the former, superlativeness amplifies the perceived threat or anomaly, making whatever is deviant more significant and alarming to the public. Presenting a given event as exceptional, unprecedented or overwhelming in its impact not only captures attention but also intensifies the emotional response of the audience, possibly in the form of fear, awe, or outrage.

3 Sensationalism, emotions, and proximization

To win the attention war and boost sales, the news media increasingly resort to strategies meant to increase the audience's emotional engagement (Grabe et al., 2001; Peters, 2011; Molek-Kozakowska, 2013; Sachsman, 2013; Grundlingh, 2017). Sensationalism, defined by Lefkowitz (2016, p. 371) "as journalistic deployment of content and language that stands to provoke sensory and emotional reactions from readers as the result of an emphasis placed on drama, magnitude, salaciousness, and/or the unexpected" and reflected in both content and form has become a prevalent approach in this context. Addressing the problem with the operationalization of this notion and highlighting the need to distinguish sensationalism from tabloidization, Molek-Kozakowska (2013, pp. 174, 178) points to two dimensions of the former, namely "a sensationalist choice of topics to be covered (e.g. scandal, crime, sex), and a sensationalizing way of packaging information to make it appear more relevant or interesting". It is in the context of the latter that she offers a pragma-linguistic framework for the study of sensationalism in news headlines, including such parameters as: (1) illocutions, (2) semantic macrostructures/themes, (3) narrative formulas, (4) evaluation parameters, and (5) interpersonal and textual devices (Molek-Kozakowska, 2013, pp. 183–193). Considering sensationalism to be a "compensatory" strategy, Molek-Kozakowska (2013, p. 194) observes that the parameters in question are employed by journalists to "present an issue that is not of immediate social relevance or personal interest to the respondents as something intriguing, extraordinary and worth exploring".

Without addressing sensationalism explicitly, Ungerer (1997), who combined the pragmatic methodology, news values, and insights from psychology, advanced the notion of emotional inferencing along with principles, strategies, and linguistic triggers. The principles fall into two categories: "those concerned with the *selection* (or *emotional relevance*) of news events" and those related to "the *processing stages* of evaluation and representation" (Ungerer, 1997, p. 313). The first category includes: (1) the principle of proximity with such linguistic triggers as deictic terms, kinship terms, and endearing forms of address, (2) the principle of animacy (homocentric principle) linked to the news value of personalization and manifested in "disaster vocabulary", and (3) the principle of rank and number linked to the news values of threshold and eliteness with its linguistic manifestations in numerals and other quantity expressions as well as titles. The second set encompasses: (4) the principle of emotional evaluation reflected in evaluative adjectives and emotionally-loaded lexical items, (5) the principle of intensity of presentation manifested in vivid details and metaphorical conceptualizations, and (6) the principle of emotional content involving descriptive emotion terms (adjectives, nouns, verbs) (Ungerer, 1997, pp. 313–319). The framework is followed by the classification of emotions including basic emotions (JOY/HAPPINESS, DESIRE/LOVE, DISGUST/HATE, ANGER, SADNESS, and FEAR) and secondary emotion terms, some of which, like PITY, PRIDE, and ADMIRATION are norm-related. Applying these principles to analyze the American, English, and German news coverage of the Tokyo nerve gas attack, Ungerer (1997, pp. 320–326) draws conclusions concerning differences in emotional impact between quality papers and tabloids. The latter, he observes, are more likely to rely on the principles of proxim-

ity and animacy, arouse basic emotions like FEAR and ANGER, use many emotional cues to influence the reader, and amply describe the emotional aspects of events employing human interest stories.

Discussing the interface between graphic imagery and sensationalism, Ibarra et al. (2024) point to characteristics of events which increase the likelihood of employing such emotionally-arousing images. Violent incidents in which a person or a group of people deliberately kill others are the best candidate. The geographic proximity of an event is also important. Interestingly, however, in the case of distant tragic events, newspapers are more likely to use sensationalistic and simplistic descriptions (Joye, 2009, cit. in Ibarra et al., 2024, 1443) to capture attention. The factor of cultural proximity makes distant suffering more prone to graphic representations as audiences feel less connected to the victims (Ibarra et al., 2024, p. 1443). The number of victims matters, making events with multiple casualties more likely to be covered in a sensational and graphic way.

Perry (2002, p. 82) distinguishes between two approaches towards sensationalism: one, investigating it as a researcher-defined property of media content and the other, audience-oriented perspective focused on perceived sensationalism. In the latter case, its interrelation with distance is highlighted: “Sensationalism means that stories in a publication are underdistanced: they supply more sensations and emotional reactions than we desire emotionally or that society has deemed proper ... It ... has to do with the psychological distance we wish to keep between ourselves and our perceptions of events in the world” (Danielson et al., cit. in Perry, 2002, p. 82).

Indeed, provoking stronger emotional responses in readers, sensationalist news stories are more likely to be remembered and shared (Grabe et al., 2001). Fedorova & Shevyakova (2023, p. 1671) link “shocktainment” with “the production of negative emotions”. Working as click-baits used to attract readers’ attention, headlines play a particularly important role in this process. Scholars point to various functions of headlines, including: framing the event, summarizing the content of the news story, maximizing newsworthiness, and eliciting readers’ attention (Bednarek & Caple, 2012, pp. 96, 100; see also Bell, 1991; Dor, 2003; Molek-Kozakowska, 2013). While Bednarek & Caple (2012, pp. 100–104) consider “headlinese” a particular type of language with its structural (visual and linguistic) and functional characteristics, Molek-Kozakowska (2013, p. 175) observes that “it is headlines that bear the brunt of sensationalizing the news”, and thus uses a corpus of headlines to identify discursive manifestations of sensationalism.

The MPA sees headlines as proximization triggers. Using the present tense or omitting finite verbs, they create a sense of immediacy and urgency (temporal proximization), making readers feel that an event is happening now or is about to happen, and thus intensifying its relevance. Making certain aspects of this event more salient and cognitively accessible to the audience through premodified noun phrases, metaphor, contrast or juxtaposition, selective quotation and attribution, as well as intertextuality, they act as epistemic proximization triggers. The use of emotionally-charged and evaluative lexis, metaphor, contrast or juxtaposition serves the axiological and emotional proximization. By prompting curiosity, concern, or speculation, rhetorical questions, ellipsis, and incompleteness, they direct readers’ attention toward uncertainty, controversy, or future impli-

cations, thus engaging them emotionally. In addition to headlines, keywords throughout news stories evoking particular frames, emotionally-loaded and evaluative lexis, metaphors and metonymies, deixis, as well as grammatical structures can also act as proximization triggers. Human interest angles and relatable stories that highlight personal experiences are often used to create empathy and connection or, to the contrary, anger and resentment, encouraging audiences to invest emotionally in the content.

4 Terrorism, media, and Africa

Since George W. Bush declared the “global war on terror” following the 9/11 attacks, terrorism, framed as an omnipresent threat, mostly perpetuated by Islamist networks, has become one of the most salient issues in both public discourse and consciousness, as well as political agenda (Nacos, 2007; Freedman & Thussu, 2012; Jackson & Sinclair, 2012). Highlighting the dichotomy between “us” and “them”, and focusing on the heroism of those fighting against terrorism, the narrative has not only engaged audiences emotionally but also served to legitimize governmental policies and military interventions under the guise of protecting national and global security (Hodges & Nilep 2007; Hodges, 2011). It has also affected the international news coverage with media outlets adopting the of “clash of civilisations” and “militant Islam” discourse (Thussu, 2006, p. 6), and the reporting style thriving on simplification, excessive stereotypization, and overemotionalization.

Shaped by political and professional ideology, the representation of terrorism has had impact on both public perception and policy (Altheide, 2006; Nacos, 2007). As most citizens do not experience terrorism directly, mediated experience enabled by the media gains particular prominence when it comes to knowledge, evaluations, and emotions related not only to terrorist acts themselves, but also motivations behind them and their socio-political implications. It is in this context that Altheide (2006) explores the interface between the media coverage of terrorism and the politics of fear, which he considers “a dominant motif for news and popular culture” (Altheide, 2006, p. 434). Accordingly, Jacobs & van Spanje (2023, p. 489) observe that “[e]xtensive coverage of terror acts has been found to be at least partly responsible for inducing fear of terrorism”, firstly because of its emotional character, and, secondly, due to “citizens’ primordial desire to protect themselves from harm and risk” (ibid.).

Terrorist acts are considered highly newsworthy due to several key factors that align with the established news values criteria. “When terrorists strike hard, they demand attention” (Nacos, 2007, p. 47). News often prioritizes negative events, and terrorism, with its association with violence and fear, as well as conflict, often framed as a struggle between ideologies, nations, or groups, fits this criterion. The negative consequences of terrorist acts – death, destruction, and disruption – naturally draw media attention. Resulting in significant loss of life, widespread injury, and extensive property damage, terrorist acts meet the impact criterion (superlativeness). Additionally, terrorist acts often involve dramatic stories of victims, heroes, and survivors, evoking strong emotions such as fear, sympathy, or anger, and thus making such events more relatable and engaging for the public. Altheide (2006, p. 429) points to victim and victimization as “a critical

symbol in the politics of fear”, making “crime, danger, and fear very relevant to everyday life experiences” (Altheide, 2006, p. 434).

The unexpected nature of terrorist events, combined with their time-sensitive nature, makes them urgent and important to report as soon as they occur (timeliness and unexpectedness). Giroux (2003, p. 8, cit. in Altheide, 2006, p. 418) observes that this sense of urgency contributes to the construction of what he calls “emergency time”. Proximity matters too. However, even when they happen far from the audience’s geographical location, they can still be presented as close and relevant due to their global implications, with their perceived proximity being enhanced by factors like shared cultural ties, economic relationships, or global political interests. Attacks on elite individuals or powerful nations tend to attract more media coverage due to high stakes and broader implications.

It is largely because of distance in its various dimensions, encoded in the news values, that the Western media coverage of terrorism in Africa, just like reporting on the conflict in general, has often been characterized by selective reporting, focus on the most violent and dramatic incidents, sensationalism, and lack of proper contextualization. Several decades ago, Styan (1999, p. 289) pointed to three types of stories related to events in Africa to be found in the Western media: (a) stereotypical stories associated with preconceived images of the region, e.g., famine, (b) actual or threatened interstate violence, and (c) stories concerning Westerners (e.g., kidnapping of white people). Ankomah (2000, p. 20) listed four factors affecting journalistic choices: (a) national interest or “follow the flag”; (b) ideological leaning; (c) historical factors; and (d) advertisers’/audiences’ involvement. Being relevance- and proximity-related, the first factor means prioritizing issues with possible implications for Western nations and their citizens, involving threat in both physical (material) or axiological (norms and values) sense. The second factor is connected with political or ideological perspectives espoused by media outlets (epistemic and axiological proximization). The third factor explains why news narratives draw on existing narratives along with stereotypes and simplifications used to present the new and unfamiliar in terms of what the audience is already familiar with. Lastly, the objective of audiences’ engagement and thus advertisers’ profits accounts for human interest narratives and sensational stories full of drama and negativity (emotional proximization being the goal here). This is well evidenced in the results of Kalyango & Onyebadi’s (2012, p. 681) analysis of the U.S. television networks’ coverage of Africa over 30 years and their conclusion that it was dominated by conflicts and crises, and linked to a particular U.S. interest.

When it comes to terrorism, Nossek (2004, 2008) highlights the importance of the interpretation of terrorist events as “ours” or “theirs” and distinction between “internal” and “external terror”. As regards the foreign coverage, he argues that editors and journalists are likely to opt for either a national or professional frame, depending on three factors: (1) the type of event (the form of political violence); (2) the location of the event and its relevance to the domestic politics and international relations of the journalist and media’s nation state?; and (3) the event context (the timing of the event and its local and international context) (Nossek, 2004, p. 350). Accordingly, analyzing the images from American and European news websites used to frame terrorist attacks in the USA, West-

ern Europe and Africa, Walker & Towner (2022) observe differences in framing with potential influence on international relations and public perceptions. Wanta & Kalyango (2007) discuss the interface between the coverage of terrorism in Africa and agenda building in the United States. Hawkins (2012), in turn, examines American media reporting on terrorism in Africa in the context of 9/11, concluding that foreign coverage is determined by the “national and political interest” perspective (Hawkins, 2012, p. 23).

5 Proximizing the Westgate shopping mall terrorist attack

5.1 Background

The Westgate shopping mall attack, which occurred in Nairobi on September 21, 2013, resulted in the deaths of 67 people, including 18 foreigners (six of whom were British). Following the attack, attention was drawn to Kenya’s military involvement in Somalia, where it had sent troops in 2011 to combat Al-Shabaab. The intervention is believed to have provoked retaliatory attacks, including the Westgate siege. The media coverage of the Westgate attack surpassed the coverage of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombing in Nairobi. While the latter received considerable attention at the time, particularly in the U.S., the Westgate attack’s dramatic nature, prolonged siege, and the high number of foreign victims drew extensive international media interest with live broadcasts and detailed coverage.

For British media and citizens, the Westgate attack was particularly newsworthy due to the involvement of British nationals, both as victims and potentially as perpetrators. The alleged connection to Samantha Lewthwaite, the “White Widow”, added a significant layer of interest and concern, as it suggested links between British citizens and international terrorism. The killing of six British nationals further heightened the event’s relevance in the UK, prompting widespread media coverage and public discourse about the global reach of terrorism and the safety of British citizens abroad.

5.2 Data and method

The corpus analysed comprises news articles from three British tabloids, namely the *Sun*, the *Daily Mirror*, and the *Star*. The articles were downloaded from Nexis Uni, using the search term “Westgate”, and the time frame 21st September – 21st October 2013. The compiled corpus (26,930 words) consisted of 61 news stories including 24 news articles from the *Sun*, 21 from the *Daily Mirror* and 16 articles from the *Star*.

To detect proximization triggers in news discourse, our study used corpus tools, building on the premise that corpus linguistics – by enabling the quantification of recurring linguistic patterns – can support qualitative findings and allow for reliable generalizations regarding linguistic choices (cf. Stubbs, 1996; O’Keeffe, 2006). The corpus was compiled, annotated, and analysed with the help of the Sketch Engine software. Using the British National Corpus (BNC) as a reference corpus and drawing on the assumption that the strategic use of keywords plays a major role in constructing patterns of representation in news texts, we started our analysis with generating lists of keywords and multi-word terms (see Kopytowska 2009, Tosik 2024). After filtering out generic media-related terms and proper names, the word sketches and concordances of these

terms were examined and analyzed in terms of spatiotemporal, epistemic, axiological, and emotional proximization triggers used to enhance newsworthiness by adding proximity, urgency and relevance to distant events, making the new and unfamiliar more cognitively accessible, creating axiological urgency, and thus evoking emotions in the audience.

5.3 Analysis

5.3.1 Depicting the massacre: negativity, superlativeness, and unexpectedness

Being an act of terrorism, the Westgate Mall attack meets several key criteria of newsworthiness, including negativity (connected with the underlying conflict, extreme violence, loss of life, and the sense of insecurity), superlativeness (the scale of the attack, high casualty numbers, the use of heavy weaponry, and the prolonged siege), and unexpectedness (place and character of the attack), which are additionally enhanced discursively to construct a narrative that evokes fear, anger, and shock.

The use of highly charged language in both headlines and body texts immediately frames the event in terms of extreme violence and malevolence, a clear invocation of negativity. The attack is referred to as “massacre” (used 86 times in the corpus, incl. 9 times in headlines), “carnage” (used 25 times, incl. 3 times in headlines), “atrocities” (used 20 times, incl. 2 instances in headlines), “slaughter” (used 14 times, incl. 4 times in headlines), “bloodbath” (used 13 times, incl. 2 instances in headlines), and “bloodshed” (used 6 times). Featuring among top 100 keywords, these nouns not only co-construct the brutality and magnitude of the event, conveying the sense of insecurity and chaos, but also prompt the reader to perceive the attack as a brutal and morally reprehensible act that demands immediate attention, moral evaluation, and emotional engagement (axiological and emotional proximization). The modifiers can be grouped into three thematic categories. The first category – spatial modifiers (“mall”, “Nairobi”, “Kenyan”, “Kenyan shopping mall”, “Westgate”) – anchors the event in a specific place that readers can visualize. The temporal modifier (“September”) serves to contextualize the event within a specific time frame. The descriptive and intensifying modifiers (“deadly”, “bloody”, “horror”, “horrific”, “four-day”, and “mass”) highlight the emotional impact, duration, and severity of the event. Finally, the fourth group – perpetrator and threat-related modifiers (“terrorist”, “gun”, “hostage”, “Al-Shabaab”, “terror”) – characterizes the agents and the nature of the threat. Being used in nearly one-third of the headlines and sub-headlines, the above keywords attract readers’ attention but also set the tone for the narrative, emphasizing the severity and urgency of the events, and framing the coverage in a way that highlights the emotional and dramatic aspects of the story, e.g.,

- (1) MALL MASSACRE: BLOODY BATTLE (The *Daily Mirror*, September 24, 2013)
- (2) THE ABATTOIR. MASSACRE AT MALL: AFTERMATH Horror scene as bodies lay around with throats cut 150 feared dead after bloody siege 10 of them British (The *Daily Mirror*, September 26, 2013)

- (3) EXECUTED DAYS BEFORE BIRTH; MASSACRE IN NAIROBI Dad-to-be among six dead Brits (*The Daily Star*, September 24, 2013)
- (4) LIKE AN ABATTOIR; CARNAGE OF NAIROBI REVEALED Blood and rotting corpses ‘everywhere’ 150 feared killed including TEN Brits Hostages blown up shot hurled to death (*The Sun*, September 22, 2013)
- (5) SLAUGHTER OF BRITS IN MALL (*The Daily Star*, September 23, 2013)
- (6) I could have been in middle of THIS; NAIROBI BLOODBATH; BOBBY WILLIAMSON EXCLUSIVE (*The Sun*, September 29, 2013)

“Abattoir” in (2) and (4) acts as a powerful metaphor that likens the mall to a slaughterhouse, conveying the scale and brutality of the violence. The imagery of “throats cut” further reinforces the barbarity of the perpetrators, while the expression “rotting corpses” brings in multi-sensory elements, evoking not only the visual horror but also the stench and decay associated with death. Similarly, the metaphorical use of “bloodbath” (6) brings to mind not just a scene of death, but one marked by excessive and indiscriminate killing. The metaphors and graphic descriptions, highlight the moral violation committed by the attackers, serving as powerful axiological and emotional proximization triggers which are likely to evoke not only moral outrage but also empathy and fear in the audience. The axiological dimension is also involved whenever references to British citizens – “our” group – are made and the news value of cultural proximity evoked, as in examples (2), (3), and (5). Mentioning “dad-to-be” who was “executed days before birth” (3) is also likely to intensify both the axiological and emotional impact by personalizing the tragedy and linking it to the audience’s moral values. Referencing children “shot in toy store” (7) performs a similarly proximizing function, juxtaposing innocence and vulnerability with the brutality of the attackers.

- (7) They shot children in toy store... shoppers were dead, slumped at cafe tables; TERROR AT MALL 3 BRITS DIE IN KENYA JIHAD HORROR NAIROBI (*The Sun*, September 23, 2013)
- (8) YOU’RE A BAD MAN; MALL MASSACRE Brit boy, 4 to terrorist (*The Sun*, September 24, 2013)

Personalization draws readers into the narrative by focusing on an individual story within the broader tragedy, making the abstract horror of the event more tangible and immediate (8). The child’s perspective conveyed in the form of direct speech heightens the emotional impact. Axiologically, the moral judgment – “you’re a bad man” – brings forth the universal values and the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil. The proximity is both cultural, as it involves a “Brit boy”, and moral, as it appeals to the shared ethical standards of the audience, with the child symbolizing the purity and moral clarity standing in opposition to the terrorist’s actions. As “our” values are under threat, axiological urgency emerges, transforming the narrative into a confrontation

between good and evil. Not only does it evoke a sense of condemnation but it also enhances a sense of solidarity, reinforcing a collective identity against the perceived threat.

Other keywords characterizing the event include: “siege” (used 55 times), “gunfire” (used 14 times), “explosion” (used 17 times), “grenade” (used 33 times), and “bombing” (used 8 times). The modifiers of the first term can be grouped into several categories: (a) duration and continuity modifiers (“four-day” and “ongoing”) making the event feel immediate and enduring for the audience, (b) spatial modifiers (“Westgate” and “Kenya shopping mall”) anchoring the event in a specific setting, (c) weapon- and armed conflict-related modifiers (“armed” and “gun”) highlighting the existence of a physical threat, (d) perpetrator-related modifiers (“Al-Shabaab” and “terror”) identifying the nature and the perpetrators of the attack and providing context about the motivations and the larger ideological threat behind the siege, and (e) intensifying violence- and brutality-related modifiers (“bloody,” “brutal,” “devastating,” “horrific,” “deadly,” and “horror”) amplifying the sense of danger and evoking negative emotions. These lexical choices collectively construct a narrative of conflict and extreme violence, reinforcing the news value of negativity.

The second group of keywords comprises terms referring to the perpetrators, namely “gunman” (used 48 times and modified by “horror,” “merciless,” “terrorist,” “AK47-armed,” “masked,” “Islamist,” and “Nairobi”), “militant” (used as a noun 31 times and modified by “Al-Shabaab,” “Al-Qaeda-linked,” “Islamist,” “Islamic,” “armed,” “crazed”), “attacker” (used 35 times and modified by “hidden,” “white,” “female,” “more”), “terrorist” (used as a noun 117 times and modified by “crazed Somali-based,” “Al-Shabaab,” “Islamic,” “Irish born,” “AK47-armed,” “evil,” “merciless,” “British,” “international”), “bomber” (“suicide”), “fanatic” (used as a noun 17 times and modified by “Muslim,” “Islamic,” “Islamist,” “Al-Qaeda,” “British”), “extremist” (used as a noun 19 times and modified by “Islamic,” “Islamist,” “local,” “British,” “Boko Haram,” “dozen”), and “jihadist” (used as a noun 5 times and modified by “crazed”). The frequent use of the above terms (paired with specific modifiers), not only highlights the physical danger posed by these individuals but also frames them as morally corrupt, out of control (“merciless,” “evil,” and “crazed”), and driven by extremist ideologies (“jihadist”), fundamentally at odds with societal norms, as illustrated by examples (9) and (10). While the former paints a vivid picture of uncontrolled and indiscriminate violence, in the latter, the attackers’ barbaric nature and disregard for human life is highlighted by the description of the deliberate targeting of children.

- (9) Radio Africa reporter Bernard Wambua was overseeing a cookery contest for children in the car park when the crazed jihadists burst in and began spraying bullets in all directions from an arsenal of weapons. (*The Daily Mirror*, September 23, 2013)
- (10) Other witnesses told how the merciless gunmen from Islamic jihad group al-Shabaab took pot shots at children in a toy shop. (*The Sun*, September 23, 2013)

The use ethnic and national identifiers, such as “Islamic”, “Somali”, and “British” links the local violence to broader, international narratives of terrorism and radicalism. In this way, the global reach of terrorism is highlighted, as in (11) where the perpetrator is presented as not just an Islamist gunman but also a “Norway-based Chelsea fan” (spatial proximization trigger). The juxtaposition of normalcy (a football fan) with extremism (an Islamist gunman) blurs the boundaries between the familiar and the threatening, making the danger feel more pervasive and immediate.

- (11) ONE of the Islamist gunmen involved in last month’s horror massacre at a Kenyan shopping mall has been identified as a Norway-based Chelsea fan. (*The Daily Star*, October 19, 2013)

The keyword “Al-Shabaab” (used 69 times) links the attackers to the Somali-based terrorist group responsible for numerous attacks in the region. “Islamist”, “jihadist”, and “jihad”, as well as multi-word terms like “extreme Muslim group” and “Somali Islamist militant group”, add a religious dimension, suggesting motivations rooted in radical interpretations of Islam. The keyword “Al-Qaeda” and the multi-word expression “Al-Qaeda-linked” point to connections with the broader network of global jihadism responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The perpetrators thus emerge not only as criminals but also as symbols of a larger ideological menace, amplifying the overall sense of threat and axiological urgency.

The third group of keywords refers to the impact of the attack on the victims. These include general references to victims, e.g., “victim” (used 24 times and modified by “terrified”, “stricken”), “shopper” (used 33 times and modified by “helpless”, “terrified”, “massacre”, “fellow”), “civilian” (used 10 times), “survivor” (used 16 times), “hostage” (used 42 times and modified by “British”, “most”, “screaming”), as well as multi-word terms like “innocent people” (used 4 times), “non-Muslims” (used 8 times), “number of fatalities” (used 3 times), specific descriptions of the physical and emotional impact on victims, e.g., “wounded” (used 8 times), “deadly” (used 10 times), “death toll” (used 17 times), “horror” (used 24 times), as well as verbs used with victims as subjects like “lie”, objects such as “execute” (used 8 times), “shoot” (used 59 times), “murder” (used 11 times), “gun down”, and “slaughter” (used 13 times). Terms like “bloodbath”, “massacre”, and “carnage”, along with figures such as “150 feared dead”, underscore the magnitude of the attack, thereby heightening its perceived significance. Numerals and quantity expressions, emphasizing the high number of fatalities, enhance the impact of the tragedy, discursively constructing the news value of superlativeness. Additionally, the news narratives use detailed, graphic descriptions and direct quotes from witnesses to personalize the violence and make the horror of the event feel immediate and real, as in (12). Bringing the audience into the intimate, life-or-death moment experienced by the victims, the survivor’s words allow readers to witness the event through the eyes of someone directly affected, acting as a powerful emotional proximization trigger.

- (12) A woman named Cecelia told how she watched in horrified disbelief as the AK47-armed gunmen stormed the Nairobi mall and indiscriminately gunned

down men, women and children. She said: “They were shooting everywhere. I saw people being shot all around me, some with some with blood pouring from bad wounds. I was just praying that God would keep me alive. That my day had not come”. (The *Sun*, September 23, 2013)

- (13) Ross Langdon, 33, was cradling his heavily pregnant girlfriend when they were both gunned down. His Dutch partner Elif Yavuz was a malaria expert who was just two weeks away from giving birth to their first child. (The *Daily Star*, September 24, 2013)
- (14) Heart-stopping images from the Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi show a gunman shooting an innocent man at point-blank range. The stricken victim can be seen desperately trying to escape even as blood pours from his body. But moments later the sick killer opens fire... . (The *Daily Star*, October 18, 2013)
- (15) They claim many were dismembered, some men castrated, others had their eyes gouged out and victims were suspended from hooks in the supermarket ceiling. (The *Daily Mirror*, September 27, 2013)

The narrative in (13) employs personal tragedy by focusing on specific, named individuals. The mention of the victim’s pregnancy highlights the brutality of terrorists’ actions. The graphic description in (14), full of detailed, sensory imagery adds an explicit moral judgment in the words “sick killer”, while (15) describes acts of violence that are not just lethal but also grotesquely sadistic, evoking both outrage and disgust.

The term “terror”, one of the top keywords, used 101 times in the corpus, has a dual function. Used in phrases like “terror attack”, “terror gang”, “terror group”, “terror suspect”, “terror plot”, “terror mastermind”, and “terror massacre”, it brings up references to terrorism, associating the event with global narratives of ideological violence and extremism (serving as the epistemic and axiological proximization trigger). There are, however, contexts, where it additionally suggests an atmosphere of chaos, unpredictability, and psychological impact (emotional proximization) as in the following headline:

- (16) TERROR AT MALL 3 BRITS DIE IN KENYA JIHAD HORROR NAIROBI
(The *Sun*, September 23, 2013)

5.3.2 Portraying “our” victims, heroes, and perpetrators: proximity, relevance and eliteness

While the event happened in Kenya, the media coverage employs several linguistic strategies and keywords that construct proximity for the British audience, making the attack feel closer and more personally relevant. By highlighting specific connections between the event and the UK, the coverage reduces geographical and cultural distances, proximizing the threat both physically and axiologically. This construction of proximity is achieved through the frequent use of identifiers, references to British victims, and comparisons that align the narrative with British concerns, values, and anxieties.

One of the most direct ways in which proximity is established is through an emphasis on British victims, repeatedly mentioned in both headlines and the body of news texts. Keywords like “Briton” (used 22 times) and “Brit” (used 65 times), multi-word terms like “British citizen”, “British passport holder”, “former British soldier”, “British national”, “slaughter of Brits”, “British victims”, and specific references to individuals such as “British boy”, “British soldier’s daughter”, and named victims like “Elliott Prior” play a critical role in creating a personal connection for the British audience. The headlines such as (17) and (18) draw immediate attention to the nationality of those involved, making the event feel more immediate and relevant to readers in the UK. By foregrounding the impact on British citizens, the coverage transforms the attack from a distant foreign tragedy into a shared experience that affects “us”, not just “them”.

(17) SIX BRITS DIE IN NAIROBI SLAUGHTER (*The Sun*, September 23, 2013)

(18) Soldiers surround 15 fanatics in centre Brits among 68 dead and 175 wounded (*The Daily Mirror*, September 23, 2013)

The use of personal testimonies and vivid descriptions of the victims’ experiences further constructs proximity by encouraging empathy and identification with those affected. Statements from British survivors, such as “I could have been in the middle of THIS”, or the testimonies in (19) and (20) are likely to resonate with readers by personalizing the terror and inviting them to imagine themselves in similar situations.

(19) British survivor Bethan Rayner, 35, told how she crawled to safety with her seven-month-old daughter Hani in her arms after masked gunmen opened fire in a cafe. (*The Sun*, September 24, 2013)

(20) British tourist Hannah Chisholm said: “We kept running to different places but the shots were getting louder so we barricaded ourselves along with about 60 others into a large storeroom. There were children hiding with us as well as someone who had been shot. (*The Daily Mirror*, September 22, 2013)

Proximity is further constructed through references to the attackers’ connections to the UK. Samantha Lewthwaite, “White Widow” (with “widow” being the top keyword mentioned 71 times in the corpus) frequently appears in the headlines and news articles as in (21) and (22).

(21) COPS MISS 5 CHANCES TO NAB WHITE WIDOW (*The Sun*, October 14, 2013)

(22) Hate preacher who made the White Widow; MALL MASSACRE Muslim ‘brainwashed’ Nairobi attack suspect (*The Daily Mirror*, September 30, 2013)

Described as a “British terrorist”, “soldier’s daughter”, and “widow of 7/7 bomber Germaine Lindsay”, she is frequently connected to the UK, evoking a sense geographical and cultural proximity. Her British roots and ties to previous terror acts on British soil,

such as the 7/7 London bombings, are repeatedly highlighted, emphasizing her transformation from an ordinary British girl to one of the most wanted terrorists. Phrases like “British fugitive”, “mum-of-four”, and references to her upbringing in Aylesbury Bucks enhance this connection, as they present her not just as an abstract threat but as someone who once belonged to “our” community (spatial and axiological proximization). Furthermore, by emphasizing her direct involvement in the Westgate attack and her escape tactics, the articles dramatize the level of the threat she poses in the context of global terrorism and British security.

(23) WHITE Widow Samantha Lewthwaite has risen through the ranks to become one of the most powerful figures in terrorist group al-Shabaab, security sources have revealed. (*The Sun*, September 28, 2013)

(24) WHITE Widow Samantha Lewthwaite is on a hit list of more than 200 British fanatics as America ramps up the war on terror. (*The Sun*, October 7, 2013)

(25) “The lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of innocent people are at risk if she is able to launch an attack. She needs to be stopped in her tracks before it is too late. She is a danger to the world.” (*The Daily Mirror*, October 14, 2013)

The use of superlative language elevates her status from a mere participant to a leading figure, suggesting that her actions have far-reaching consequences (23). Connecting Lewthwaite to a larger, domestic narrative of homegrown terrorism suggests that she is part of a broader community of British-born extremists (24). Mentioning America’s “war on terror” situates her within an international framework of counter-terrorism, linking her actions to global security concerns and aligning the British perspective with broader Western efforts against terrorism (24). The numerical escalation to stress the potential catastrophic impact of her actions not only enhances the perceived danger but also makes her threat feel vast and uncontrollable, while the statements “She needs to be stopped” and “before it is too late” serve as a direct call to action. Finally, by labeling her as “a danger to the world”, the narrative expands her impact from a localized threat to a global menace (25).

The proximity and relevance for the British audience are also enhanced by the “hero” stories. A former Royal Marine is portrayed as a heroic figure who saved up to 100 people during the Westgate attack. The narrative compares him to a popular Hollywood action hero, John McClane from the film *Die Hard*, making his actions seem even more dramatic and relatable to the Western audience (26). This instance of intertextuality becomes a powerful epistemic, axiological, and emotional proximization trigger.

(26) Armed with a handgun tucked into his trousers, witnesses say he went back into the stricken mall up to 12 times to rescue more potential hostages. His heroics have been compared to those of the character John McClane in *Die Hard*. In the 1988 film, McClane, played by Bruce Willis, rescues a party of hostages after an LA building is sieged by terrorists. (*The Daily Star*, September 24, 2013)

Mitul Shah, a British citizen born in London and living in Kenya, who attempted to negotiate with the terrorists to save a group of children participating in a cooking competition, is also presented as a hero during the siege. The narrative emphasizes his personal sacrifice, elevating him to a moral exemplar (27).

- (27) Manchester United fan Mitul Shah was hailed a hero last night after news emerged of his courage. The sales and marketing boss, 38, had pleaded with the al-Shabaab gunmen to try to negotiate the safety of 33 youngsters taking part safety of 33 youngsters in a cooking competition. [...] One friend Alkane said: "He is a real hero. He had an option to run away but he opted to become a saviour of kids". (The *Daily Mirror*, September 28, 2013)

As a form of spatial, epistemic, axiological, and emotional proximization the articles adopt two strategies to bridge the geographical and cultural distance between the British audience and the events in Kenya, fostering a sense of shared identity and values. One of them is highlighting the heroes' British background and thus references to UK cities, education or military service. Adding to the news values of proximity and relevance, it makes them seem more familiar and relatable. The other strategy is the focus on personal and family aspects, which, in turn, is likely to reinforce their humanity, evoking empathy.

Constructing the news narratives around elite figures and institutions (the news value of eliteness), such as e.g., "Interpol", "British security analyst Paul Beaver", "British PM David Cameron", and "British Foreign Secretary William Hague" also has a proximizing function. Additionally, the frequent use of terms linked with security modified by the adjective "British", like "British security services", "a team of British cops", "British police", "the British military", "British intelligence", and "British spooks" seems to form an "axiological counterbalance" to "British White widow", "British terrorist Samantha Lewthwaite", and "250 suspected British terrorists". As already mentioned, the threat is constructed as close and immediate. Indexicals (e.g., "here" as in [28]) and locative expressions (e.g., "on British soil" in [29]) serve as spatial proximization triggers, while modal verbs ("could") and adjectives ("potential") proximize the threat in temporal terms. Finally, the use of direct speech (quotations from Abubaker Shariff Ahmed) containing threats (commissive speech acts) and deictic pronouns ("you") enhances the immediacy and intensity of the threat, making the message more personal and alarming (spatiotemporal, axiological, and emotional proximization) (30).

- (28) He said: "It's a big worry for security services and police that something like this could be attempted in London or big cities here." (The *Sun*, September 22, 2013)
- (29) Specialist firearms officers from the Metropolitan Police's gun unit SCO19 have been secretly training for a potential attack on British soil. (The *Daily Star*, October 6, 2013)
- (30) "The British will be targeted personally. That means the photos emerged as a hate preacher linked to the attack warned "Britain will be next". Abubaker Shariff Ahmed says he wants Brits "taken out" and raged: "You will all die." He ranted:

“The British will be targeted personally. That means tourists on the streets will be killed. (The *Daily Star*, October 1, 2013)

In view of both the physical threat and the axiological urgency, alongside the “hero” narratives with the strategic use of positive values (contrasted with the negative or morally reprehensible actions), the above-mentioned terms related to law enforcement and security assurance, contribute to constructing an “axiological equilibrium”, thereby providing the audience with a sense of moral reassurance or hope.

6 Conclusion

As the present analysis of the coverage of the Westgate Mall attack has demonstrated, distance and salience in news discourse are closely connected with the construction of newsworthiness and the arousal of emotions. Through strategic linguistic choices and other discursive proximization triggers, the media can make abstract or distant phenomena seem immediate, relevant, and emotionally engaging for the audience. In the case of the news reports examined in this chapter, such a proximization process enabled the transformation of a foreign tragedy into a matter of national concern and personal significance for a given public.

Proximity (the spatial, epistemic, and axiological distance reduction) is constructed through repeated references to the British context, including UK nationals involved as victims, perpetrators, heroes, or security forces, while affective salience is achieved by the use of highly charged language and metaphors that emphasize the brutality and severity of the event (the news value of negativity). The use of vivid and graphic descriptions in both headlines and news articles is likely to create a strong emotional response, ensuring that the event remains prominent in the audience’s mind. Personal identifiers and direct quotes from British survivors or eyewitnesses not only personalize the tragedy but also enhance its relevance by drawing direct connections to the audience’s own cultural and national identity (axiological and emotional proximization constructing the news values of personalization, proximity, and relevance).

Newsworthiness is also enhanced through the use of superlative language that emphasizes the scale, impact, and extremity of the event (the news value of superlativeness). Furthermore, the strategic use of spatial and temporal proximization triggers – such as references to potential future attacks “on British soil” along with the use of present tense and continuous aspect – keeps the event within the realm of immediate concern, making it an ongoing and relevant issue rather than a past and distant tragedy and evoking a heightened sense of urgency. The construction of terrorism as a global problem and the notion that the violence is not confined to a single event but could recur at any moment creates a sense of immediacy and ongoing danger, which, in turn, is likely to trigger anxiety and anticipation. Transforming an act of terrorism into a moral struggle between good and evil, “our” humanity and rationality and “their” barbarism and irrationality, axiological proximization enhances a shared sense of identity and values, evoking emotions such as empathy and pride on the one hand and condemnation and moral outrage on the other.

On the methodological level, the present chapter used the mixed-method approach. To identify the lexical items serving as proximization triggers the lists of keywords and multi-word terms were generated. This step was followed by the analysis of word sketches and concordances, which revealed how the terms function within the broader narrative structure of the articles, contributing to the discursive construction of news values and the arousal of emotions. Qualitative analysis was employed to examine the way these lexical choices interact with other elements in the text to enhance the impact of proximization strategies. As shown in the chapter, such strategies heightened the salience of the distant event by contextualizing it within broader narratives of global terrorism and, even more importantly, highlighting the British connection to the event and thus amplifying the sense of urgency and danger. As a result, the “terror in Nairobi” was more likely to resonate within the public consciousness. Being a threat to “us” both physically and axiologically, with material consequences in the recent past (British casualties) and potential implications in the near future (the danger of more terrorist attacks *on the British soil*), it ceased to be “their” problem and became a source of collective fear, anxiety, and outrage among the British public.

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Emotions and institutional approaches to gender-fair and gender-neutral language in Europe: A comparative study of Poland, Spain, and the UK

Gender equality and reducing gender bias are embedded in EU legislation and guidelines for non-discriminatory language. However, this commitment is not consistently reflected in the institutional communication and legislation of current and former EU member states. This study examines (1) the availability and content of institutional guidelines on gender-neutral and gender-fair language and (2) approaches to such language in Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom. These countries were chosen due to differences in how Polish, Spanish, and English mark gender and in the presence of official guidelines. Spain and the UK have published recommendations, while Poland has not, despite ongoing debates on gender-fair/neutral language in its institutional communication. The goal is to identify main trends in the scope of these guidelines, as well as the themes and arguments used in each country's debates, highlighting both differences and similarities. The findings confirm that resistance to gender-fair/neutral language often stems more from emotional and socio-political factors than from purely linguistic considerations. They offer insights into the emotional triggers influencing acceptance or resistance of non-discriminatory language. This research aims to clarify the broader implications of promoting gender-neutral language, encourage further inquiry, and serve as a foundation for future studies.

Keywords: *gender-neutral language, institutional discourse, language guidelines, emotions in discourse*

1 Introduction

For years, individuals, organizations, and countries have attempted to improve gender equality and reduce gender biases and stereotypes through various initiatives and legislation. For instance, the European Union has included it in its legislative framework, e.g., in the Treaties¹ and the Charter of Fundamental Rights (European Union, 2012). The EU also advocates for inclusive communication through their institutional guidelines, for example, for the European Parliament (2018). Gender-neutral language is “a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language” whose main purpose is to “avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the

1 With the first one being the Treaty of Rome (European Economic Community, 1957).

norm”² (European Parliament, 2018, p. 3). However, this level of commitment to gender equality in discourse is not always reflected in the institutional communication and legislation of its member states. While some countries have developed national institutional gender-fair language guidelines, others have not done that so far.

In this study, we examine the approaches to gender-neutral/fair language in the material from three European countries: Poland, Spain, and the UK³. The rationale for selecting these countries lies in the differences in how gender is signaled in Polish, Spanish, and English, and a varying availability of state-issued institutional gender-fair/neutral guidelines. While such documents exist both in Spain (CD, 2023) and the UK (OPC, 2024), similar guidelines have not been published in Poland so far. Our research takes into account that in the three countries, debates on gender-neutral and gender-fair policies engage not only policymakers and scholars but also the broader public (i.e., Kaczorowska, 2020; *20minutos*, 2024; Alao, 2024). This participation suggests that discussions on gender-fair/neutral language are influenced to a higher extent by emotional and ideological factors than by linguistic considerations. Therefore, we pay particular attention to observations from previous research suggesting that criticism of gender-fair or gender-neutral language often stems from such reasons (cf. Bodine, 1975; Martyna, 1978; Blaubergs, 1980; Parks & Robertson, 1998; Karwatowska & Szypra-Kozłowska, 2005; Sarasin et al., 2012; Douglas & Sutton, 2014; Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2015; Cremades & Fernández-Portero, 2021). Taking this into account, we assess the availability and analyze the content of institutional gender-neutral and gender-fair language recommendations and approaches to their manifestations. Whereas there are some studies on gender-neutral/fair language in institutional contexts in these individual languages (i.e., Williams, 2008; Guerrero Salazar, 2020; Tomaszewska & Jamka, 2024), to the best of our knowledge, there are no comparative studies examining the availability and content of the guidelines as well as arguments in favor of or against gender-neutral/fair language across these countries.

2 Approaches to grammatical gender across Polish, Spanish, and English: a comparison

Languages approach gender in various ways – natural gender languages, such as Danish, English, and Swedish, use mostly gender-neutral personal nouns and specific pronouns for each gender. Grammatical gender languages, for example Romance and Slavic languages, assign a grammatical gender to nouns, which influences the gender of syntactically dependent elements. Genderless languages, e.g., Estonian, Finnish, and Hungarian, do not use grammatical gender or gender-specific pronouns. Naturally, these

2 Although the terms ‘gender-fair’ and ‘gender-neutral’ language are often used interchangeably (e.g., European Parliament, 2018), in this study, we use the term ‘gender-fair language’ to refer to the practice of using sex-specific nouns symmetrically and ‘gender-neutral language’ for that of using words and expressions that do not indicate any sex/gender.

3 We are very grateful to Maciej Ogrodniczuk, Alina Wróblewska, and Dorota Komosińska from the Institute of Computer Science, Polish Academy of Sciences, for taking the time to read our draft and offering insightful comments that helped us improve this text.

variations influence discussions on gender-neutral or gender-fair language and the scope of related recommendations.

In Polish, the grammatical gender of a personal noun influences all syntactically dependent elements, such as adjectives, past/conditional verb forms, and possessive forms. Feminine grammatical gender typically denotes a woman or a group of women, while masculine grammatical gender is usually considered 'generic', potentially denoting both men and women (Łaziński, 2006). Feminine personal nouns in Polish, especially for jobs and positions traditionally held by men, are usually derived from masculine counterparts through suffixation (Grochowska & Wierzbicka, 2015). The most common suffixes include *-ka* (e.g., *dyrektor/dyrektorka*) and *-yni/-ini* (e.g., *naukowiec/naukowczyni*). The derivation of feminine forms for high-ranking positions, however, is believed to be restricted mostly by extralinguistic factors (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2019). Although linguistically possible for all personal nouns, there is a tendency in Polish to use the masculine form for women in prestigious roles such as *marszałek* or minister. In such cases, gender is marked by preceding the noun with *pani* and/or by adjusting the grammatical agreement of dependent elements. In Spanish, as in Polish, grammatical gender influences syntactically dependent elements, and feminine personal nouns, especially those referring to traditionally male-held jobs and positions, are usually derived from the masculine form and designate only a woman or a group of women. The masculine form is often considered generic or even inclusive (RAE, 2020; 2024). The usage of feminine personal nouns in so-called non-sexist language (CD, 2023) is frequently discussed (e.g., Bengoechea Barolomé, 2000, 2009; Bosque, 2012; Guerrero Salazar, 2007, 2020; RAE, 2020, 2024).

Unlike Polish and Spanish, English uses a natural gender system, in which nouns are classified as masculine, feminine, or neuter based on extralinguistic reality. These classifications primarily affect pronoun agreement rather than other grammatical elements (Curzan, 2003). Apart from certain groups of sex-specific nouns such as kinship terms (e.g., mother, father), most personal nouns in English (e.g., doctor, director) are gender-neutral.

3 Emotions and gender-fair/gender-neutral language

It has been suggested in literature that criticism of gender-neutral or gender-fair language is rarely linguistic in nature (e.g., Bodine, 1975; Martyna, 1978; Blaubergs, 1980; Parks and Robertson, 1998; Karwatowska & Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2005; Sarasin et al., 2012; Douglas & Sutton, 2014; Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2015; Cremades & Fernández-Portero, 2022). Most critical arguments do not stem from linguistic limitations, such as phonetic difficulties, lack of suffixes, or constraints in word formation but often appeal to ideological, sociological, and historical factors. Therefore, it seems justified to refer to this type of criticism as emotional criticism. Emotional criticism was addressed in Blaubergs (1980) where eight arguments against past gender-fair reforms in English were enumerated (presented in Table 1).

Table 1. Blaubergs' Taxonomy of Arguments Against Gender-Neutral/Fair Language (1980)

Name	Description
Cross-cultural	Argues that if languages were inherently sexist, there would be a direct link between the visibility of women in language and their societal status.
Language is a trivial concern	Acknowledges the potential sexism in language but views it as less important compared to other gender equality issues.
Freedom of speech/unjustified coercion	Frames inclusive language guidelines as restrictive rules and regulations, equating them to censorship (Kingston & Lovelace, 1977a; 1977b, as cited in Blaubergs 1980, 140).
Sexist language is not sexist	Claims that the generic masculine was never intended to be sexist and thus is not sexist.
Word etymology	Refers to the historical meanings of words to argue they were not originally gender-specific.
Appeal to authority	Relies on dictionaries and linguists to assert the correctness of current language practices.
Change is too difficult, confusing, inconvenient, or impractical	Suggests that while the generic masculine might be sexist, altering it would be too problematic for speakers.
It would destroy historical authenticity and literary works	Claims that adopting non-sexist language would require "rewriting" existing texts, thereby losing their original meaning and style.

Parks and Robertson (1998) expanded on Blaubergs' taxonomy by adding four more arguments (presented in Table 2).

Table 2. Parks and Robertson's Addition to Blaubergs' taxonomy (1998)

Name	Description
Sexism is acceptable	Supports the claim that men are superior to women, and suggests that this should be reflected in language.
Hostility and ridicule	Shifts focus from the language itself to the advocates of change, often subjecting them to mockery.
Tradition	Views the use of generic masculine as a longstanding practice rooted in historical and societal norms.
Lack of understanding	Attributes resistance to a lack of awareness or consideration among speakers regarding the impact of language.

Vergoossen et al. (2020) adapted and extended these frameworks to investigate the reception of a Swedish gender-neutral third-person pronoun. They grouped responses into twelve categories, which they further divided into four primary dimensions of resistance to gender-neutral language (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Dimensions of Resistance to Gender-Neutral Language (Vergoossen et al., 2020)*

Name	Description
Defending the linguistic status quo	Encompasses arguments such as ‘change is too difficult,’ ‘appeal to authority,’ ‘word etymology,’ and ‘tradition’.
Sexism and cisgenderism	Revises Parks and Robertson’s ‘sexism is acceptable’ to include arguments that ignore or marginalize non-binary people.
Diminishing the issue and its proponents	Includes arguments like ‘hostility and ridicule,’ ‘freedom of speech/ unjustified coercion,’ ‘sexist language is a trivial concern,’ and ‘sexist language is not sexist’.
Distractor in communication	Considers gender-neutral language as an impediment to effective communication.

Interestingly, Vergoossen’s et al. findings suggest that these types of arguments are not limited to specific cultures, languages or times, but are, in fact, cross-cultural and cross-linguistic (2020).

4 Method

4.1 Scope/aim

This study aims to examine and compare (1) the availability and content of institutional gender-neutral/fair language recommendations in Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom, and (2) the most recurrent arguments for and against gender-neutral/fair language in the research material. First, a comparative analysis of the available guidelines allows us to determine trends related to gender-fair/neutral language in the countries studied. Second, analyzing arguments for and against such language in these countries helps identify the main constraints on its adoption. We hypothesize, in line with relevant literature, that (1) the guidelines align with the internal logic of the language, i.e., they suggest feminization for languages with grammatical gender and neutralization for languages with natural gender (Karwatowska & Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2005; Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2019); (2) criticism toward gender-fair or gender-neutral language is more emotional than linguistic (Blau-bergs, 1980; Bodine, 1975; Cremades & Fernández-Portero, 2021; Douglas & Sutton, 2014; Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2015; Karwatowska & Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2005; Martyna, 1978; Parks & Robertson, 1998; Sarasin et al., 2012); and (3) critical arguments against gender-fair language are cross-linguistic and cross-cultural (Vergoossen et al., 2020).

This study is divided into two main parts. The guidelines content analysis section examines the main points of official guidelines on gender-neutral and gender-fair language in Spain, the UK, and Poland. It identifies the primary trends in gender-fair/neutral language guidelines, focusing on the types of lexis, as well as approaches to such language in explanatory notes and forewords. For Poland, the results are supplemented with data from two non-state-issued sets of language guidance. The second part, the argument analysis, explores opinions and debates on gender-fair/neutral language in the three countries and categorizes them according to Parks and Robertson’s arguments and Vergoossen et al.’s dimensions to identify the main obstacles to adopting gender-neutral/

fair language. In these analyses, we take into account emotional responses in public debates, socio-political discourse, and the broader contexts of each country.

4.2 Materials

We compiled a multilingual corpus of guidelines and advice, opinions, and debates on gender-fair and gender-neutral language. We present the corpus structure, divided into the three languages, in Table 4.

Table 4. Corpus Structure Divided into Polish, Spanish, and English

Language	Document type	Details	Source	Year
Polish	EU Guidelines for Polish	Guidelines on gender-fair language use in official EU documents for Polish	European Parliament, Council of the EU (European Parliament, 2018; Council of the European Union, 2018)	2018
	Collection of Guidelines from Institutions	Guidelines on gender-inclusive language	Various, e.g., universities	2013–2024
	Language Advice from Advisory Councils	Collection of related language vice from linguists	Various, e.g., Polish Language Advisory ⁴ , Language Advisory of the University of Warsaw ⁵	2013–2024
	Opinions on Gender-Fair Language of the Council for the Polish Language	Opinions on the use of gender-fair language in Polish	Council for the Polish Language (RJP, 2012; 2019)	2012, 2019
Spanish	Official Parliamentary Guidelines	Guidelines from the Spanish Parliament on gender-inclusive language	Spanish Parliament (CD, 2023)	2023
	Report on Inclusive Language	Analysis and recommendations on inclusive language in the Spanish constitution	Royal Spanish Academy (RAE, 2020)	2020
	Opinion on Institutional Guidelines	Opinion on gender-inclusive language in Spanish institutional guidelines	Royal Spanish Academy (RAE, 2024)	2024

4 PWN. Available at: <https://sjp.pwn.pl/poradnia>. Accessed June 2024.
5 Poradnia Językowa. Available at: <https://poradniajezykowa.uw.edu.pl/>. Accessed June 2024.

Language	Document type	Details	Source	Year
English	Gender-Neutral Drafting Guidance	Guidance on drafting gender-neutral legislation	Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC, 2024)	2024
	Debates on Gender-Neutral Language	Transcripts from debates in the House of Lords regarding gender-neutral language	House of Lords (House of Lords, 2013; 2021)	2013, 2021

4.3 Procedure

To analyze the guidelines and the opinions/debates, we employ a two-step process. First, we use corpus analysis techniques to examine the guidelines. This part of the study is conducted using Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al., 2014) and involves: (1) generating a keyword list to identify the primary subjects discussed in the guidelines, (2) performing a concordance analysis to understand the contexts in which these keywords appear, and (3) describing the content to highlight the main topics and key information covered. Second, we perform an argument analysis of opinions on gender-fair/neutral language using quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods (Bengtsson, 2016). This analysis is both deductive and inductive, and it includes several steps: (1) coding arguments using an adapted list based on Parks and Robertson's (1998) taxonomy of twelve arguments against non-sexist language, categorized into four dimensions identified by Vergoossen et al. (2020); (2) introducing adaptations to the coding list to better suit the languages and cultures studied: (a) 'Word Etymology' is expanded to 'Word Etymology/Grammar' to include grammatical features of Polish and Spanish; (b) The 'Cross-Cultural' argument includes comparisons with other languages to downplay the need for implementing gender-neutral/fair language; (c) 'Appeal to Authority' is broadened to include arguments based on the majority of speakers of a given language; (d) 'It Would Destroy Historical Authenticity and Literary Works' is rephrased as 'It Would Destroy the Language' to generalize its impact; (e) A new category, 'Threat to Women,' is added, suggesting that gender-neutral language decreases women's visibility and threatens their rights; (f) 'Sexist Language is Not Sexist' is integrated into the first dimension, as it is often used to defend the linguistic status quo; (g) The 'Cross-Cultural' argument, which did not appear in Vergoossen et al.'s (2020) sample, is classified as 'Diminishing the Issue and Its Proponents'; (h) Arguments that do not fit into these modified categories are classified as 'Other: Negative' or 'Other: Positive' and discussed further. The data for this part of the analysis is processed using Taguette, a free computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Rampin & Rampin, 2021).

5 Analysis

5.1 Guidelines for Polish

In Poland, the derivation of feminine personal nouns from the so-called 'generic' masculine has been debated since at least the beginning of the 20th century (Woźniak, 2014). Grammatical gender, gender in language, and gender-sensitive Polish have been

extensively studied (e.g., Karwatowska & Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2005; Łaziński, 2006; Małocha-Krupa, 2018; Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2023, 2024), also within institutional, parliamentary, and legal contexts (e.g., Śledzińska-Simon, 2022; Tomaszewska & Jamka, 2024). Despite the evident interest and potential significance of this topic, to this day no official state-issued recommendations for gender-neutral or gender-fair language have been drafted in Poland. Therefore, one of the materials analyzed is the recommendations for the Polish language as outlined in the EU institutional guidelines.

5.1.1 EU guidelines for Polish

Gender-fair language guidelines for Polish developed by the EU (European Parliament, 2018; Council of the European Union, 2018) are part of a multilingual initiative to encourage non-discriminatory, inclusive language among EU professionals (e.g., drafters, translators). In Polish, the guidelines acknowledge challenges posed by its grammatical structure (see Section 2). When the person's gender is unknown, both masculine and feminine forms can be used together with *lub* (or), e.g., *sprawozdawca lub sprawozdawczyni* (male/female rapporteur) or *poseł lub posłanka* (male/female member of parliament). They address academic titles and professions, noting the frequent use of masculine forms for women (e.g., *profesor*). Although feminine forms are sometimes perceived as less "serious," their use has recently grown for some professions, such as *psycholożka* (female psychologist), *filozofka* (female philosopher), and *politolożka* (female political scientist). To ensure precision and conciseness in formal texts, the guidelines advise against lengthy sentences listing both forms. In less formal texts, however, the full range of Polish forms should foster inclusivity, e.g., *osoby uczestniczące* (participating persons) instead of the masculine plural *uczestnicy* (participants). These guidelines arose from the need to avoid words seen as biased, discriminatory, or demeaning. Their reception, as noted by Roszkowski (2009), Piotrowski (2014), and WPolityce.pl⁶ (2019), often involves emotional reactions, reflecting perceived threats to traditional structures and norms. Another document considered is the Council of the European Union's guidelines, applying to most communication in the General Secretariat but not to EU legislation. They propose gender-fair strategies: (1) use feminine forms for women (e.g., *urzędniczka, dyrektorka, stażystka*), (2) use both masculine and feminine forms (e.g., *urzędnik/urzędniczka*), (3) employ collective numerals (e.g., *dwoje, troje, oboje*) if group composition is known, and (4) use plural forms, though masculine plurals can evoke masculine associations.

The EU's Polish guidelines also emphasize the emotional aspect of criticism. They recommend applying gender-neutral language in oral and informal communication as well, making inclusivity a collective responsibility to avoid stereotyping or demeaning others. These guidelines build on current Secretariat practices, inter-institutional norms

6 E.g., Piotrowski, M. (2014) Europa neutralna płciowo? *Niedziela*. <https://www.niedziela.pl/artikul/110892/nd/Europa-neutralna-plciowo>; Roszkowski, W. (2009). *Gość Niedzielny*. <https://www.gosc.pl/doc/765961.Jezyk-neutralny-plciowo>; WPolityce.pl. (2019). <https://wpolityce.pl/swiat/428280-kolejny-absurd-pe-wprowadza-jezyk-neutralny-plciowo>

(e.g., Inter-institutional Style Guide⁷), other EU and international organizations' guidelines, emerging Polish language usage, and academic research. If doubts arise, consulting the Polish Language Department's language unit or the Equal Opportunities Office is encouraged.

5.1.2 Institutional and public Polish-language guidelines and linguistic advice requests

Another data type we collected are various Polish-language recommendations and linguistic advice requests. This part of material is composed of two subcorpora: (1) guidelines on gender-inclusive language from non-state institutions, e.g., universities and (2) linguistic advice articles in which individuals seek guidance from Polish linguists on the correct usage and formation of gender-related language forms. This dataset is composed of 53 publications spanning from 2013 to 2024, with a concentration of materials from 2019 to 2024. The compiled corpus consists of 134,482 tokens, 107,076 distinct words, and 4,130 sentences (see Table 4 for corpus statistics).

5.1.2.1 Institutional and public Polish-language guidelines

The Polish-language data on institutional and public guidelines for gender-neutral and gender-fair language includes documents promoting equality and non-discriminatory language in institutional contexts (e.g., University of Warsaw, University of Rzeszów). Several trends emerge from these guidelines. First, there is a strong emphasis on interpreting what "avoiding discriminatory language" means. For example, one guideline recommends *dyrektor generalna* (female general director) and *redaktor naczelna* (female editor-in-chief), where the noun is masculine but the adjective is feminine. Some guidelines suggest feminization by making both noun and adjective feminine. To create feminine forms, some propose adding suffixes *-ka* or *-yni/ini*. Another method is pragmatic derivation, altering the masculine or generic adjective ending to feminine *-a*. Splitting is also mentioned. As alternatives, some guidelines recommend collective nouns like *kadra* (staff), *zespół* (team), or *drużyna* (crew) instead of gendered terms (e.g., *pracownicy* [employees], *członkowie* [members], *nauczyciele* [teachers]). Another approach is choosing wording that avoids gendered forms altogether, e.g., *prowadzisz badania naukowe* (you conduct research) instead of *jesteś naukowcem* (you are a researcher).

A dominant subject is the use of feminine forms, evidenced by keywords like *feminy* (89 occurrences; 662 ppmw) and *równościowy* (104 occurrences; 773 ppmw). This reflects their importance in Poland's professional and academic contexts. Examples include *kwestorka* (female bursar), *rektorka* (female rector), *kanclerka* (female chancellor), *specjalistka* (female specialist), *wykładowczyni* (female lecturer), *szatniarka* (female cloakroom attendant), *profesorka* (female professor), and *doktorka* (female doctor). Keywords related to sexual orientation and gender identity are also present, including *LGBT* (175 occurrences; 1301 ppmw), *niebinarny* (93 occurrences; 692 ppmw; non-binary), and *biseksualny* (93 occurrences; 208 ppmw; bisexual).

7 Available at: <https://style-guide.europa.eu/en/home>, accessed June 2024.

Unlike guidelines from other countries, the Polish-language gender-fair/gender-neutral guidelines incorporate gender identity terminology, likely due to their origins in universities and advocacy groups rather than legislative frameworks. Such data also reflects socio-political and emotional factors influencing the adoption of these guidelines, including efforts to prevent exclusion and lexical trends mirroring ongoing societal debates.

5.1.2.2 Language advice from advisory councils

The language advice subcorpus explores the use of feminine personal nouns and gender-neutral terms, focusing on their creation, contemporary usage, and integration into language practices. The documents provide guidance on using such nouns appropriately, addressing challenges and cultural variations. The content includes practical advice for using gender-neutral alternatives. Particular attention is given to feminine nouns that reflect the role of women in various professions and functions. People seeking advice are particularly interested in understanding the rules for forming and using these nouns across different contexts. Discussed examples include i.a., *ministra/ministerka* (female minister), *adiunktka* (female assistant professor), *prezydentka* (female president), or *geolożka* (female geologist), i. e. feminine forms that either may be difficult to pronounce (*adiunktka*), denote prestigious titles/professions (*prezydentka*, *ministra/ministerka*) or are considered troublesome due to the change from the final /g/ to /z/ in derivation (*geolożka*) (Szpyra-Kozłowska, 2019). Other types of requests are those related to the potential homonymy between feminine non-personal nouns and feminine personal nouns denoting specific professions. For example, one inquirer wants to know how to refer to a woman working as *tokarz* (turner) or *drukarz* (printer). According to the Polish word formation system, their feminine counterparts (*tokarka* [female turner], *drukarka* [female printer]) would be homonyms of the object such as lathe (*tokarka* in Polish) or printer (*drukarka* in Polish). Another issue is whether usage is sufficient to use a word not found in the dictionary. The request reads: “I would like to ask whether the word *akwarystka* is correct. It is the feminine form of *akwarysta* (aquarist), but it is not present in dictionaries. Is it already in common use? How do you view its official usage?”. The responses to such requests vary and reflect the differing perspectives on gender-fair and gender-neutral language of the linguists who address them.

The inquiries also touch upon other aspects of grammatical gender. These include neuter nouns, e. g., those with a suffix *-szcze*: *kurwiszcze*⁸ (a highly derogatory term for a prostitute and/or invective); *aktywiszcze*⁹ (a term used by some non-binary activists¹⁰) as well as gender-neutral, i. e., non-sex-specific nouns. People also seek guidance on polite forms of address to non-binary individuals, aiming to find respectful terms that accom-

8 Language Advisory of the University of Warsaw (2023). *Kurwiszcze*. Available at <https://poradniajezykowa.uw.edu.pl/porady/kurwiszcze>, accessed June 2024.

9 PWN Language Advisory (2023). *Aktywiszcze*. Available at <https://sjp.pwn.pl/poradnia/haslo/O-tzw-osobatywach;23145.html>, accessed June 2024.

10 Wysokie Obcasy (2023). *Aktywiszcze San Kocoi: Byłom zaskoczone, że kwestia moich zaimków wywołała taką burzę*. Available at: <https://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/7,163229,30186122,aktywiszcze-san-kocon-bylom-zaskoczone-ze-kwestia-moich.html>

moderate such identities. Furthermore, some inquiries focus on descriptions of women in specific professions, such as *kobieta kierująca tirem*¹¹ (woman driving a truck), as well as collective terms for Polish citizens, including *Polki i Polacy* (Polish women and men).

5.1.3 Opinions of the council for the Polish language

The Council for the Polish Language (Polish: *Rada Języka Polskiego, RJP*) is an advisory body on matters related to the Polish language. Its main tasks include advising on language policy in Poland, establishing rules of spelling and punctuation, and issuing opinions on various aspects of language, including gender-neutral and gender-sensitive language. The Council issued two opinions on gender-fair language in 2012 and 2019, addressing the use, correctness, and necessity of feminine forms, mostly in reference to job titles. Both opinions sparked extensive discussions in Polish media and academia (e.g., MJP/PAP, 2012; Latos, 2020; Kliks-Pudlik, 2023). Latos (2020) highlighted inconsistencies in the first opinion and noted a shift in the Council's approach to gender-fair language in 2019, while Kliks-Pudlik (2023) emphasized that the second opinion points out the importance of allowing speakers to choose the gender form they are most comfortable with.

5.2 Guidelines for Spanish

5.2.1 Parliamentary guidelines

Spanish parliamentary gender-fair language guidelines (CD, 2023), titled “Recommendations for non-sexist use of language in the parliamentary Administration,” were issued in December 2023. They are 15 pages long, consisting of a foreword and three main parts. The foreword states that the guidelines have legal and linguistic bases (unlike in Poland), namely Article 14(11) of the Organic Act for effective equality between women and men (Ley Orgánica 3/2007), the Plan for Equality of Cortes Generales (CD, 2020), other Spanish institutional guidelines for non-sexist communication, and grammatical norms and recommendations by the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE, 2020). Article 14(11) calls for the “implementation of non-sexist language in government and furtherance thereof in all social, cultural and artistic relationships” (Ley Orgánica 3/2007). Although this act is from the 21st century, the first non-sexist Spanish guidelines date back to the 1980s, and since then many public institutions (city halls, universities, ministries) have published their own recommendations (Guerrero Salazar, 2020). The preamble thus frames these guidelines as official, legal, and linguistically normative principles of communication within the Spanish parliamentary administration. The first part is divided into seven main points with examples. Although Spanish has a robust grammatical gender system, the guidelines suggest a mixed approach: neutralization for mixed groups/generic persons and feminization for a particular woman/group of women. Neutralization includes using gender-neutral adjectives (e.g., *diferente*) instead of gender-marked ones (*distinto*, *distinta*), collective nouns (*el personal* instead of *los empleados*), and unmarked determiners (*cada* instead of *todos*). Another technique is to avoid overusing the generic masculine

¹¹ *Tirówka*, a feminine personal noun derived in line with the principles of Polish word formation system, is used as a derogatory term for a prostitute.

by choosing collective nouns or splitting (e.g., *el funcionariado* or *los funcionarios y las funcionarias* instead of just *los funcionarios*). Changing word order to avoid masculine determiners when referring to a mixed group/generic person is also suggested. Splitting should be used sparingly to avoid lengthy texts. Feminization techniques include using feminine job titles for women (*la diputada*) and advising masculine/feminine determiners and suffixes indicating feminine gender with a slash or a “person + adjective” construction for generic persons (e.g., *el/la interesado/a*, *la persona interesada*). The guidelines also recommend words without gender asymmetry (*varón/mujer* instead of *hombre/hembra*). Numerous examples illustrate these techniques, showing neutralization across all word classes and feminization with a list of parliamentary job titles in feminine forms.

The second part lists techniques to avoid: (1) deriving sex-specific forms from compound nouns by changing stems/suffixes (e.g., *portavoza* is incorrect; use *el portavoz/la portavoz*), (2) using symbols (-@) or morphemes (-x, -e) for gender-neutral forms, and (3) using feminine forms not recognized by the RAE. The guidelines conclude that all techniques are complementary and each text calls for a different approach.

These recommendations are noteworthy because (1) although called recommendations, the foreword’s legal and linguistic references frame them as official and binding; (2) they offer a range of techniques, illustrated with examples, allowing flexibility in implementation; (3) they reflect a mixed stance toward the RAE’s opinions. Although the preamble states the guidelines follow the RAE’s norms, much content contradicts the Academy’s stance that the masculine grammatical gender is inclusive, not sexist, and that avoiding it is unnecessary and hinders communication and the Spanish language (RAE, 2020; 2024).

5.2.2 Royal Spanish Academy opinions

The Royal Spanish Academy (Spanish: *Real Academia Española*, RAE) is an official royal institution responsible for language planning, research, and prescription. In this study, we analyze two opinions issued by the RAE. The first opinion is a report on inclusive language in the Spanish constitution (RAE, 2020), commissioned in July 2018 by the Spanish government that expressed an interest in editing the Spanish Constitution to make it more gender-fair. This report is divided into two sections: an analysis of the Constitution language in terms of gender-fairness and the RAE’s opinion on linguistic sexism. It is supplemented by appendices: a sample of the RAE’s linguistic advice and a list of changes to the Spanish Language Dictionary related to gender-fair language. The second part of the report is a statement on the official Spanish parliamentary guidelines for non-sexist communication (RAE 2024). Similar to the opinions of the Council for the Polish Language, the Spanish texts primarily discuss the necessity and correctness of creating and using feminine forms.

5.3 Guidelines for English

5.3.1 Policy-drafting guidelines

Since the development of feminist linguistics in the 1970s (Curzan, 2003), efforts have aimed to replace sex-specific titles, such as *chairman*, with gender-neutral alternatives like *chairperson*. Similar initiatives included replacing generic *he* with *he and she* or *they*. The first English-speaking countries to adopt gender-neutral drafting were Australia and

New Zealand in the 1980s, followed by Canada and South Africa (early 1990s), the US (early 2000s), and the UK (2007). This shift ended the “masculine rule” in British legislation, which had assumed masculine pronouns included both males and females since the 19th century (Williams, 2008). The latest British gender-neutral policy-drafting guidelines (OPC, 2024), available on the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel’s website, are part of “Drafting guidance” prepared by its Drafting Techniques Group. The entire document consists of an introduction, 11 chapters, and an appendix. Gender-neutral recommendations appear in part 2, “language and style,” divided into “gender neutrality” and “sex-specific language,” each preceded by the relevant government policy.

The “gender-neutrality” section explains that primary legislation should avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes (OPC, 2024). It explicitly calls for neutralization, recommending avoidance of gendered pronouns and sex-specific nouns through three main techniques: (1) repeating the noun, (2) using singular/plural *they*, or (3) rewording the sentence. Examples are drawn from actual legislation. The “sex-specific language” section notes that using sex-specific language is sometimes appropriate (OPC, 2024). Unlike Spanish or European guidelines, the British guidance considers trans and intersex people. It states the UK sees sex as binary and that a person’s legal sex is determined by a birth or gender recognition certificate. For intersex individuals, policy decisions influence drafting. It also mentions that under Section 6 of the Interpretation Act 1978, “words importing the masculine gender include the feminine” and vice versa, allowing *woman* to apply to trans men in pregnancy-related legislation. However, excessive reliance on this rule risks unclear drafting. When sex-specific vocabulary is needed, the guidance suggests either using “without more” (no additional explanation) or adding an explanatory note referencing the specific act of law.

5.3.2 House of Lords debates

In the absence of an official English language advisory body, we took into account two parliamentary debates on inclusive communication, which are published and available for download from Hansard. The first debate (House of Lords, 2013) focuses on gender-neutral bill drafting, particularly the usage of *they* as a generic pronoun. The second debate (House of Lords, 2021) focuses on the use of the words *mother* and *person* in the Ministerial and other Maternity Allowances Bill. Both debates focus on gender neutrality in legislation, as stipulated in the British guidance on drafting. As such, the matters discussed differ from those in the Polish and Spanish texts.

5.4 Argument analysis: opinions from Poland, UK, and Spain

In this section, we quantitatively and qualitatively analyze opinions on gender-neutral/fair language in the countries studied. Our goal is to explore the relationship between the emotions expressed in criticisms of gender-fair language and the availability and content of these guidelines. Table 5 presents the quantitative results of a content analysis on three sets of opinions and debates regarding gender-fair/neutral language¹².

12 All (n=455) coded arguments are available in the GitHub repository at: <https://github.com/ajamka92/tagged-arguments-Tomaszewska-Jamka-2024-.git>

Table 5. Quantitative results of the content analysis

Dimension	Argument	PL (n=36)	ES (n=231)	UK (n=188)	Total (n=455)
Defending the Linguistic Status Quo	Sexist language is not sexist	11.1 %	14.7 %	4.2 %	10.1 %
	Word-etymology/grammar	16.6 %	15.5 %	4.2 %	10.9 %
	Appeal to authority	5.5 %	8.2 %	0.5 %	4.8 %
	It would destroy historical authenticity and literary works	0 %	1.7 %	4.2 %	2.6 %
	Tradition	22.2 %	16 %	9 %	13.6 %
	Change is too difficult	0 %	7.3 %	1.5 %	4.3 %
	Total	55.4 %	63.4 %	23.6 %	46.3 %
Sexism and Cisgenderism	Sexism/cisgenderism is acceptable	0 %	0 %	19.1 %	7.9 %
	Threat to women	0 %	0 %	21.8 %	9 %
	Total	0 %	0 %	40.9 %	16.9 %
Diminishing the Issue and Its Proponents	Cross-cultural	2.7 %	6.9 %	3.1 %	5 %
	Language is a trivial concern	0 %	1.2 %	0.5 %	0.8 %
	Freedom of speech/unjustified coercion	5.5 %	1.2 %	1 %	1.5 %
	Hostility and ridicule towards proponents	2.7 %	9 %	5.3 %	7 %
	Lack of knowledge/understanding	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
	Total	10.9 %	18.3 %	9.9 %	14.3 %
Distractor in Communication		5.5 %	10.3 %	9.5 %	9.6 %
Other (Negative)		2.7 %	2.5 %	2.1 %	2.4 %
Other (Positive)		25 %	4.7 %	13.2 %	9.8 %

The most common dimension of criticism against gender-fair/gender-neutral language across all materials is ‘defending the linguistic status quo’ (46.3 %), followed by ‘sexism and cisgenderism’ (16.9 %), ‘diminishing the issue and its proponents’ (14.3 %), and ‘distractor in communication’ (9.6 %). However, ‘sexism and cisgenderism’ arguments appeared notably only in the British parliamentary debates (40.9 %). The only entirely absent argument was ‘lack of knowledge or understanding’. In the Polish data, ‘defending the linguistic status quo’ (55.4 %) dominated, reflecting strong resistance based on tradition and grammar. Positive arguments for gender-fair language reached 25 %, found mostly in the 2019 opinion. ‘Diminishing the issue and its proponents’ (10.9 %) and ‘distractor in communication’ (5.5 %) also occurred. The absence of ‘sexism and cisgenderism’ in Polish data suggests a focus on masculine-feminine forms, ignoring gender-neutral alternatives. Similarly, the Spanish material primarily defended the status quo (63.4 %), then minimized the issue (18.3 %), and treated it as a distraction

(10.3 %). Positive arguments (4.7 %) were fewer than in Polish data. Like Polish, Spanish data lacked ‘sexism and cisgenderism,’ focusing on binary sex distinctions. The British debates, in contrast, were dominated by ‘sexism and cisgenderism’ (40.9 %), then status quo defenses (23.6 %) and positive arguments (13.2 %). Criticisms regarding distractions and minimizing the issue both stood at 9.9 %. The prominence of ‘sexism and cisgenderism’ in the UK points to a different cultural and linguistic approach.

These findings show many emotionally-based arguments, supporting claims that resistance often stems from emotional and ideological grounds rather than purely linguistic ones (Blaubergs, 1980; Parks & Robertson, 1998; Karwatowska & Szypra-Kozłowska, 2005; Sarasin et al., 2012; Cremades & Fernández-Portero, 2021). Only 2.4 % of arguments fell outside Parks and Robertson’s (1998) or Vergoossen et al.’s (2020) taxonomies, indicating that such criticism is cross-cultural and cross-linguistic.

Unlike previous studies (Blaubergs, 1980; Parks & Robertson, 1998), we found many arguments favoring gender-fair/neutral language. This may be due to the recentness of the texts (2013–2024), as gender-fair language has become less controversial. Also, the institutional nature of sources (official statements/reports from advisory bodies and parliamentary debates) may limit overtly hostile or supportive statements, leading to more formal, constrained discourse (Freed, 2015). This may also explain the absence of ‘lack of knowledge/understanding’ arguments, particularly in Spanish and Polish data from language experts.

In Polish material (RJP, 2012; 2019), tradition was the most cited argument. The RJP noted the traditional use of masculine nouns for women in professional contexts, emphasizing their popularity, especially with prestigious job titles (2012; 2019). Such usage, often preceded by *pani* (lady/madame), is discussed in literature (Łaziński, 2006), advised by non-state institutional recommendations (Bańko et al., 2020), and confirmed by corpus studies (Tomaszewska & Jamka, 2024). However, there is a shift in the RJP’s stance. While the 2012 opinion had only one positive argument, the 2019 statement contained about 40 % positive arguments and encouraged symmetric use of feminine and masculine forms. Comparing both documents shows that the 2019 statement invalidated many critical arguments from 2012. For example, in 2012 the RJP considered *premiera* (‘female prime minister’) a distractor in communication due to homonymy with *premiera* (‘premiere’). In 2019, the RJP recognized this homonymy as no more distracting than that of masculine forms (e. g., *pilot* for a male pilot or a remote control), thus debunking the earlier claim.

The Spanish materials, dominated by ‘defending the linguistic status quo,’ advance the thesis that the masculine grammatical gender is inclusive (RAE, 2020: 6; 2024). This ‘sexist language is not sexist’ argument is often backed by ‘word etymology/grammar’ and ‘cross-cultural’ claims. The RAE stresses that the generic masculine’s “purely grammatical nature” (RAE, 2020, p. 6) is evident when different gender nouns that do not designate sexed beings agree, and that this feature occurs in all Spanish-speaking countries and Romance languages. The RAE also cites indigenous languages where the feminine is generic but women’s status is not improved, downplaying concerns about gender-fair language. While tradition, ‘sexist language is not sexist,’ and ‘word etymology/

grammar' dominate, many 'distractor in communication' arguments also appear, describing gender-fair alternatives as "extremely forced" (RAE, 2024), causing "ambiguity" (RAE, 2020, p. 61) or "helpless monotony" (RAE, 2020, p. 60), or violating discursive/pragmatic principles (RAE, 2020, p. 54). The RAE also uses the 'it would destroy' argument, claiming gender-neutral forms impoverish stylistic properties. Occasionally, hostility toward advocates of gender-fair language emerges, implying they lack scientific rigor or care only about prestigious positions. Finally, the RAE criticizes the Spanish administration for labeling their guidelines "recommendations for a non-sexist use of language" (CD, 2023), accusing them of hypocrisy and reiterating 'sexist language is not sexist.'

In the UK material, "sexism and cisgenderism" predominates. Unlike Polish and Spanish, English lacks grammatical gender and minimal inflection, so debates focus on using *they* instead of *he/she* and *person* or *mother/woman* in legislation about pregnancy. Against *they*, critics called it ambiguous, unclear, colloquial, and hard for "ordinary people" to understand (House of Lords, 2013). Some supported *they*, arguing language evolves with society and gender-neutral drafting is common in other English-speaking countries (House of Lords, 2013). Another debate centered on replacing *mother/woman* with *person* in the Ministerial and other Maternity Allowances Bill (House of Lords, 2021). Most saw *person* as erasing women from legal language, threatening their sex-based rights. Some claimed 'cisgenderism is acceptable,' asserting only women can bear children. Despite no explicit denigration of trans identities, motherhood was implied to be inherently female. One speaker supported *person*, saying *woman/mother* excludes trans men and non-binary people. Thus, UK debates saw gender-neutral drafting as threatening women's visibility.

Surprisingly, Polish and Spanish materials share more similarities than differences. Both mainly defend the status quo, focusing on tradition, grammar, and supposedly inclusive masculines. The key difference is the RAE's overtly critical stance versus the RJP's neutral or positive stance. This is seen in fewer positive arguments in Spanish material (4.7 % vs. 25 % in Polish) and presence of arguments absent in Polish (e.g., 'it would destroy', 'change is too difficult', 'language is a trivial concern'). The RAE also employs more 'hostility and ridicule' (9 % vs. 2.7 %) and 'cross-cultural' arguments (6.9 % vs. 2.7 %), heightening its critical tone. The British material differs significantly, dominated by 'sexism and cisgenderism', though 'defending the linguistic status quo' remains important, indicating tradition matters in limiting gender-fair/neutral language. All three countries share the same core issue: the visibility of women in language/discourse. In Polish and Spanish, this revolves around creating feminine forms to ensure women's visibility. In the British material, it appears in debates over preserving words like *mother* or *woman*. Despite different linguistic and cultural contexts, the underlying concern is similar. Table 6 summarizes these findings, comparing availability, linguistic system, key strategies, feminine forms, controversies, emotional resistance, cultural context, core issue, and implementation.

Table 6. Summary of quantitative and qualitative results of the content and argument analyses

Aspect	Poland	Spain	United Kingdom
Guidelines availability	No state-level guidelines; uses EU recommendations	National guidelines established (Ley Orgánica 3/2007, Congreso de los Diputados 2020, 2023)	National guidelines established (since 2007 [Williams, 2008]; OPC 2024)
Linguistic system	Grammatical gender (Slavic)	Grammatical gender (Romance)	Natural gender (Germanic)
Key strategies	Feminization, e.g., splitting Use of collective alternatives Gender-neutral language encouraged in less formal texts	Neutralization Feminization Splitting (rarely) Neutralization prioritized for mixed groups	Neutralization Singular <i>they</i> Gender-neutral rewording Limited use of sex-specific vocabulary in legislative texts
Examples	Male and female forms: <i>sprawozdawca</i> lub <i>sprawozdawczyni</i> (rapporteur) Gender-neutral forms: <i>osoby uczestniczące</i> (participating persons) instead of <i>uczestnicy</i> (participants)	Collective nouns: <i>el personal</i> (personnel) instead of <i>los empleados</i> (employees) Feminine titles: <i>la diputada</i> (female MP)	Gender-neutral titles: <i>chairperson</i> instead of <i>chairman</i> Neutral pronouns: <i>they</i> instead of <i>he/she</i>
Feminine forms	Encouraged in informal/EU contexts; debated in formal settings	Recommended for specific female references and job titles	Limited; focus on neutral terms; used contextually
Controversies	Debates on feminization for prestigious roles	Balancing between the norm established by the RAE and creating gender-fair guidelines; Avoids -@, -x, -e symbols for gender-neutral forms rejects non-standard feminization like <i>portavoza</i>	Debates on the use of gender-neutral wording in sex-specific contexts
Emotional Resistance	Tradition and grammar-based arguments; users' resistance to feminization in the context of prestigious job titles	Perceived awkwardness of changes; fear of communication ambiguity; Fear of impoverishing the language	Concerns about clarity and natural use of <i>they</i> ; Concerns about marginalizing the role of women in discourse
Cultural Context	Conservative gender roles; resistance in official contexts	Strong feminist movement; institutional support for inclusivity	Progressive drafting policies; balancing traditional and modern views
Core Issue	Visibility of women in language/discourse	Visibility of women in language/discourse	Visibility of women in language/discourse
Implementation	EU guidelines in institutional settings; increasing informal use	To be widely implemented in public institutions; ongoing debates on expanding practices	Implemented in legislative texts; guidance for sex-specific terms in specific contexts

In Poland, the absence of state-issued guidelines is partly compensated by EU recommendations for Polish and by recommendations from universities, NGOs, and local authorities. These documents advise feminization, splitting, and collective or gender-neutral terms, especially in less formal contexts. However, social resistance persists, particularly in formal settings, with ongoing debates about feminizing prestigious roles. Conversely, Spain has established national guidelines through legislation (e.g., *Ley Orgánica*) and parliamentary documents. They incorporate similar strategies extending into formal contexts. Despite concerns about some gender-neutral terms seeming unnatural or causing communication issues, these guidelines are widely implemented in public institutions, with discussions on further expansion. In the UK, the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel has issued national legislative drafting guidelines focusing on neutralization (e.g., singular “they,” gender-neutral rewording), while still allowing context-dependent use of sex-specific terms. The UK’s cultural context shows a progressive approach to drafting policies, with debates often centering on women’s visibility in language. In all three languages, resistance appears driven more by emotional and ideological factors than by linguistic ones. The main conflict is women’s visibility in discourse. While this issue is less prominent in Polish and Spanish materials, it becomes a key argument against gender-neutral language in British discourse.

The link between official gender-fair guidelines and institutional criticism seems minimal. For instance, Poland lacks official parliamentary guidelines, yet the Polish Language Council supported feminine nouns in 2019. Similarly, the Royal Spanish Academy’s reservations in 2020 and 2024 affect only a small portion of Spain’s state-issued guidelines. Potential drafters of Polish state-issued guidelines could benefit from examining Spain’s “Recommendations for non-sexist use of language in the parliamentary administration,” which offer a variety of gender-fair and gender-neutral strategies suitable for languages with grammatical gender systems.

6 Conclusions

The key differences among the three countries regarding gender-neutral/fair language guidelines lie in their level of formality and institutionalization (state-issued guidelines for Spanish and English, and non-state-issued for Polish), their content, and the recommended strategies. While UK gender-neutral drafting guidelines suggest avoiding sex-specific vocabulary unless contextually required, Spanish guidelines encourage the use of feminine forms when referring to female representatives. Polish non-official recommendations, beyond discussing feminization, also address broader issues such as gender identity and sexual orientation. Analysis of multilingual opinions on gender-neutral/fair language confirms that the main obstacles to adopting these strategies are predominantly emotional and ideological rather than purely linguistic. The majority of arguments analyzed do not indicate lexical, phonetic, or grammatical constraints against using gender-fair/neutral language.

Two factors motivated the selection of various sources: the lack of state-issued guidelines from Polish institutions and the attempt to gain a wider perspective. However, this approach introduces limitations to be considered in future research. The documents

analyzed vary in length, origin, and genre. Unlike their English and Spanish counterparts, Polish guidelines are not state-issued. They span several genres: EU guidelines pertain to parliamentary and internal institutional activities, university guidelines focus on academic communication, and language advice responds to individual requests. While Polish and Spanish opinions on gender-fair language come from language-advisory bodies, the English materials originate from parliamentary debates. Although these sources contribute to understanding attitudes toward gender-fair/neutral language, the differences in genre may influence the arguments presented.

Secondly, individual language preferences relate to subjective experiences and cultural backgrounds, which may affect the acceptance of gender-inclusive language. Further research could involve surveys on the reception of these guidelines or sentiment analyses of public reactions. This would yield insights into how the guidelines are perceived by different groups and how they influence communication in various contexts. Additionally, the institutional discourse analyzed here does not fully capture the emotional range evident in broader public debates. Future research should include a more diverse range of data sources, such as social media discussions and other forms of public discourse, to better understand public sentiment and practical applications of gender-neutral/fair language.

Finally, since content analysis used in the argument analysis is a qualitative method relying on the researcher's interpretation, it is subject to researcher bias. Future studies should draw on more extensive material, involve multiple annotators, and employ adjudication techniques to mitigate bias. Another key area of future research is the development of a unified framework for examining guideline content and assessing the effectiveness of gender-fair language strategies across different languages and cultural contexts. The lack of such a standardized framework currently makes it challenging to comprehensively evaluate and compare the implementation of these strategies. Establishing one would enable systematic analysis of how official guidelines are applied in practice, considering both adherence to the guidelines and the emotional and subjective factors influencing language use.

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Narrative as justification for emotional evaluation of Turner syndrome identity

A case of anger and pride-inducing experience

The current chapter analyzes retrospective narratives delivered in semi structured interviews with women with Turner syndrome. It aims to explore how narratives are shaped to enable the *fittingness* of emotions (D'Arms & Jacobson, 2000) to situated identities performed by interactants. The data are retrieved from a larger corpus of interviews with Turner syndrome women. The narratives justifying two emotions of contrastive valence (anger and pride) have been selected for analysis to find out whether identities of women diagnosed with one and the same genetic aberration can be bipolar, subject to social influences. The analysis has revealed variation in (i) the emphasis put on the development of the components of Labovian narrative structure and (ii) the propositional structure of narratives recounting experience of the opposed emotions. It has positively verified the hypothesis that interactants shape their narratives differently to justify for versions of identities they aim to perform.

Keywords: *emotions, identity, narrative, Turner syndrome*

1 Introduction

Scholars investigating the relationship between language and emotions approach this issue from two different perspectives. One of them “focuses primarily on the ‘expression’ of emotions, i. e., the behavioral act of expressing affect in communication” (Bamberg, 1997, p. 309). The other sees language to be a means of making sense of emotions, i. e., by referring to emotions languages enable people across the world to engage in talk about the emotions. It is this former that I will take as a starting point for this paper. However, I will continue and employ the latter to investigate into narratives of emotional events in a subject’s life.

The scholarly literature of recent decades is abundant with concepts emphasizing emotions as sustaining essential connections with interpersonal relationships. These concepts emphasize the fact that emotions are accompanied with verbal expression processes. What used to be considered as a private subjective experience (e. g., Arnold, 1960; Duprez et al., 2015; Frijda, 1986) is turned into words and communicated. In a similar

vein, most of the formative forces explored for identities like social groups, power relations, discourses and narratives are interpersonal. “Internal and external processes are co-constitutive; that is they have effects both ways” (Hollway, 2010, p. 217). Identity as “an actor’s experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative” (Tilly, 1996, p. 7). Learning how to share stories in accord with particular cultural parameters, within particular groups, and in formal and informal social contexts is a prerequisite for identity development (McAdams & McLean, 2013).

In the narrative research on the emotion process, narratives are argued to “take on the important role of the normative form with which to process and communicate emotional experiences [...] What is missing in psychological emotion theories and research is the role of narrative as a communicative means of retrospectively contextualizing emotions and re-presenting emotion episodes so that they can be shared, interpreted, and negotiated (Habermas & Bongard, 2024, p. 2). Moreover, a potential of an emotional retrospective narrative as a tool of identity performance has not received much attention in scholarly literature (Bamberg, 1997; Habermas, 2019; Habermas & Bongard, 2024).

In this chapter, I focus on the role of the appropriateness of narrated emotions and their employment for identity performance, and hypothesize that when narrating emotional events, the story told needs to demonstrate that the emotions are appropriate for the event and identity rendering. Furthermore, I aim to show that the appropriateness of emotions shapes the narrative and propositional structure of the narrated text, which differs between emotions, and that different emotions are narrated differently. I make my arguments on the example of anger and pride-inducing narrated events recounted by Polish women with Turner syndrome (TS).

2 Anger, pride, narratives and identity

Emotion can be defined as a process centered on events, characterized by (a) specific mechanisms that trigger emotions based on the significance of a stimulus, and (b) an immediate shaping of an emotional response across various aspects of the organism (Brosch et al., 2013). Emotions are elicited as individuals continually evaluate objects, events, and situations in terms of their relevance to their needs, objectives, values, and overall welfare (appraisal). Upon detecting a significant event, an adaptive emotional reaction is elicited, mobilizing resources to enable the individual to manage the situation.

Narrative plays a crucial role in the human emotional process due to three main functional relationships between emotion and storytelling (Habermas et al., 2009). Firstly, narratives serve as triggers of emotions, arousing feelings through their depiction of significant events. Secondly, narratives must revolve around reportable events (Labov, 1997) that deviate from canonical expectations, making them intriguing to listeners and likely to evoke emotions. This highlights the temporal parallelism between emotions and narratives, where complicating actions lead to emotion arousal and subsequent attempts at resolution (Ekman, 2003; Oatley, 1992). Finally, the act of narrating emotional events serves multiple purposes: it offers a cathartic release of negative emo-

tions, aids in understanding the events through causal sequencing, and fosters identity performance and social connections by sharing experiences and establishing a common reality. Consequently, narratives often conclude with happiness or sorrow, as these are the primary *outcome emotions*, while other emotions, termed *juncture emotions*, typically occur during the complication phase of the narrative.

Anger is a juncture emotion (Hogan, 2003) characterized by antagonism toward someone or something you feel has deliberately done you wrong. It is considered to be one of the most powerful and complex of all human emotions (Ho et al., 2010) a “prototypical emotion category” (Kövecses, 2000) which is frequently “accompanied by autonomic nervous system arousal” resulting in “cognitive distortions and deficiencies” and affecting “socially constructed and reinforced scripts (Ramirez & Andreu, 2006). Anger viewed as a temporally extended process that embraces the emotion-eliciting situation and coping with the ensuing emotion has a narrative quality and can be effectively understood in the narrative format that relates the events and enables their interpretation and evaluation (Lazarus, 1999; Habermas, 2019). “Narratives provide a background in terms of pre-history, characters, and context; they provide a provocation of the emotion, and a story of the attempts to cope with it”. (Habermas, 2019, p. 9). The narrator delves into the reasons behind a character’s anger, often rooted in perceived provocation. As Van Wolde (2008) argues, anger typically emerges as a response to prior provocation or the belief of being provoked.

Depicting scenes of anger in narratives involves the narrator’s use of expressive language to indicate the character’s emotions. This designation of anger is evident when the narrator directly associates the character’s mood with verbs that denote anger when describing heated scenes (Michael, 2015). In conversational narrative, however, emotions may not be explicitly verbalized. Tellers need to convince their listeners and themselves that the emotions fit the narrated scene, i.e., “narrators need to highlight that the specific appraisal conditions for the emotion(s) they exhibit are given and that the situation does not require different emotions” (Habermas & Bongard, 2024, p. 4). Scenes of anger are often confrontational and they directly help to move the plot forward because anger provides important drive for self-expression and action. Similarly, scenes of anger are intense emotional moments in narrative representation because they provide emotional template for the representation of characters. In fact, scenes of anger take audiences into the emotional world of the narrative with characters expressing passionately their anger and displeasure against the point of view of other characters (Michael, 2015). The scene of anger is often immediately followed by a question or series of questions posed by characters in the scene of anger or, in case of conversational narratives, by interactants. If the latter is the case, co-narrations of angry experiences can ensue, which can spur validation of the situational fittingness of the emotion.

Pride is a juncture emotion (Hogan, 2003) that arises when individuals evaluate a positive event as significant to their sense of self and their aspirations for personal identity. Events that evoke pride are attributed to the individual themselves. Feelings of pride are enjoyable and therefore serve as a form of reinforcement. Individuals feel pride in response to their accomplishments even in the absence of external validation.

Consequently, the reinforcing nature of pride motivates individuals to pursue further achievements autonomously.

Pride is argued to consist of two separate aspects called *authentic and hubristic pride* (Tracy & Robins, 2004), both of which are linked to a universally recognized nonverbal display. Authentic pride is characterized by feelings of achievement and self-assurance and encourages behaviors that benefit others, while hubristic pride is characterized by feelings of arrogance and superiority and encourages behaviors that are detrimental to social harmony. Tracy et al. (2023) propose that each aspect of pride plays a distinct role in achieving social status: Authentic pride appears to facilitate prestige – a status earned through admiration and respect – while hubristic pride appears to facilitate dominance – a status gained through force and intimidation.

The outward display of pride can have both beneficial and detrimental effects on social interactions. While it may strengthen one's position within a social circle by affirming achievements, it also has the potential to create distance between oneself and others, risking the quality of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, openly expressing pride may not always be advisable and could even lead to negative repercussions (Mosquera et al., 2000).

Pride is considered a self-conscious emotion evoked by comparing oneself and one's own conduct and accomplishments with the ideal self they construct referring to social norms and the performance of others. "Individuals experience self-conscious emotions only when they become aware that they have lived up to, surpassed, or failed to live up to their actual or ideal self-representations" (Tracy et al., 2023, p. 520). Without relying on external assessments, individuals strive to cultivate an identity that aligns with societal norms. Those who succeed in this endeavor are subsequently rewarded with social recognition, acceptance, and increased social status (Tracy & Robins, 2004).

Van Osch et al. (2018) argue that pride is evoked by social comparisons, that contain three elements: the self, the relationship between the self and another person, and the other person. Furthermore, from the literature on pride, they distill three related elements; perceptions and feelings of self-inflation, other-distancing, and other-devaluation. With respect to the self, pride has been linked with self-inflation or self-directedness. Feeling an inflated self – one that appears larger – has been proposed to be closely connected to the advantage of pride in attaining and upholding status (Tracy & Robins, 2007). If individuals who perceive themselves as larger also present themselves more prominently, this might result in heightened visibility and consequently raise perceptions of status (Shariff & Tracy, 2009). Regarding interactions between oneself and others, pride has been correlated with increased interpersonal distance. For instance, it has been suggested that individuals experiencing pride distance themselves from others (Van Osch et al., 2018), which can enhance salience. Proud individuals often view themselves as more akin to powerful than weak or inferior others, implying a separation from weaker individuals (Oveis et al., 2010). Concerning perceptions of others, pride may be linked with perceiving others as inferior, less worthy, or deserving less.

While narratives focusing on anger and fear have received considerable attention in research, there is limited understanding of the formal aspects of narratives involving

other emotions, including narratives of pride. Drawing on research concerning narratives of negative juncture emotions and positive outcome emotions, we can make some assumptions about the potential structure of pride narratives. Similar to narratives of anger, pride narratives may include extended segments dedicated to evaluating events and recounting efforts to resolve complications (cf. Hudson et al., 1991; Fivush et al., 2003), aiming to justify the elicitation and expression of pride. Unlike narratives designed to build suspense, pride narratives may incorporate evaluative thoughts expressed directly before the climax or resolution. Additionally, research indicates that narratives involving juncture emotions often feature proactive attempts to address complications and conclude with a resolution that resolves the emotion. In contrast, studies by Hudson and colleagues (1991) suggest that narratives of happy events are often presented as static “moment-in-time” narratives or brief chronological sequences, while narratives of anger tend to follow a more complete narrative structure. Given that pride, like happiness, is a positive emotion, it is conceivable that pride narratives may frequently lack a complication, with emphasis placed on the orientation and evaluation components instead.

3 Turner syndrome

Turner syndrome is a genetic aberration that results from the partial or complete loss of the second X-chromosome in phenotypic females and has a prevalence of 1 in 2000 to 2500 live born female children. Girls with TS have significant variability in their clinical presentation, but short stature, pubertal delay, and ovarian failure leading to infertility are recognized to be key symptoms of TS (Shankar & Backeljauw, 2018). The primary treatment for patients with Turner syndrome is growth hormone therapy (GHT) to maintain body stature, and additionally, estrogen replacement therapy (HRT) to prevent, amongst others, premature ovarian failure (Huang et al., 2021). While GH has been shown to be effective at increasing the height of patients with Turner syndrome, variables such as dosing and late initiation of treatment can reduce efficacy. What is more, the Ministry of Health in Poland began to reimburse growth hormone therapy for girls with Turner Syndrome in 2000 (Świątkiewicz-Mośny, 2010), which means that the girls whose puberty terminated before that year never received GH therapy since it has been proved ineffective after puberty. Consequently, the average height of these women is approximately 20 centimeters shorter than the population average, often not exceeding 140 centimeters. Although in its mild form TS is said to have low impact on the life of the affected individual, and “with adequate support and medical care, individuals with TS can reach their full potential with improved health-related and overall quality of life” (Shankar & Backeljauw, 2018, p. 40), the stigma associated with having Turner Syndrome, the short stature and other body deformations may ‘exacerbate the degree to which women feel that their bodies do not conform to the unrealistic standards prescribed by their culture, and consequently might have a greater impact on women’s self-esteem and body image concerns’ (Cragg & Lafrenier 2010, 437). People are motivated to evaluate themselves as positively as possible and when events threaten to deflate their positive self-evaluation or when they think they will make undesired

impressions on others (Leary 1983; Leary et al., 1987), they become anxious. Therefore body abnormalities in TS may be viewed as potentially causing psychological distress (Cragg and Lafrenier, 2010) and impacting the identity of an individual. Moreover, unfair access to hormone replacement therapy (HRT) might lead to different emotional appraisals of the quality of life in women of varied social experience with their bodies which would be reflected in stories about their experience with TS.

4 Current study

4.1 Method

4.1.1 Dataset and data collection

The sample for this chapter is derived from a larger corpus of ten interviews with Polish women with TS (a 870-minute data sample). All interviews were conducted in Polish and the audio was recorded; subsequently, selected parts where narratives had been identified were transcribed and translated into English. The interviews were semi-structured. Initially, the interviewees were asked to define Turner syndrome, and as the interview concluded, they were posed evaluative questions about the impact of TS on their real and possible (future) selves. The purpose of the opening question was to situate the conversation within the discourse of TS, while the closing questions addressed the central focus of the research, namely identity construction by TS individuals. For the current research, two interviews of similar length were randomly selected, with the only criterion being that one interview was conducted with a woman who had received growth hormone therapy, while the other was with a woman who had not. The rationale behind the criterion of selection was that a narrative by a woman deprived of GH therapy and thus of the body height considerably lower than the average in the population will feature anger while a narrative by a woman of average body stature will feature pride, given the hardships and challenges that women with TS face during the therapy.

4.1.2 Participants

Ten women with TS responded to a recruitment post via social media and volunteered to take part in an in-person interview in 2020. For the current research, the interviews with Eva and Lena were selected. The names are nicknames.

Eva, 56 years old, lives in a medium-sized town in western Poland. She was diagnosed with TS in late childhood. She did not receive growth hormone therapy. Currently, she measures 130 cm. She is a university graduate. She worked briefly as a teacher of Russian. Since she was dismissed 28 years ago, she has been unsuccessfully searching for work in her field of education. Currently, she is supported by unemployment benefits and occasional contract work. Her applications for disability benefits have been rejected several times. She lives alone in an informal relationship. She has two younger brothers.

Lena, 27 years old, lives in a large city in eastern Poland. She was diagnosed with TS in mid-childhood, and previously with another serious illness. She received growth hormone therapy for five years. Currently, she measures 160 cm. She holds three master's degrees in the field of humanities. She works as an editor at a local publishing house. Engaged, she plans to get married. She has a younger sister.

4.1.3 Transcription and coding

Since the development of a coherent sense of self and identity takes place in the context of close relationships, such as with family members and peers (Adams et al., 2006; Erikson, 1959, 1968; Scheck, 2014), for the current study, narratives related to three social milieus, i. e., family, school, and work were analyzed. Although little research has been conducted on how different kinds of social contexts regulate identity construction, I have delineated these three social contexts because they play a direct role in identity formation of every adult, and because each interviewee interacted with them at some point in time in their lives. These three categories of contexts complement, rather than antagonize, one another and identity is given solid consolidation through understanding of who a person is in each of them.

Furthermore, since identity is understood here as a process in which individuals integrate their life experiences into an internalized, evolving story of the self that provides the individual with a sense of unity and purpose in life (McAdams, 1993, 1996, 2001; Kurzwelly, 2019), narratives were analyzed along the lines laid by Labov and Waletzky (1967/ 1997) and Labov (1981, 1997). Next, the structural analysis was mapped onto the analysis of emotionally charged events depicted in the story. This structural analysis was complemented with the functional one that reveals a communicative value of the story (Fludernik, 1996). Narrative, then is viewed as “a naturally bound unit of discourse in which both formal and functional aspects of grammatical variation can be examined in a controlled and systematic way” (Schiffrin, 1981, p. 45).

To enable structural-functional analysis, both the narratives delivered in the interviews and verbal responses by the interviewer were transcribed in propositions. Based on Labov's model, each proposition in narratives was coded as one of the six elements in the Labovian scheme: *abstract* announcing the central content of the narrative, *orientation* providing background information, *complication* representing the breach of normality and attempts to restore it, *resolution* with the successful or unsuccessful result of these attempts, *coda* leading back to the present, and *evaluation* justifying the point of the narrative (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). To simplify coding and to follow the theoretical model, all propositions had to be coded, codes had to follow this order, and each code could only be assigned in an uninterrupted sequence. Thus, after a first complication, for example, all following propositions were coded as complication until the first proposition was coded as a resolution.

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 Eva's narrative

Line no		Line content
1	E:	so, for me, it was like this
2		I was always the shortest in school, right?
3		I didn't go to kindergarten because my mom stayed at home,
4		so I went straight to school
5		so I was always the shortest
6		well, finally at around... first, I was in the hospital in xxxxx,
7		there was still a children's hospital nearby
8		they did tests
9		and began to suspect that it was turner syndrome
10		and sent me to warsaw, to the children's health center
11		and there, they examined me, a handful of genetic tests
12		and it turned out to be turner syndrome
13	I:	And what age were you?
14	E:	Under 15, yes, around 15 years old
15	I:	But those were still the times when there wasn't... therapy?
16	E:	No, there wasn't, how to say... For one, there were those old-type hormones
17		because I don't have ovaries or anything, right?
18		There was no need to be treated with hormones
19		growth hormone, it only started to be mentioned later
20		at that time, it was still a stage where they took it from corpses, right?
21		my mom even asked there if there wasn't a growth hormone available somewhere
22		so, the pediatrician said, "Madam, you should go to America to buy it."
23	I:	Was that back in the 1970s?
24	E:	I think so, yes, because I went to primary school
25		And basically, nothing was done later,
26		because... Simply put, my father banned my treatment
27		And of course, my mom obeyed him, you know
28	I:	Why did he ban the treatment?
29	E:	Because he wanted to show that he was in charge at home.
30		He was in charge at home
31		Well, to tell the truth, there was harassment and bullying and so on,
32		because he was... back then he was in the militia, a policeman, right?
33		So, there was violence and so on
34		So, yeah, I wasn't treated
35		I practically had no idea about this condition, what it is,
36		because there were no conversations or anything with my parents.
37		I thought it was just about height, right?
38		And I told my mom that I felt bad after those... pills
39		She said "don't take them"
40		So, I didn't take them, because I thought I didn't need them, right?
41		Well, later, after years, it also turned out that
42		I had a referral for treatment abroad in Sweden or Switzerland,
43		I don't even remember anymore
44		It's in the documents there.

- 45 But of course, I didn't even know, right?
 46 Well, my father banned the treatment, of course, yeah
 47 So, that's how it turned out. Neither treatment nor disability pension.
 48 I'm fighting now,
 49 because I have nothing. Neither disability certificate nor pension, nothing.
 50 Because I didn't even know at all that you could arrange something like that, right?

The overriding narrative delivered by Eva which can be further dissected into several sub-stories, unfolds during the initial phase of the interview when she is prompted to define Turner syndrome. In response, Eva characterizes it as a genetic disorder, emphasizing the unique nature of each case of TS. She then transitions directly into recounting her personal experiences with TS, effectively “retrospectively duplicating event sequences in language” (Habermas & Bongard, 2024, p. 2). The narrative unfolds with a recurring statement, “I was always the shortest in school,” reiterated as an assessment in line 5, indicating that for Eva, short stature is the primary concern related to TS. Subsequent sections of the narrative depict complicating actions leading to climaxes revolving around issues related to short stature (diagnosis (12), unavailability of growth hormone (22), father's prohibition of GH therapy (26–27, 46), mother's neglect of her daughter's treatment (39). Throughout the narrative, Eva emerges as the protagonist affected by TS and growth deficiency, and semantically as the recipient of actions by other agentive characters in the stories. Notable among these social actors are medical personnel (8–11, 22) and parents (21, 26, 39, 46), with Eva's father portrayed as the primary actor whose actions are most detrimental. Constructed as a figure of authority within the family, he is held responsible for denying Eva growth hormone therapy, the consequences of which she must endure into her adult life (4–49). While Eva's mother is portrayed as subservient to her husband, she retains control over her daughter's conduct within the confines set by Eva's father.

A significant aspect of narratives, beyond simply reporting events in temporal sequence, is evaluation (Labov, 1972). Eva evaluates from her past perspective as a protagonist (30; 37; 45; 50), from the past perspective of other characters (29), and from her present perspective as narrator (17–18; 31–33). Although emotions are not explicitly named in these evaluations, Eva implies them through their embedding in event sequences or codas, as well as through her vocal tone and speech pace monitoring.

Alongside narrative clauses and evaluations, interactional narratives also incorporate elements such as orientation, which establish the spatial-temporal setting of the story. This element is particularly valuable for situational interpretation, setting the stage of normalcy interrupted by an event in complicating action, evaluated as significant and therefore highly newsworthy. The subsequent efforts to resolve the complication may also be assessed for their relative success. Each story relayed by Eva is embedded within a well-defined setting (medical treatment (6–7; 14–20; 41); family life (3–4; 35–36)) relating to traditional discourses of health and illness, healthcare, and family dynamics. In Eva's perspective on healthcare, medical professionals offer services to aid patients in diagnosis, treatment, and recovery, a portrayal derived from orientation 1 (6–7) and complicating action 1 (8–11). The noteworthy event is the outcome of the diagnosis

process, specifically Turner syndrome, which comes as a surprise due to the family's belief that Eva's issue pertains solely to height rather than a broader spectrum of health concerns. Hence, the diagnosis and TS itself serve as the primary triggers for anger. Moreover, in Eva's view, all parties involved in healthcare discourse should work toward patient-benefitting goals while promoting honest discussion and problem-solving (15–22). However, this discourse is disrupted as medical staff prove uncooperative and unwilling to help (22). The attitude of medical doctors can be considered another provocation, escalating to its peak when treatment cessation is enforced by a powerful social actor, Eva's father (26–27). This anger provocation reaches its zenith as the newsworthy event, treatment cessation, disrupts both healthcare and family discourse that Eva had taken for granted. It becomes evident that healthcare providers are inconsiderate and negligent in the former, while key family figures are neither nurturing nor attentive in the latter. The narrative structure mirrors the emotional process, with a state of normality (orientation) disrupted by events impacting Eva's concerns, which she must confront.

The telling rights of a particular story and the narrator's motive for recounting personal experiences must be secured and validated by others (Labov, 1972; Habermas & Bongard, 2024). Since Eva's narratives (similar to anger narratives) serve instrumentally to assign blame to significant figures in her environment (van Kleef et al., 2006) and to elicit affiliative responses from the listeners (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen, 2012; Rühlemann, 2022), she must ensure that her storytelling is appropriate for the context of the interaction and that her credibility as a trustworthy narrator is taken seriously. In essence, the conditions for appraising this particular emotion (anger) in a story need to meet normative criteria for the *quality* and *intensity* of the emotion (Warner & Shields, 2009) to elicit affiliative responses. Initially, Eva must convince her interlocutor that she has been harmed. Her narrative about the diagnosis of TS (12) continues until she recounts an incident involving her mother speaking to a pediatrician who carelessly dismisses her inquiries about the possibility of GH therapy (21). The pediatrician's actions clearly violate moral standards and the obligations of medical staff as outlined in the discourse of healthcare. Since Eva may not be allowed to participate in parent-doctor disputes due to her age, this could potentially undermine her credibility as a narrator. To counter this, Eva employs direct speech positioning herself as an eyewitness of the event, thus asserting her right to provide a credible presentation of the pediatrician's stance (22). The interviewer's subsequent question to specify the temporal setting of the event (23) confirms that Eva's anticipation was correct. Furthermore, recognizing that her interlocutor is knowledgeable about past possibilities of TS therapy and may not attribute responsibility for the harm done to Eva solely to the pediatrician, Eva introduces another character into the narrative, her father (26). Positioned against the normative discourse of nurturing family, her father's intentional prevention of Eva benefiting from GH therapy and living a productive life contravenes moral norms and obligations specific to the parent-child relationship, making him the target of Eva's anger. Another character that provokes Eva's anger is her mother, who through her inaction and subordination to her husband fails to meet the criteria of a mother truly devoted to her child (27). Although Eva's narrative presentation of her father and his conduct may initially appear insuffi-

cient, her grounding of her family life in the larger discourse of the communist era in Poland and identifying her father as a member of militia forces (32) provides strong evidence of home abuse, validating Eva's anger directed at her father.

Moreover, in anger narratives, the conduct of the protagonist must be impeccable so that blame is squarely placed on the character responsible for the harm done to the protagonist (Habermas & Bongard, 2024). To achieve this, Eva initially presents herself as obedient to her parents and unquestioningly following the rules at home, as this was the family dynamic she was socialized into. She recounts an event of discussing the adverse effects of medication with her mother (38-39) and portrays herself as blindly following her mother's advice that is given in direct speech. Secondly, Eva aims to absolve herself of any guilt by depicting herself as silenced within the story world. Silence serves as an aspect of the story setting that provokes anger.

To sum up, Eva addresses all three essential elements of anger appraisal specified by Habermas and Bongard (2024): harm (22; 26-27; 46), responsible actor (22; 26-27; 46), and a norm (26; 36; 46) violated by the harmful act (22; 26-27; 46). The narrative successfully justifies the object of anger and assigns blame, thereby validating Eva's trustworthiness. On one hand, this enables Eva to present herself as a victim of others intentionally doing harm to her, and on the other hand as a responsible, highly motivated, and self-confident social actor.

4.2.2 Lena's narrative

Line no	Line content
1	I: How would you define Turner syndrome today?
2	L: As of today? Or at all?
3	I: As of today
4	L: Well, today, I would define it as an enemy. Okay, an enemy that it's better to keep close rather than push away and fight against.
5	I: Why is it an enemy?
6	L: Why is it an enemy?
7	Because every now and then, at least in my case, it opens up new pages that I have to live and to rub along with it
8	I: Can you give an example?
9	L: Um, well, now at this age, it's issues of women's health, menstrual matters
10	[...]
11	when I turned 18, I took responsibility for myself
12	[...]
13	now I'm 27 years old,
14	so in the past nine years
15	This is the first gynecologist who first did hormone level tests
16	and then changed the medication
17	not the other way around.
18	I: How were you diagnosed with TS?

- 19 L: So, I was admitted to the hospital to see what's going on.
 20 So, I spent a month in Prokocim
 21 and to cut a long story short, they examined me in every possible way
 22 and that's how it turned out
- 23 I: What was your reaction?
- 24 L: Let me tell you, I...
- 25 I: You were 10 then, right? Do you remember yourself?
- 26 L: That's what I was going to say
 27 I don't remember myself but the diagnosis wasn't hidden from me
 28 [...]
 29 maybe it was thanks to the doctor
 30 because he was tough
 31 he kept saying, "please don't look for culprits by force, because there are no culprits, and
 32 don't feel sorry for your daughter, because it leads to nowhere"
 and that might be the reason why my life didn't revolve around Turner syndrome at all
 33 I swear to you, the only thing that revolved around it
 34 and where it was harder for me was with peers
 35 during the growth hormone therapy,
 36 because I was told that I had to have the shot at 8 p.m.
 37 I don't know how others react
 38 but as for me, at 8:30 p.m. I was asleep
 39 it had a sedative effect on me
 40 like melatonin
 41 a nightmare!
 42 So, I just knew
 43 I didn't ask my parents if I could ...
 44 I knew I couldn't spend a night at friend's house or go on a school trip
 45 I kept saying "no"
 46 because I knew I had stupid classmates
 47 you have to call a spade a spade
 48 they wouldn't understand what it meant to have a needle, medication, and also techni-
 cal things like ...
 49 how? I would just have to have an icebox and ampules on me
 50 it's a huge problem for teenagers
 51 I always had the feeling that I was always a few steps ahead of my peers, more mature
 52 that's how it is
 53 it has always been like this
 54 [...]
 55 Maybe it's because of self-discipline
 56 because I kept gaining weight
 57 so I had discipline at home
 58 I exercised, rode 20 kilometers a day on a bike
 59 which is why I really thank my dad today
 60 because only now have I taken care of myself
 61 and lost 18 kilograms
 62 there's still a struggle before the wedding to lose more
 63 but if I hadn't been rebellious and listened to my dad
 64 this wouldn't have had to happen at all
 65 Besides, I have a bit of a task-oriented character
 66 like, take the medication – I take the medication

- 67 change the patch because I'm on hormone replacement therapy with patches, and I
change it
68 Then, I knocked myself on head and said to myself
69 God, Lena you're so stupid
70 You are ashamed of carrying this load and of handling it so well
71 I raised my spirits
72 and then I had it under control
73 really, whether they laugh at me or not, I do not care

Lena's narrative unfolds as she is prompted to define Turner syndrome. In (4), she provides an abstract of a dominant narrative wherein she employs a war metaphor to define TS as an adversary that she seeks to keep close rather than combat. This perspective on the adversary is uncommon, leading to a request for clarification (5). In response, Lena expands on the definition (7) and portrays TS as a hostile strategist whose actions are unpredictable yet manageable. The sub-stories within the dominant narrative serve to present events whose root cause is TS, events that Lena effectively managed and turned to her advantage. The dominant narrative concludes with resolution (72), demonstrating Lena's success in keeping the adversary close, yet under control. The complication within this dominant narrative (68–71) depicts the protagonist engaging in introspective reflection on her attitude towards her condition, defined as a burden. This introspection leads to a subsequent shift in Lena's perspective on living with TS, articulated in resolution (72) and revisited in the interview setting in the coda (73).

The sub-stories prompted by a request for examples of TS, metaphorically characterized as an adversary (8), are situated in various social contexts: healthcare (11–27), school (34–53), and home (55–64). In each context, Lena faces challenges (e.g., obtaining relevant medical treatment, undergoing extensive medical examinations, abstaining from enjoyable pastimes, coping with strict discipline at home). While the challenges confronting the protagonist are not extraordinary, Lena emphasizes through frequent evaluation that she managed them effectively. The actions recounted in sub-complications are presented in a concise, static-like manner or in chronological order (cf. Habermas et al., 2009), typically employing no more than two clauses (e.g., undergoing hormone level tests initially and subsequently altering medication (15–16); refraining from seeking permission to spend a night at a friend's house or participate in a school trip (43–44)).

Lena's narrative extensively elaborates on two elements of the Labovian narrative scheme: orientation and evaluation. The former, which plays a significant role in interpreting action (MacIntyre, 1981), enables Lena to clarify her intentions to herself and her interlocutor. For instance, by precisely detailing the years spent searching for a qualified gynecologist (13–14), she underscores her responsibility (explicitly stated in (11)) and persistence in addressing and resolving health issues. Moreover, expressing gratitude for the outcome of hormone therapy to a demanding doctor (29–30) or her disciplinarian father (63) reflects her inclination to align with strong individuals rather than weak ones, a trait associated with individuals who exhibit pride and tend to identify more with strength than weakness (cf. van Osch et al., 2017; Oveis et al., 2010). Evaluation, posited to serve an interpretive function by signaling the narrative's significance for the narra-

tor and interlocutor (Labov & Waletzky, 1967), is frequently delineated as a distinct component in Lena's narrative. Lena evaluates from her perspective as the protagonist (46; 51; 69–71), from the perspectives of other characters in the past (31), and from her current perspective as the narrator (17; 29; 32–33; 37; 39–42; 47–50; 55; 60; 63–67). Evaluations from her present perspective as the narrator encompass situated evaluations (29–32; 39–42; 46–49; 51) as well as overarching evaluations (37; 50).

Regarding the protagonist's characteristics, Lena constructs an inflated image of herself, primarily focusing on her knowledge, abilities, and skills in managing and controlling TS. She presents herself as more mature and knowledgeable than her peers regarding her health and TS medication (48–49). However, she acknowledges that her concerns are similar to those of her peers, offering a general evaluation in (50) ("it's a huge problem for teenagers"). She appears to experience pride predominantly intrapersonally, though grounded in social comparisons (44–53). Furthermore, she appears to distance herself from her peers and develop closer relationships with formidable individuals, such as a medical doctor (29–31) and her father (59). The inflated self-image is reinforced by contextualizing the recalled events in naturalistic settings, using direct speech (31), providing event details (58; 61), and itemizing mundane activities (66–67). In portraying her worthy self, Lena experiences "authentic pride" (Tracy & Robins, 2007), derived from her genuine accomplishments. Additionally, Lena strives to maintain high self-esteem and status rather than power, focusing on her own achievements and exaggerating them rather than diminishing others. Her socially desirable and appreciated accomplishments enhance Lena's self-esteem, which forms the basis of her social status and prestige. Lockwood and Kunda (1997) observe that the achievement domain is significant for individuals subject to downward social comparison, potentially heightening perceptions of distance. This explanation appears applicable to Lena's situation, as indicated in (73), where she suggests being subjected to ridicule and downward social comparison. Although Lena's narrative summarizes events and seemingly brings them to a conclusion (71–72), her concerns persist into the present (73), and the emotion of pride endures.

4.3 *General discussion*

In this chapter, the focus has been on narrating two juncture emotions of contrasting valence – anger and pride – and their utilization for a desirable identity performance by Polish women with TS. The analysis has unveiled variations in the development of the components of the Labovian narrative structure, aimed at justifying the versions of identities that narrators seek to perform.

In particular, the analysis has demonstrated that the anger narrative comprises a well-elaborated orientation, serving to embed and present the narrated events as contrasting with the expected code of conduct or social norms, thereby validating the evocation of anger in the affected protagonist. Similar to other anger narratives, which are often confrontational and thus possess a dynamically evolving plot, Eva's story is action-oriented, with anger serving as the driving force that propels the plot forward. The narrative actively attempts to address complications and concludes with a resolution that affirms the emotion.

Eva's narrative is also abundant in evaluation. She provides assessments of events and each character in the narrative. Indeed, evaluation is present as early as in the abstract of the overarching narrative, where she evaluates her body height by comparing it with her peers. Short stature and small body size are perceived as the main reasons for her social marginalization, isolation, and deprivation of the right to voice her needs and opinions, as well as to interact with others on an equal basis. Social isolation during childhood and adolescence deprived Eva of coping strategies and opportunities to relate to others as equals. Eva portrays herself as a victim of TS and of hegemonic discourses that penalize and stigmatize bodily otherness. Thus, she presents herself as an impeccable character who is punished for actions that are not her fault, making anger appear as a justified emotion that motivates her to act.

In contrast to Eva's anger narrative, Lena's pride narrative indicates complications mostly through brief chronological sequences, while orientation and evaluations are frequent, well-developed, and detailed. The recounted events are depicted in a summarized fashion, enabling the evaluation of characters' conduct and behavior. The description of the social context in orientation is inward-directed, reflecting the protagonist's inner world: thoughts, reasoning, beliefs, and feelings. Similarly, evaluation presents the protagonist's assessments of her own stance, knowledge, and views of other characters in the narrated situation. Evaluative thoughts are also expressed directly before the climax or resolution. Lena's narrative concludes with a resolution that justifies the pride she expressed. Pride in Lena's narrative is elicited by a positive self-evaluation entailing a comparison with an internalized social standard that deviates from the standards accepted by her peers but aligns with those accepted by others who are perceived as more important, powerful figures in Lena's view. Social comparison provides a reference point for establishing Lena's own internal standard rather than striving for superiority. She believes herself to be responsible for a socially valued outcome of her decisions and behaviors, even if it does not entail appreciation from her peers, from whom Lena distances herself, not considering them as valid sources of assessing her accomplishments.

Furthermore, Lena's definition of TS as an enemy she keeps close to control is intriguing. The enemy encompasses not only the genetic aberration but also other members of society. Having an enemy, on one hand, implies that Lena is strong enough to withstand it and its detrimental outcomes. On the other hand, it implies that in Lena's perception, she is considered by the enemy to be sufficiently strong to "deserve" their opposition. Given that in the coda, Lena speaks about other members of society as those who ridiculed her, it can be inferred that she views herself as someone who cannot be disregarded or ignored by others.

In both cases, emotions signal flaws in the person's models of how the world works. Depending on how the individuals perceive their potential and actual capacities, in order to handle these flaws, they produce appropriate narratives to justify emotional challenges experienced by them. Emotions emerge at the heart of the individual experience which is not shared by others in the society, the experience that they find essential for their social-emotional welfare.

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Emotional gatekeepers: The critical role of parenting influencers in describing and teaching emotions

This chapter explores the growing influence of social media parenting figures on how parents understand and respond to their children's emotions. Parenting influencers leverage social media to build communities around relatable content and "sharenting" – sharing parenting experiences (Jorge et al., 2022). They often position themselves as experts, offering advice that challenges traditional views and promotes "good parenting" practices focused on building positive parent-child relationships (Toader, 2023). Given the crucial role that parents play in shaping children's emotional development (Zeman et al., 2012), this study examines how influencers describe children's emotional expressions in various contexts and "translate" them for parents. Through a thematic and critical discourse analysis of 100 Facebook posts from prominent Romanian parenting influencers, the research explores the strategies used to describe children's emotions. It further investigates the themes emerging from this discourse, such as the "parent as emotional learner" and the "influencer as the provider of emotional literacy". While traditionally parents were seen as central figures in guiding children's emotional development (Hoffman, 2009), our analysis of parenting influencer discourse reveals that parents themselves may need emotional guidance, too. The study delves into influencer – parent dynamic to explore how influencers position themselves as authorities in emotional vocabulary and management, aiming to equip parents to effectively model these skills for their children.

Keywords: *emotions in parenting, Romanian parenting influencers, describing and interpreting emotions, good parenting*

1 Introduction

Parenting influencers use social media to build online communities around shared experiences and relatable content on child-rearing, combining sharenting (sharing + parenting) with expert-led discourse to promote 'good parenting' practices (Jorge et al., 2022; Toader, 2023). Much of the advice that influencers share with their followers concerns the emotional experiences and challenges of parenting.

In psychology, parents are viewed as primary agents of emotional socialization (Hoffman, 2009; Zeman et al., 2012). Therefore, how they respond to their children's emotional displays – whether supportive or unsupportive – can significantly impact how children process emotions and develop coping mechanisms. This study brings a socio-

logical and communicational angle to the discussion by examining how parenting influencers describe emotions displayed by children in various socio-cultural settings, how they 'translate' these emotions to parents, and how they legitimize themselves as experts in decoding, labeling, and managing emotions.

Our main assumption is that, compared to traditional literature on emotional socialization, the social media realm brings another layer to the discussion with the emergence of parenting influencers, who portray themselves as experts in emotional language. We analyzed 100 Facebook posts by popular Romanian parenting influencers to identify themes, examine how influencers describe emotions, and legitimize their discourse.

The role of parents in helping children deal with their emotions is based on an established view according to which the latter are deficient regarding labeling, interpreting, and expressing emotions (Hoffman, 2009). Our analysis reveals that, while recognizing the importance of this role, Romanian influencers shift the view of emotional deficiency from children to parents, positioning themselves as emotion mitigation experts.

This chapter examines the transformation of parenting advice from a traditional, community-based model to an online, professionalized, and often commercialized endeavor. This shift is discussed in relation to larger societal trends like individualization, globalization, and neoliberalism, which have increased parents' reliance on specialized advice (Furedi, 2002; Lee et al., 2014). We investigate how Romanian parenting influencers describe emotions and teach parents how to effectively instruct children in emotional regulation techniques by transferring the perceived deficiency in emotional knowledge from children to parents.

2 Parenting influencers and parenting advice online

Becoming a parent has traditionally been linked with the need for new parents to seek advice and support from older generations and more experienced peers, epitomized by the popular saying, "It takes a village to raise a child". The digital era has transformed parenting support from a traditional, community-based model to online platforms, leading to new practices such as mummy blogging or 'sharenting' (Jorge et al., 2022), seeking parenting information on online forums and social media groups (Bîră et al., 2020; Bailey, 2023; Zayts-Spence et al., 2023), and the online promotion of education programs and books by parenting expert influencers (Toader, 2023).

Parenting advice has long been conveyed through media, including books and television shows, as well as parenting programs and seminars (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014; Shpakovskaya & Chernova, 2016). The rise of the social media expert influencer is the latest addition to the plethora of parenting advice sources. These influencers leverage authority through parenting courses from recognized institutes, despite lacking formal training in medicine or psychology (Toader, 2023).

The increasing need and search for parenting advice are the results of larger societal trends such as individualization, globalization, neoliberalism, and "risk society" (Beck, 1992; Lee et al., 2014; Shpakovskaya & Chernova, 2016; Furedi, 2002), which have influenced parenting practices, leading to what is known as "paranoid parenting" (Furedi,

2002). Parents face numerous challenges from early childhood to adolescence, relying on specialised advice to navigate these complexities.

The dispersion of the extended family, identity shifts, and balancing career and family life add to the pressures, especially for new mothers (Thomson & Kehily, 2011; Ladge & Greenberg, 2015; Seymour-Smith et al., 2017). This has led to the professionalization of parenting and parenting advice (Allen & Hudd, 1987; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2014; Shpakovskaya & Chernova, 2016), where parental decisions are shaped by experts and professionals.

These experts offer hard skills in fields like nursing, pediatrics, and psychiatry, as well as soft skills in baby sleep advice, emotional regulation, and educational approaches. Such advice sometimes contradicts traditional wisdom, investing parenting experts with symbolic power (Cottam & Espie, 2014; Toader, 2023). In this new societal logic, parents are portrayed as lacking the proper skills and knowledge to practice their parenting duties, and experts become paramount in delivering procedures and a whole new vocabulary of parenting practices.

The commodification (Ball, 2004) of parenting advice has made it a product sold through parenting books, apps, seminars, programs, and training or coaching sessions, emphasizing “recipe-based parenting” (Toader, 2023). This advice also follows promotional logic, which sometimes exaggerates, uses stereotypes, and oversimplifies certain ideas, which raises the need for critical approaches towards online parenting advice (Connell-Carrick, 2006).

3 The discourse on emotions in (online) parenting

Raising a resilient child is the goal of ‘resilience-oriented parenting’ (Hoffman, 2010), which focuses on emotional resilience – the ability to adapt and cope with adversity (Vandoninck et al., 2012). Parenting research emphasizes enhancing parents’ emotional vocabulary and cultivating self-control to foster a calmer environment (Hoffman, 2010; Hofmann, 2009). Social-emotional learning (SEL) techniques help parents de-escalate intense emotions in their children (Scheibling & Milkie, 2023). Parenting advice is widely shared through books, magazines, blogs, and social media, offering tools to recognize and manage emotions in child-rearing.

Hoffman’s (2009) thematic analysis of U.S. parenting media identified two key themes: the emotion coaching parent and the parent as therapist, both focusing on emotion management. This study revealed a prevalence of negative emotions in the parenting advice analyzed. In a subsequent study, Hoffman (2010) critiques resilience parenting which runs the risk of becoming an instrument of social control and conformity to a dominant ideology of childrearing.

Social media has transformed parenting advice, with influencers sharing emotion coaching based on personal experience or expert opinions (Jorge et al., 2022). Scheibling and Milkie’s (2023) study of mommy and dad blogs revealed a focus on emotional development skewed towards mothers, highlighting their use of SEL strategies.

Mommy influencers use “emotional discourse that promotes relatability with the audience” (Jorge et al., 2022, p. 166) to commodify sharenting and capitalize on their

influence. To monetize their influence, they must balance relatability, authenticity, and audience aspirations. Publicly exposing their children's emotions and behavior, along with their reactions and de-escalation strategies, enhances the relatability and authenticity of their content.

However, this practice raises ethical and practical questions about sharenting. Parenting influencers may add an affective and cultural spin to expertise (Maddox, 2022), but emotion expression and socialization require that they are capable to describe, explain, and teach parents how to recognize and react to emotions, while helping parents build a vocabulary of emotions.

4 Methodology and corpus

We use thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and critical discourse analysis, focusing on Van Leeuwen's (2007) categories of legitimation, to explore the discourse on emotion expression and emotion management emerging from four Romanian female parenting influencers' social media posts. Building on the literature on "good parenting" (Dermott & Pomati, 2016; Toader, 2023) and on the critique of resilient-oriented parenting (Hoffman, 2010), we aim to show to what extent the discourse on emotion management of the four parenting influencers reinforces or challenges assumptions about good parenting and resilient parenting. The research questions guiding our analysis are:

How do Romanian parenting influencers describe emotions and emotional experiences? What linguistic and discursive strategies do they employ to talk about emotions?

What themes emerge from their discourse? What legitimation strategies do these parenting influencers use to justify their view of parenting and emotion management?

The corpus of the study comprises 100 Facebook posts published between December 2022 and March 2023 by two of the most popular and most followed Romanian parenting influencers and two micro influencers (see Table 1). The posts were first manually selected and saved from Facebook to reproduce usual interaction with influencer content. The analysis focused only on written content (videos, images, infographics were excluded) which consisted mainly of promotion of training courses, webinars, coaching sessions held by the influencers, but also confessions inspired from their own experiences as parents and as experts in parenting and education (i.e., Oana Moraru) and book recommendations. According to a 2022 study by Starcom Romania, Facebook and WhatsApp are the most widely used social media platforms in Romania. Consequently, Facebook was chosen as the platform for thematic analysis and CDA in this study because parents targeted by these specific influencers are most active on this platform. Our study focuses on analyzing parenting discourses targeted towards parents of toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children. The collected data was then uploaded to, coded, and computed with MaxQDA.

Table 1. Influencers and no. of followers

Influencer	Followers	Posts
Anca Zlăvog	858	25
Raluca Ștefan	2,5 K	25
Oana Moraru	100K	25
Urania Cremene	816k	25

The sample of parenting influencers in this study reflects a diverse range of backgrounds and parenting approaches. Anca Zlăvog, a certified parenting coach with a micro-influencer reach, integrates principles of nonviolent communication, emotional intelligence, and the neurobiological theories of Bruce Lipton into her approach. Raluca Ștefan, another micro-influencer, draws upon the frameworks of Aware Parenting and the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget through her work as a parenting counselor. Notably, she presents herself as being the first Peaceful Parenting Instructor in Romania, accredited by the New Zealand-based Peaceful Parent Institute. Oana Moraru, a macro-influencer, educator, school founder and educational consultant, leverages her extensive experience in the education sector to bridge the gap between parenting styles and children's academic outcomes. Finally, Urania Cremene, a prominent parenting figure with a significant online presence, utilizes the self-determination theory formulated by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan to inform her program, "All About Parenting". This variety in theoretical foundations and influencer reach within the sample ensures a comprehensive exploration of the landscape of parenting advice offered in the Romanian context.

5 Findings

5.1 Strategies for labeling and describing emotions and emotional experiences

All four Romanian parenting influencers openly and fully acknowledge the crucial role that emotions play in the cognitive and social development of children. Much of the analyzed content contains relatable stories of emotionally charged situations which the influencers had to deal with in the relationship with their children. They share solutions based on their experience, expert knowledge of various parenting approaches, and insights from specialized books. This often sets the stage for promoting their own seminars and training courses.

To describe emotions and the emotional experience of (their) children (and their own experiences, too), the four Romanian influencers use specialized terminology abundantly. Terms like emotion regulation, emotion intensity, emotion management, emotion repair, parental anger, and parent-child attachment are common, reflecting language found in parenting and emotion-related psychology and development literature.

e. g., Emotions management

The only long-term successful approach is to help our children recognize and express their emotions by showing empathy and encouraging them to unload their emotional baggage. (Raluca Ștefan)

e. g., Emotion repair

In parenting, both aspects matter equally: working with us (and increasing the degree of internal safety in order to be more aware of our reactions to anger) and repair work we do as parents. (Anca Zlăvog)

This strategy is typically seen in expert-led discourse, which influencers may adopt to persuade parents and followers to participate in their training seminars and coaching sessions. Using specialized language to describe emotions also enables influencers to suggest coping strategies that fit a particular mechanism underlying children's (and parents') emotional functioning. As a result, influencers' discourse on emotions serves both to legitimize their advice and to reflect the promotional value of social media influence. It also provides a resource for parents to draw inspiration from to help them cope with challenging, emotionally charged situations.

Emotions are complex, abstract concepts that we use to conceptualize subjective psychological experiences. The subjective nature of emotions and the difficulty to talk about abstract concepts make figurative language an essential tool for emotion communication. The key role of figurative language in talking about and evoking emotional experience has been widely acknowledged in the literature (see Fussell, 2002). Metaphors and metonymies are often used to express and evoke emotions. Kövecses (2008, 2014) claims that figurative language is indispensable to emotion communication since emotions concepts that we use to describe our experiences are largely metaphorical and metonymical. In our corpus, we have found both conventional and novel emotion metaphors, such as "emotions as containers" (conventional), "emotions as a snowball" (novel), "recognizing emotions as learning a foreign language" (novel), and "emotions as jars" (extensions of a conventional metaphor); see Table 2 in the Appendix for more examples.

Anger is the emotion most frequently encountered; we have found several metaphorical extensions of "anger is a hot fluid in a container," a conventional metaphor for anger extensively described in the psychological and metaphor literature on emotions (Gibbs et al., 2002; Kövecses, 2014). Examples include: emotions as jars, cups, and erupting volcano (see Table 2).

Additionally, the influencers often describe expressive behaviors associated with emotions (e. g., laughing for *joy*; crying for *sadness*, and *fear*; tantrums for *anger*) and activities that are frequently used by children to stimulate emotional experiences and to regulate emotions (e. g., playing video games and shooting the enemies in the game because of anger and rage; drawing).

Based on their knowledge of parenting methods and training, as well as their own experience as parents, the Romanian parenting experts (except for Oana Moraru, whose work and expertise primarily focus on education) provide their audience with various

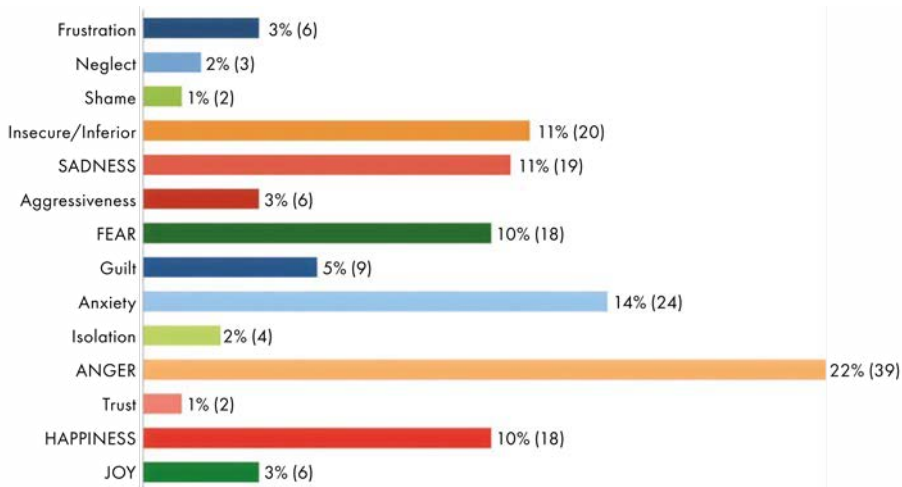


Figure 1. Distribution of negative and positive emotions across the corpus (%) and number of coded segments containing the themes (N). Labels in caps indicate primary emotions whereas those in sentence case indicate secondary emotions.

examples of emotion recognition and coaching strategies that parents can use to teach their children to recognize and express their emotions. Since negative emotions are more problematic in the parent-child relationship and since parents seem to be more interested in getting advice on how to recognize and deal with negative emotions in their children, the analyzed posts comprise disproportionately more descriptions of negative emotions than of positive ones (see Figure 1).

We could only identify three positive emotions (*happiness*, *joy*, and *trust*) based on the coded segments in the corpus that described behaviors associated with these emotions and emotional experiences. Parenting influencers describe and label predominantly negative emotions associated with challenging aspects of the parent-child relationship.

As they are all mothers, and have experienced challenging parenting situations firsthand, the findings may be a discursive reflection of their mastery of negative emotion management. It is also a way to make their social media discourse more relatable and authentic for their followers, which is a promotional practice as well. Additionally, it is a way to legitimize the expert status of the influencer, by providing solutions to the most challenging parenting experiences.

5.2 Themes and legitimization categories emerging from influencers' discourse

Our analysis also aimed to identify the themes that are recurrently used in the corpus to reflect the influencers' view of the challenges confronting parents around (un-)recognizing and handling children's emotions. The analysis revealed the presence of four themes in the corpus: a) parents as emotional learners, b) parenting influencers as emotional educators, c) parenting as a burden, and d) guidebook for emotional savvy parents (see Figure 2).

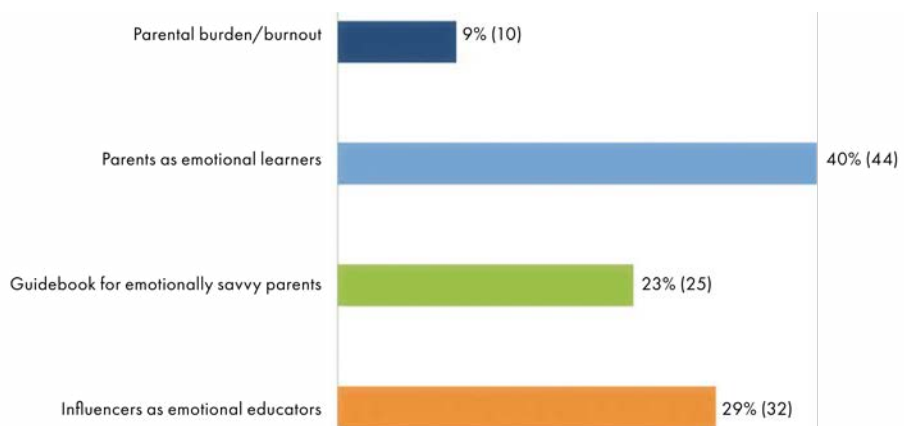


Figure 2. Identified themes: distribution across the corpus (%) and number of coded segments containing the themes (N)

These themes shed light on the importance of emotion expression and regulation in child rearing, and on the need that parents learn and use the vocabulary of emotions, as some of the influencers overtly affirm it in their posts.

I believe you may have already heard me talking about how we lack a vocabulary of needs and emotions. (Anca Zlavog)

We draw on Van Leeuwen's (2007) categories of legitimation to identify the strategies used by these influencers to legitimize their discourse on emotion expression and regulation in the parent-child relationship. Two categories of legitimation described by Van Leeuwen were predominantly used to support the parenting influencers' view of the emotion expression and management, namely *Authorization* (specifically, the subcategories of Expert authority and Role-model authority) and *Rationalization* (both Instrumental and Theoretical), while *Moral evaluation* is less frequently encountered.

E.g., Expert authority

How do you work with a child's potential? A good educator knows how to lay the foundations of thinking. An inspired one knows how to ask at least one question in each lesson that surprises and pushes thinking, that stirs and challenges it. We'll discuss how to take the class beyond the average limits at the event (...). (Oana Moraru)

E.g., Role-model authority

Hands up if you've ever received the opposite response from your child when asking them to do something! If you also have a strong-willed child like my little boy, "success" is guaranteed. [...] My child is dealing with unpleasant feelings and unmet needs. As a parent, it's my duty to figure out what unmet need he has and help him express the

painful feelings that hinder his natural desire to cooperate. In this case, I realized that his reaction was driven by a great need for power and control. Strong-willed children have an even greater need for autonomy and choice compared to other children. Therefore, I used my secret weapon, the “attachment game.” (Raluca Stefan)

E.g., Instrumental rationalization

To manage a child’s emotions, it is essential for parents to have a rich emotional vocabulary. This allows them to recognize, name, and validate the child’s emotions, thereby providing a model of emotional self-regulation. (Urania Cremene)

E.g., Theoretical rationalization

A child who is constantly criticized in a harsh tone will develop emotional problems. It is in human nature to need validation and understanding to develop healthily. (Anca Zlavog)

E.g., Moral evaluation

Dear mother, who is alone with the baby almost all day long, you struggle and there’s nothing wrong with you.

Dear parent, who raises your child alone, because their grandparents live in a different city, it’s normal to feel exhausted.

Dear mother, who feels isolated from your friends, since you are the only one with a child, it’s normal to feel depressed and lack vitality. (Anca Zlavog)

The impact of these legitimation strategies is considerable. By leveraging expert opinions and personal success stories, influencers position themselves as credible sources of parenting advice, enhancing their credibility and authority. Sharing personal anecdotes and addressing common parenting challenges help influencers build a loyal and engaged audience through emotional connection and relatability. By explaining the practical benefits of their advice and grounding it in universal truths, influencers make their guidance more persuasive. These strategies not only disseminate practical advice but also promote the influencers’ own services, seminars, and products, reinforcing their status as experts in the field, and also showing their promotional approach. In conclusion, the use of these legitimation strategies effectively supports influencers’ efforts to guide, persuade, and engage their audience, ultimately enhancing their influence and authority in the parenting domain.

5.2.1 Parents as emotional learners

All four Romanian parenting influencers discuss parents’ unpreparedness to recognize and deal with their children’s emotions and describe ways to improve emotional literacy in parents, which is unsurprising since most of the analyzed posts are marketing material promoting courses held by the influencers themselves and/or their team. Parents, who are supposed to teach children to recognize and manage their emotions, seem to lack an emotional vocabulary themselves and, oftentimes, are in danger of losing their emotional control.

The truth is that we, adults, find it difficult sometimes to express our emotions without yelling, blaming, crawling into our shell, waiting for it to pass. And it is so difficult for us now because we didn't have someone to teach us when we were kids. So the tears of our kids make us feel uncomfortable, their anger terrifies us, because we fear they may end up being aggressive, their sadness engulfs us, too. (Urania Cremene)

It's hard as parents to watch our kids suffer, and this, I believe, is caused by two things:

1. *We somehow project similar experiences from our own childhood and we struggle to recognize the needs of our child because of our inner noise.*
2. *We are not in contact with emotions (sadness, disappointment, anger, frustration, etc.). We didn't have an adult to help us recognize and express our emotions safely so we deduced that some emotions are dangerous and should be avoided. The emotions we avoid are exactly those we cannot accept, contain or handle in our kids. (Anca Zlavog)*

Interestingly, while stating their knowledge and expertise, these parent influencers abundantly use the personal pronoun “we” to build a sense of belonging to a community of parents, of mothers, who share similar experiences regarding emotion expression and regulation. However, unlike their audience, these influencers have acquired the vocabulary of emotions and the emotional literacy needed to handle their children's emotions healthily: they know (and have practiced) how to identify underlying emotions, how to diffuse anger, how to set boundaries.

We lack a vocabulary of needs and emotions. For me these two were foreign languages, which I learn with a lot of effort and practice. [...] how you can translate the needs and emotions so children can better understand them and how you can start learning this foreign language. (Anca Zlavog)

By sharing their personal experiences with the audience and by emphasizing their solid expertise in parenting following the principles of an internationally established or practice-driven personal approach (as in the case of Oana Moraru, who has been an education trailblazer for more than 20 years), these influencers promise to teach parents (who access their training and coaching sessions) how to successfully manage their children's emotions. They leverage a common practice related to social media presence: projecting authenticity. However, it is a curated form of authenticity, specific to strategic or commercial online communication. Regardless of the approach, the basic principles of emotion management which all four influencers seem to agree to are: engaging in empathetic listening, validating the children's emotions, empowering children to express their emotions and become emotionally self-aware individuals.

5.2.2 Influencers as emotional educators

The dominant legitimation strategy identified in the corpus is authorization (expert and role-model authorization, in particular) which influencers use to justify their parenting approach and advice regarding expression and management of emotions in childrearing. They brand themselves as parenting professionals, using specialized language and

referencing established approaches in the field (e. g., specialized emotion-related lexicon, renowned psychologists, neuroscientists and their theories that apply to parenting and emotion management, book recommendations), and as opinion leaders in parenting, based on their recognition and outreach (e. g., number of seminars held, number of parents trained, invitations to TV shows on parenting broadcast on popular Romanian TV channels).

The child's feelings escalate, and the parent feels overwhelmed, gets angry and could say and do things they might regret. In coaching, we focus a lot on examples of emotional reactivity and on understanding of the nervous system. We use many tools, among which Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory. We come to be aware of and consolidate neuroception in order to reduce stress levels. (Anca Zlavog)

Their expertise comes from extensive study of parenting theories and methods, from putting the acquired knowledge into practice, while continuously seeking to improve both.

If you want to know more about this, search for Dr. Shefali Tsabary's parenting course, who is a psychologist, family therapist and more. Some aspects of this course are taught by Anca Bolos, who trained with Dr. Tsabary, and who, subsequently, made things clearer to me, too. (Oana Moraru)

Nothing could ever make me doubt the Aware Parenting philosophy. There were too many situations in which what I had learnt from theory accurately described the reality of my children, who were and will always be my compass showing me that I am on the right path. (Raluca Ștefan)

Much of parenting content is already available online for parents to grab it, the books recommended in the posts can be ordered from various online bookshops, however, these do not seem to be perceived as potential business threats by influencers, who are confident in their power as experts, practitioners and parents.

I wholeheartedly believe that we need a guide when it comes to working on ourselves. Reading books or deciding not to repeat certain patterns can help, but they are not enough. If you want to find out what parenting coaching does and how it can help you, schedule a free discovery session. (Anca Zlavog)

Posing as experts and educators in parenting and in emotion management, in particular, influencers run a moralizing risk which could be detrimental to both the audience (e. g., parents become reluctant to apply the concepts and instruments described to encourage emotion expression in their children) and themselves (e. g., low enrollment rates in seminars). While moralization strategies are less present in the influencers' discourse, rationalization is widely spread across the corpus. This helps legitimize their view of the emotionally deficient parent who needs an emotional vocabulary that parenting experts can provide. Through rationalization, influencers ground their arguments in expert or universally recognized principles, which enhances their authority in addressing and offering parenting advice.

5.2.3 Guidebook for emotionally savvy parents

This theme is closely linked to the previous two discussed here and reflects the influencers' knowledge of and expertise in expression and management of emotions. They can provide parents with the emotional ABC needed to recognize and handle their own and their children's emotions. Theoretical and instrumental rationalization are employed to legitimize the view of the emotionally deficient parent who lacks the necessary knowledge and skills to teach their (also) emotionally deficient children. Parenting influencers have the expertise and the relatable experience to help parents become emotionally resilient so that they can, in turn, empower their children with emotional confidence and resilience.

Here's what you'll learn by participating in the seminars:

- *how to get rid of anger, constant negotiations, rebellion crises when you refuse to give them more sweets, more cartoons, more video gaming;*
- *how to get rid of guilt when you don't give your child everything they ask for;*
- *what you can do, explicitly, to raise a child content with what they have, who does not want more, newer, more expensive things.* (Urania Cremene)

Parents are responsible for helping their children recognize, express and handle emotions and for this they need a vocabulary of emotions. Not only are these parenting influencers capable of teaching parents the vocabulary of emotions, but they also provide them with specific contexts in which to use it and how to do it.

Influencers employ both instrumental and theoretical rationalization to make their guidance more persuasive. By explaining the practical benefits of their advice and grounding it in universal truths, they provide clear, bullet-point structured, logical reasons for parents to adopt specific behaviors. This strategy helps disseminate practical advice and promote the influencers' own services, seminars, and products while reinforcing their status as experts in the field.

5.2.4 Child rearing as a burden

Admittedly, it takes a (virtual) village to raise a child (Toader, 2023, p. 26). Parenting can be perceived as a burden given the economic, physical, and emotional costs it entails. Nevertheless, parents are responsible for helping their children build an emotional vocabulary to help them understand and express their emotions, if parents themselves have gained mastery over their own emotions.

Because, in reality, it is within our power to control our emotions, it is not the children's responsibility to tiptoe around us to avoid provoking us. We are the ones who must show them how to manage their emotions correctly, without causing harm, because if they don't learn this at home, it will be difficult for them to learn it elsewhere. When we are angry, feel like bursting with anger, or are having a difficult day, we should take a deep breath and not burden them with our state of mind. (Urania Cremene)

Moralization is used by influencers as a de-legitimation strategy for ostracism perpetrated by the society against parents who seem to lack the skills to identify and adequately

deal with emotions and emotion management. Influencers use direct address (e.g., *dear mother, dear parent*) to create a more personal connection with the audience and interpellation (e.g., *did you know, would you like to know*) to both affirm their knowledge and expertise and contest dominant or old-fashioned parenting (Toader, 2023). There is no shame in admitting that, as a parent, you are ill-equipped to deal with emotional expression in children, if you consciously invest time and effort to increase your emotional literacy, starting with building an emotional vocabulary.

6 Discussion and conclusions

This study explored the discourse on emotions in four Romanian parenting influencers' Facebook posts. The analyzed posts mainly promoted their training courses, shared personal parenting experiences, and offered reading suggestions for parents. Our two-fold aim was to inventory the linguistic and discursive strategies used to describe emotions and examine the themes and legitimation strategies these influencers use to justify their views on managing children's emotions. We are interested in identifying and analyzing the discursive strategies used by the influencers to describe and label emotions (e.g., metaphors like "burst like a volcano" for anger; descriptive behaviors like "laughing" for joy, "rolling out the eyes" for boredom, and "direct gaze" for happiness); the themes emerging from their discourse on emotion expression and emotional engagement (e.g., "parent as emotional learner", "influencers as emotionally literate", "a good parent is an emotionally safe parent"); and the legitimation strategies used by parenting influencers to justify their advice. Our findings reveal that all four influencers describe emotions similarly and view parents as emotionally deficient, lacking the necessary skills to manage their own and their children's emotions.

All four parenting influencers acknowledge the crucial role of emotions in parenting and developing a healthy parent-child relationship. Consistent with previous studies (Hoffman, 2009), negative emotions, especially anger, are predominantly described, highlighting the challenges of anger expression and management in children. Influencers use scientific approaches to discuss regulation, embodiment, intensity, integration, management, brain development, and emotional reactivity. These complex concepts are translated into relatable terms through metaphors, descriptive behaviors, and personal experiences. For example, sadness is described as a container/a pot that parents shouldn't "put a chocolate lid on", and anger as "kicks, spits, bites". This relatability helps influencers connect with their audience and makes the advice both authoritative and practical.

Our findings reveal themes like those found in previous research on emotions in parenting (Hoffman, 2009, 2010) and intensive parenting (Scheibling & Milkie, 2023). Parenting literature highlights pedagogical (emotion coaching parent) and therapeutic (parent as therapist) views of emotion expression and management. These approaches emphasize that parents are responsible for helping their children build an emotional vocabulary and navigate emotionally charged situations. The view of children as emotionally deficient, lacking the vocabulary and skills to manage their emotions, and dependent on their parents for emotion regulation, also appears in the discourse of Romanian influencers. However, our analysis reveals an interesting twist: parents, too, may be

emotionally deficient and in need of an emotional vocabulary to handle their own and their children's emotions; parents need to learn how to identify and express emotions, de-escalate negative emotions, and encourage positive emotional behaviors.

Influencers have a role in teaching parents a vocabulary of emotions and, thus, fostering emotional literacy in parents by leveraging on their legitimacy as (self-proclaimed) emotion mitigation experts. Our study reveals the significant impact that parenting influencers can have in shaping modern parenting practices through various legitimization strategies. Parenting influencers portray new parents as lacking the proper vocabulary of emotions because of the latter being used to a different parenting style, which did not emphasize this aspect as much. By leveraging expert opinions and personal success stories, these influencers enhance their credibility and authority, positioning themselves as reliable sources of parenting advice. This is particularly evident when they share personal anecdotes and address common parenting challenges, fostering emotional connections and relatability with their audience. This approach helps them build a loyal and engaged follower base while facing the ethical, practical and social challenges of sharenting (Blum-Ross & Livingstone, 2017).

Book recommendations and workshops conducted by influencers like Anca Zlăvog highlight the importance of cognitive and neurocognitive development in children. These recommendations underscore the role of embodied cognition and the corporeal experience of emotions. Similarly, Urania Cremene emphasizes the continuous development of a child's brain, reinforcing the scientific basis of their advice.

The influencers seem to operate under the assumption that one can raise emotionally sound children, free from the burdens of past generations, by learning to discern and manage emotions properly. While they acknowledge the need for self-compassion and the inevitability of mistakes, this forms the core of their argument. However, this simplifies parenting by isolating the variable of mastering emotions and (re)parenting oneself and children for a more successful upbringing. A possible conclusion from influencers' advice is that following it and continually perfecting emotional understanding can provide a trauma-free life for future generations. While this approach can be enlightening and empowering, it can also invalidate parents, making them question every parenting decision and feel the need to always validate their choices with expert advice. This dependency makes them reliant on parenting influencers.

Such an approach neglects the human nature of parents, who are expected to outperform older generations, sometimes at the cost of estranged relationships within the extended family due to conflicting views on parenting. Consequently, the proverbial "village" needed to raise a child might fragment into opposing viewpoints regarding the best childrearing practices. This perspective also overlooks the lack of social and political support parents face and ignores the many roles one needs to fulfill besides being a conscious parent. While such nuance does exist in the influencers' discourse, emphasizing self-care and self-compassion, the promotional nature and sometimes oversimplification of parenting into recipes make this discourse subject to critical thinking.

This study, like any other research, comes with a set of limitations. We compiled a convenience corpus of 100 Facebook posts, very similar in content and structure.

Therefore, the thematic diversity and the meaning patterns may have been substantially impacted by their high homogeneity in content and structure. The corpus is not very large either, which may affect the trustworthiness of the analysis. The qualitative analysis might benefit from interviews with influencers and followers which could provide a deeper understanding of the parenting influencers' discourse on emotions and of how it was perceived by their audience.

The discourse of online parenting influencers shows great potential for future research, including the parenting experts' view of emotional vulnerability within the parent-child dynamics. Following a recent trend in psychology regarding the need for adults to reparent themselves to undo the 'damage' done by previous generations, future studies might investigate the extent to which parenting influencers become indispensable for addressing gaps left by previous generations of parents.

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Appendix

Table 2. Overview of the strategies used to describe emotions and emotional experiences.

Strategies used to describe emotions and emotional experiences	Examples from the corpus
Specialized language	
Emotion regulation	<i>My little girl had come emotionally charged from school and the only way she knew to show me that she wasn't feeling well was to use a harsh tone with me. Despite feeling powerful on the outside, on the inside she felt powerless. To help her, I have decided to reconnect with her via an attachment game "Your Majesty", which is also a wonderful game to explore the child-parent power dynamics. (Raluca Ștefan)</i> <i>We manage to feel our emotions in our bodies and we can co-regulate our children during intense emotionally charged moments without trying to redirect children's attention away from emotions and without making emotions disappear. (Anca Zlavog)</i> <i>Dear parents, the time has come for us to realize that our role is not to ensure that our kids are happy in every single moment but to contain them and to be there for them when they are unhappy. (Anca Zlavog)</i>
Emotion management	<i>You can learn how to correctly manage your emotions and the emotions of your child so that you feel in control and they feel safe. (Urania Cremene)</i> <i>During this webinar you will find out, among other things, what you can do when your child cries, what research on crying showed and what is and you will familiarize yourself with the broken biscuit phenomenon. (Raluca Ștefan)</i>
Emotion repair	<i>When our child expresses their painful feelings and reacts in an undesirable manner, the first step is to try to repair it. [...] However, if we listen to them more, we might discover hidden emotions because of fear or shame, which now have the chance to be heard and healed. (Raluca Ștefan)</i> <i>From the moment you ask yourself what can you still do to repair your mistakes, you can start by showing them [your children] the unconditional love you feel for them. Keep fighting the painful experiences of the past to help you heal the wounds of the present. (Urania Cremene)</i> <i>[I work with] Parents who want to reconnect with their children, to show more patience and to speak their children's language, parents who have lost their path in the noise of unsatisfied needs, of tiredness and contradictory advice. (Anca Zlavog)</i>
Emotion intensity	<i>Even when they are angry, our children need to be assured that our love for them and our connection with them are stronger than their anger. (Raluca Ștefan)</i> <i>The child escalates emotionally and the parent feels overwhelmed, becomes angry and may say or do things which they will later regret. (Anca Zlavog)</i>

Strategies used to describe emotions and emotional experiences	Examples from the corpus
Parent-child attachment	<i>Infants' brains are built in such a way that they need more attachment figures. (Anca Zlavog)</i> <i>Our children are born with the unique ability to have more attachment figures. Although children may have one primary attachment figure, their development is influenced by more people, not just by the one person. (Anca Zlavog)</i> <i>When we offer our child our time and attention, we re-establish connection and we grow the feeling of safety in them. (Raluca Ștefan)</i>
Parental anger	<i>It is very possible that your child cannot hear you, that you don't have enough space to listen to yourself, to discover what makes you angry. Your child needs you to call him by name, to ask him for things that are found in that space in which you are neither a victim, nor an angry parent, not an emotionally unstable parent. Anger is a sign of powerlessness, when you feel that others are guilty for how you feel. (Oana Moraru)</i> <i>[...] parental anger: where does it come from and what can we do to control it. (Raluca Ștefan)</i>⁴ <i>steps to calm your nerves and those of your child. What should you do when you feel like howling, threatening and even hitting. (Urania Cremene)</i>
Figurative language Metaphor	Recognizing emotions is learning a foreign language <i>[...] we lack a vocabulary of needs and emotions. For me these two were foreign languages, which I learn with a lot of effort and practice. [...] how you can translate the needs and emotions so children can better understand them and how you can start learning this foreign language. (Anca Zlavog)</i> Emotions as a snowball <i>And all these [emotions] become a big snowball that rolls over criticism, insults, injustice; the child carries the snowball throughout their life and which transforms them into a "deficient" adult. (Urania Cremene)</i> Emotions as a container/ jar <i>Those unspoken feelings gather "in a jar", like my little girl likes to say. (Raluca Ștefan)</i><i>I have continued to allow her feelings (anger) to find a way to get out. (Raluca Ștefan)</i> (Anger like a fluid in a container) <i>When sadness is eating you, don't put a chocolate lid on it. (Urania Cremene)</i> Emotions/ anger are/is an erupting volcano <i>[...] without bursting like a volcano (Urania Cremene)</i> Emotions as containers/ cup <i>We need to fill the emotional cup more often (Raluca Ștefan)</i>
Personification	<i>[...] we need to become friends with our own anger (Anca Zlavog)</i>

Strategies used to describe emotions and emotional experiences	Examples from the corpus
<u>Expressive behaviors associated with emotions</u>	the child kicks, spits, bites (<i>anger, anxiety</i>) throwing things (<i>anger, frustration, aggressiveness</i>) tantrums (<i>anger</i>) the need to raise our voice (<i>frustration, anger</i>) crying (<i>sadness</i>) little by little he softened and fell into my arms (<i>trust</i>) bowed head, hidden between his [child's] little shoulders (<i>fear, anxiety</i>) yelling (<i>anger, aggressiveness</i>) laughing (<i>joy</i>) hugging and cuddling (<i>happiness, trust</i>) direct gaze (<i>happiness</i>) bright eyes (<i>happiness</i>)
<u>Activities</u>	playing video games and shooting the enemies (<i>anger, frustration</i>) drawing: evaluation criterion of cognitive, emotional and social development (Oana Moraru), help children express their emotions and allow adults to recognize and label them playing (jumping in puddles, climbing trees, etc) (<i>happiness, joy</i>)

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Emotions and hate speech against victim of domestic violence on news sites in Croatia: *The case of Denis Buntić*

In the digital environment, virtual and real life are often inextricably intertwined. Nowadays, citizens can participate almost equally in the creation of media content, and the easiest way to participate is through reader comments (Ksiazek & Springer, 2020). Although it was believed that the Internet, with its democratic inclusivity, would be an expression of the ideal public sphere (Habermas, 1996; Dahlberg, 2007), the content of online forums is often full of incivility (Papacharissi, 2004). Hate speech on news sites can contribute to a hostile online environment and escalate into real-life violence and Croatia ranks third in the European Union in terms of femicides (mup.gov.hr, 2023). Online, women are often confronted with gender-based hate speech that attacks them based on stereotypes, perpetuates harmful ideologies and reinforces discriminatory attitudes. Previous research (Kunić, 2022) in the Croatian media has shown that women who have been victims of violence are often victims of unacceptable speech in reader comments. The aim of this research is to determine the presence of misogynistic statements and hate speech against female victims of violence in reader comments on Croatian news sites. In this paper, a sentiment analysis and a content analysis of more than 1100 reader comments posted on the two most-read news sites 24sata.hr and Index.hr in the period from September 2023 to October 2023.

The corpus for the research consists of comments collected on 13 articles published on a topic that attracted a lot of media attention during this period, the case of former Croatian handball national team player Denis Buntić, who was accused of domestic violence against his wife, who is obviously a vulnerable party. The sentiment analysis of reader comments will examine emotions and feelings towards vulnerable victim of violence, from negative to neutral to positive. Content analysis will examine the presence of incivility towards women victim including qualifications such as hate speech, vulgar language, swearing and offensive language (Kunić, 2024). Rude comments include those that insult the victim because of their sexuality, appearance, education or mental health. Particular attention will be paid to comments that justify violence against women based on the perpetrator's sporting success or ironically comment on violence through sports jargon. It is expected that this research will provide insight into the misogynistic rhetoric and negative emotions of citizens towards victims of abuse on Croatian news sites when it comes to topics of domestic violence. In the final part, we will suggest building an ethical framework and guidance in such cases of aggression and violence (Butler, 2009) against the vulnerable, based on the ethics of vulnerability (Gilson, 2014) and moral sentimentalism (Slote, 2010).

Keywords: *hate speech, emotions, sentiment analysis, vulnerability, ethics, moral sentimentalism*

1 Introduction

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women and the most extreme form of gender discrimination (EIGE, 2023). It is estimated that 21 % of women in Croatia have experienced violence (EIGE, 2016). One in five women in the EU has experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former partner (Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), 2014). If we consider online life as an extension of 'offline life', the online version of misogyny is just an extension of gender-based violence in offline life, so we try to argue that the consequences of online hate and hostility can easily be transferred to real life. Online hate speech describes any form of invective, slander or offensive speech directed at another user via the internet, including virtual forums as editorial comments. Attacks on an individual or group are usually based on one or more personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin or religion (Costello & Hawdon, 2020). As cyber violence is widespread and equally trivialised, it promotes the normalisation of a culture of violence against women and a broader and overarching reinforcement of gender stereotypes and gendered social roles that affect women as a whole. Cyber violence is by no means 'just words', but 'harmful speech acts' that have the potential to constrain certain social groups, legitimise their discrimination and change attitudes and behaviours towards them (Esposito, 2018, p. 465).

In this chapter, we have examined a case that was very prominent in the Croatian media and attracted the attention of readers. Former Croatian national handball team player Denis Buntić was arrested in late 2023 for physical violence against his wife and illegal possession of weapons. Newspapers in Croatia and the region have been writing about the case for days and publishing footage of the attack, including an interview with his wife, who was hiding in a safe place at the time. In reader comments, which we see as part of participatory journalism where the audience can contribute to the debate on important social events alongside the content of professional journalists, we wanted to find out what kind of emotions the Croatian audience has towards domestic violence and towards the victims of domestic violence, considering that digital means of communication tend to blur the boundary between public and private identity (Mahlouly, 2013, pp. 10–12).

We have taken in account that different media systems entail different patterns of communication. The polarised pluralistic system, to which Croatia belongs according to Hallin and Mancini's (2004) typology of Western media systems, is characterised by the fact that the development of the commercial media market is very weak and the media often remain dependent on the state, political parties, the church or wealthy individuals, which is certainly detrimental to the development of professional media as autonomous institutions. Commercialisation is a way to escape those pressure, and opening to the audience through more interactive participation, still allowing the media to maintain control over the content created by readers (Suau & Masip, 2014, p. 681). Sharing, rating and commenting are the tools most frequently used by readers in that kind of media system (Suau & Masip, 2014, p. 682). Milosavljević and Poler (2018) point out that the media of the Western Balkans are under constant pressure from state censorship and

control on the one hand and are exposed to the self-contradictory and self-paralysing tendencies of market-based communication media on the other. In addition to the specific Croatian media environment, which in the digital age spans news sites and social media as well as traditional media, it is important to note that digitalization, increasing commercialization and the introduction of sensationalism as a new norm in journalism have negatively affected the journalistic practises and professional standards of Croatian news media (Grbeša & Volarević, 2021). According to Human Rights Watch (2023), members of ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+ people are still discriminated against in Croatia. Although the constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, women earn less than men for comparable work and hold fewer management positions. This complex media landscape, with challenges such as political influence and sensationalism, can affect how violence against women is portrayed and perceived.

2 Public debate in reader comments

Public debate, as envisioned by Habermas (1991) and later elaborated by Dahlberg (2007), is a forum where citizens listen to opposing viewpoints, aim for consensus and binding decisions, engage in honest, respectful, and empathetic dialogue, formulate clear arguments and acknowledge others' perspectives and reflect on their own opinions.

Participatory journalism in digital media allows for a public arena that is much more open, accessible and effective than the audience engagement mechanisms in traditional media (Ruiz, et al., 2011; Campbell et al., 2014). The audience has the limited control over the media content and the way it is received. The ability to see who and what has commented on a particular article significantly democratizes our information environment, but also threatens the power and control relationship between the media and the audience. If we consider participatory journalism as an attempt to strengthen deliberative democracy, in which citizen groups, local governments and the media actively work together to shape social, economic and political agendas, citizen communication on the Internet must fulfill some conditions similar to those in offline public spaces (Kunić, 2024).

While online platforms offer greater access, ensuring quality discourse remains a challenge. One of the differences between virtual environments and a normative Habermasian public sphere¹ is that digital technologies offer everyone the opportunity to contribute to public discourses regardless of the quality of their contributions (Mahlouly, 2013). Online discourses are significantly affected by a lack of rational thought and effective deliberation, so their publications are likely to be less reliable and their arguments lack rationality (Mahlouly, 2013, p. 12). Also, the fact that the quality of an on-

1 The Habermasian public sphere refers to an area of social life in which public opinion can be formed and which is accessible to all. The public sphere is a space for rational-critical debate where individuals come together to discuss matters of common interest, free from the influence of the state and market forces (Habermas, 2006). Various theorists (Habermas, 2006; Dahlberg, 2007; Borge Bravo & Santamarina Saez, 2016) have described how communication in internet forums should be inclusive, argumentative, respectful, reflective and free. The Habermasian public sphere provides normative framework for understanding and evaluating public discourse and democratic participation.

line public sphere depends on the diversity of participants contributing to the debate and users tend to visit websites or connect with networks that promote their own opinions (ibid). Reader comments, one of the most popular forms of citizen contributions in the digital public sphere, can be an important source of information and serve as a predictor of public opinion on socially important issues, especially in countries with a relatively young democracy such as Croatia (Kunić, 2024, p. 6). Reader comments on the texts of professional journalists, as a particular form of participation in the creation of media content under the moderation of the media company, are often the subject of research for unacceptable statements, hate speech and lack of reasoned rational discussion. Despite their great democratic potential, reader comments are usually not overly thoughtful; they are impulsive, superficial, more aggressive and less polite than other forms of audience participation (Reich, 2011). Anderson et al. (2018) argued that incivility makes people less responsive. It can lead people to believe that there will be no different points of view in discussions (Hwang et al., 2014) and that they are less satisfied with the discussion overall (Gervais, 2015).

In the study by Küchler et al. (2023) on gender and incivility, two concepts were presented that are used by media scholars to define incivility in online media spaces:

- Incivility as a rhetorical element: this view focuses on how things are said, not what is said. Incivility is the use of rude language, directly insulting people (ad hominem attacks) or attempting to silence them (verbal intimidation) (Coe et al., 2014).
- Incivility as a range of behaviours: This definition is about the effects of what is said. Incivility is anything that undermines democracy and freedom of speech or creates stereotypes about groups of people (Papacharissi, 2004). This includes things like racism, sexism and threats.

This study uses the definition of Coe et al. (2014, p. 660), which describes incivility as “characteristics of a discussion that convey an unnecessarily disrespectful tone toward the discussion forum, its participants, or its topics”. This includes name-calling, slurs, lies, vulgarity and derogatory language. We chose this definition because it is detailed, clearly defines what is meant by incivility, and is commonly used in media studies, allowing us to relate our findings to existing research.

3 Gender-based hate speech and incivility online

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the European Council defined hate speech or incitation to hatred as: “The advocacy, promotion or incitement of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatization or threat of such person or persons and any justification of all these forms of expression – that is based on a non-exhaustive list of personal characteristics or status that includes “race”, colour, language, religion or belief, nationality or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, age, disability, sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation” (Ortega-Sánchez et al., 2021; EK, 2016).

Hate speech is defined as communication that is hateful or threatening and aimed at people who warrant protection. This negative form of communication can lead to a

toxic atmosphere on social media and can escalate to psychological or physical violence in real life (Mantilla, 2013). As Ortega-Sánchez et al. (2021) argue, previous research has characterized hate speech as abusive or hostile messages, also known as flames, abusive language and offensive language related with issues such as cyberbullying or trolling (Mantilla, 2013). Mantilla (2013) introduced the term “gendertrolling” to describe the misogynistic variant of hate speech, which often involving credible threats of physical and psychological violence.

As in the research by Wojatzski et al. (2018, p. 68) the term gendered online hate speech is addressed towards women or men and has sexist and/or sexually aggressive content and can cover sexually aggressive expressions as an important additional element besides the expression of sexist attitudes. Sexually aggressive messages by strangers and out of the context of a consensual intimate relation are regarded as part of gendered offline and online hate speech because they sexually objectify, degrade, offend or even scare the victim (ibid.).

Gender-based hate speech on the internet disproportionately targets women, girls, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community because of their gender (EIGE, 2020). This kind of hate speech can manifest in various forms such as sexualization, objectification, body shaming, cruel remarks about gender, religion, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation. Women and girls are particularly exposed to violence if they assert their views, defend their identity or challenge traditional norms and gender roles or other human rights issues on public forums (EIGE, 2022). Research indicates that between 25 % and 41 % of women experience online sexual harassment (Duggan, 2015), often perpetrated by, like in-person harassment, heterosexual men seeking power and dominance (Barak, 2005). The EIGE report *Combating Cyber Violence against Women and Girls* (2022) concludes that the main impact on victims of gender-based hate speech online is withdrawal from social media or other public platforms with user-generated content. Both women in public life and private individuals may decide to post less frequently, tone down their language to mitigate provocation (self-censorship) or even deactivate their accounts. Behind this decision is often the idea that by keeping a low profile, they will avoid attracting even more attention and endangering their physical safety or that of their loved ones should the violence spill over into the offline realm. Gendered hate speech perpetuates the digital gender gap, making women feel unwelcome and unsafe in online spaces. Women’s Aid (2014) stated that 41 percent of domestic violence victims they helped were stalked or harassed via electronic devices. Women of any age, race, ethnicity or sexual preference can be the target of hate speech online, and some of the more prominent women are even more threatened in virtual spaces than their male counterparts. When analysing online violence against female politicians (Carson et al., 2024), it was found that female local politicians are subjected to a particular form of incivility in their workplace, which they describe as gendered. Rheault et al. (2019) analysed 2.2 million messages directed at female politicians on Twitter and found that highly visible female politicians were more affected by rude messages than male politicians.

Lumsden & Morgan (2018, pp. 123–126) explain examples of gender-based bullying online:

- 1) *Rape and death threats* are most frequently made against women who are in the public eye, such as politicians, TV presenters, musicians and feminist bloggers and activists.
- 2) *Body shaming and 'feminine' expectations*, especially in relation to posting pictures on social media, as well as negative comments about the appearance of victims
- 3) *Women who are seen as incompetent or incapable in relation to their profession* are associated with normative expectations of how femininity should be portrayed in public. This refers, for example, to comments about women doing jobs that are not traditionally considered feminine
- 4) *Women as 'double deviants'* who are seen by men as 'incompetent' in terms of their profession and gender and who work in a field normally associated with men and masculinity.

Similarly, Esposito (2018, pp. 466–469) has listed the most prevalent forms of violence faced by women in the cybersphere: body shaming, gender stereotyping and gatekeeping, claims of moral degradation, and direct threats and abuse. Felmlee et al.² (2020) find that slurs, defined as insults directed at group of people, in this case women, most often include words that insult appearance (e.g., “ugly,” “fat,” “skinny”), intellect (e.g., “stupid”), sexual experience (e.g., “promiscuous”), mental stability (e.g., “crazy”), and age (e.g., “old”).

Of great relevance to our research are the findings of Barratt (2018), which suggest that misogyny, or the extreme dislike and contempt for the feminine outside the established parameters of legitimacy, absolutely manifests in extreme verbal aggression and hostility, particularly name-calling, victim-blaming and the insistence that female victims deserve the violation of their trust and privacy online.

4 Methodology of case study

Denis Buntić is a former Croatian national handball player who retired in 2018 and lives with his family in neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina. In September 2023, he was arrested for domestic violence against his wife and unauthorised possession of weapons. His wife gave an interview to the Croatian media and shared a tape recorded during the fight. The case was very popular in the Croatian media, not only because of the popularity of the handball team he played for, but also because of his release from pre-trial detention by order of the judiciary. The media speculated that he was released early because his mother works at the criminal court where he was to be tried. During the time that the media paid attention to the case, some of the news stories talked about the rudeness on social media towards Buntić's wife and about some prominent people from Croatia, such as a fellow athlete and a priest, who justified his violence due to his sporting success (Klauški, 2023).

2 We used Felmlee et al.'s (2020) typology in our research on incivility related to gender-based hate speech when defining categories for our study.

The aim of this research is to investigate sentiment of audience to topics of domestic violence and extent of unacceptable speech towards victims in comments to newspaper articles about a famous handball player. In order to answer this we propose the following questions:

- Q1: What sentiment do readers have toward topics of domestic violence when perpetrator is a famous handball player?
- Q2: Do citizens use gender-based hate incivily toward victim in reader comments?
- Q3: To which gender characteristics do the uncivil comments refer to?
- Q4: Do readers in the comments minimize guilt of the perpetrator because of his achievements in sport?

From the two most read Croatian news websites, 24sata.hr and Index.hr in the period from September to October 2023, 13 articles about the Denis Buntić case that had the most comments were selected and 1021 comments were collected. On Index.hr we collected 381 comments and on 24sata.hr 640 comments. We employed a purposive sampling approach, selecting seven articles with the highest number of comments from each website. This ensures a focus on comments most likely to generate reader engagement and discussion.

Sentiment analysis, in which we define sentiments as judgments and ideas expressed through emotions (Liu 2012, p. 28), was used to identify readers' emotions towards the topic of domestic violence and the victim. Sentiment analysis was used to identify positive, negative or neutral language features in the comments. Due to the complexity of the Croatian language, a manual sentiment analysis was performed by one of the authors for this study. Moreover, sentiment analysis serves here as a help method to identify the differences between the emotions towards the topic of domestic violence and the emotions towards the victim. In this part of the study, reader comments were analysed according to their polarity: positively intoned comments, negatively intoned comments, neutrally intoned comments and comments where no emotion could be detected. A manual analysis was performed used NRC emotion lexicon (Mohammad & Turney, 2013) to detect emotions expressed in comments related to the topic of the article and to the victim of violence. Manual quantitative content analysis was used to look for gendered hate speech, as well as gender characteristics as a basis for an insult. In our final line of content analysis, we wanted to find out whether the commentators trivialised the culpability of the perpetrator based on his sporting achievements.

5 Results

Our results showed that overall, 60 % of reader comments expressed negative emotions on the topic of domestic violence, while 22.3 were neutral. Only 0.5 % of comments were positive towards domestic violence and 17 of comments could not be identified. When analysing the feelings where the object of the sentiment is the victim, we found 17.2 % of comments with negative emotions towards the victim. Interestingly, not a single comment that referred to the victim of domestic violence had a positive or neutral attitude towards the victim. If they referred to the women at all, it was in a negative way.

The hate speech we found was in 2.7 % directed against the perpetrator of domestic violence and the ethnicity of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was associated with the place of residence of the perpetrator of violence.

Here are the examples, translated from Croatian to English, of hate speech directed at the perpetrator of violence:

- (1) The “former Croatian national handball player” is actually a **primitive peasant** from Herzegovina who has nothing to do with Croatia except that he plays for the national team because **he is ashamed to perform for his B&H team, the so-called Muslim** as perceived by the citizens of Herzegovina.
(*Bivši hrvatski rukometaš” je zapravo primitivni seljak iz Hercegovine koji nema nikakve veze s Hrvatskom osim što igra za reprezentaciju jer ga je sram nastupati za svoju BH. reprezentaciju, tzv. muslimansku kako ih doživljavaju građani Hercegovine.*)
- (2) This is the face of Herzegovinians who still treat women according to Turkish custom because they have been **Turkicized for centuries**.
(*Ovo je primjer Hercegovaca koji još uvijek tretiraju žene po turskim običajima.*)

Incivility against women, that was related to gender, and can be perceived as gender-based hate speech was found in 7.6 % of reader comments and referred to the victim. They referred to the victim as: *stupid, unreasonable, she deserved it, loves a sponsor, loves thugs, should have known who she was dealing with, crazy, sick...*

Here are examples of insults directed at victim of violence, translated from Croatian:

- (3) I feel sorry for the woman, but my old lady, if he wanted to kill you at 150 cm and 50 kg with his 2 meters and 150 cm, he would have done it, man, he would have made a pancake out of you so small. In addition to the fact that you are so small, you're standing on a 2-meter-long, 150-kg idiot, which means that **you're not very clear-headed** either.
(*Žao mi je žene, ali stara moja da je on tebe od 150 cm i 50 kg sa svojih 2 metra i 150 cm mislio ubiti on bi to i napravio, čovječe od tebe bi tako malene palačinku napravio. Osim toga što se tako malena pališ na krkana od 2 metra i 150 kg govori da i ti nisi baš čista u glavi.*)
- (4) The lady **found the other dick and then she accused him of harassing her**, so that the public would condemn him for beating her up
(*Čučnila dama na drugi k....! i onda optuzila njega da je maltretira da javnost osudi njega sto joj je plesku opalila a ne nju sta đuska po prangiji*)
- (5) I don't know **who is crazier, this maniac or this stupid woman who married such a man?? What does a woman need in her life to marry this kind of raw material????** And then she complains to the media that he is like this ...
(*Ne znam tko je tu ludji, ovaj manijak ili ova glupaca koja se za takvog udala?? Sto treba zeni u zivotu da se uda za ovakvu sirovinu???? I onda kuka po medijima da je on takav ovakav...*)

In analysing the gendered insults, we grouped them into six categories: appearance, „gold digger“, intellect, sexuality, mental stability and age. We added the “gold digger” category to Felmlee et al. (2020) categorization of slurs because we noticed that many comments referred to marrying for money as a justification for violence.

Most importantly, we noticed that most of the insults were not limited to one characteristic. In majority of cases, one single comments consisted of several gender-based insults. In 85 % of the comments, the victim was insulted because of her appearance.

These are examples of gender-based insults translated from Croatian:

- (6) She's **disgusting** with that pumped up mouth and botox
(*Odvratna je s tim napumpanim usnama i botoksom.*)
- (7) Better for him if this **plastic one** is as far away from him as possible ... her story holds less water ...
(*Bolje za njega da je ova plastična što dalje od njega ... sve manje njena priča drži vodu ...*)
- (8) There is **more life in those plastic dolls from the store window than in this empty head.**
(*Više života ima u onim plastičnim lutkama iz izloga dućana nego u ovoj praznoglavki.*)
- (9) A typical depiction of a modern marriage...a drunken horse prone to violence and a **plastic gold digger without a brain.**
(*Tipični prikaz modernog braka...pijana konjina sklona nasilju i plastificirana sponza bez mozga.*)

50 % of the comments referred to the victim as a „gold digger“ along with other categories.

- (10) Another **gold digger. Who funded all this plastic surgery?**
(*Još jedna sponzorša. Tko je financirao sve te plastične operacije*)
- (11) When you see this “**I don't do anything and take good care of this job**” simile, you immediately understand why Mr. Buntić gets drunk.
(*Kad vidiš ovu “ne radim ništa i dobro čuvam taj posao” spodobnjaču odmah ti bude jasno zakaj se gospodin Buntić opija.*)
- (12) Watch out for the combination, **she's all been operated on**, pictures on social media, travels, **easy life**, it's clear to everyone that **there's no gram of love but pure material interest**, he's a popular athlete, **the financial issue is settled**, he's eager to have a top-notch wife, even if **she's had a lot of plastic surgery**, from that interest developed into jealousy, control of his wife, alcohol and maybe drugs, he gave himself to evil, physically abandoned himself, the bullying began, physical violence that lasted for years, **she refused to report it immediately, perhaps out of the much-mentioned interest**, but certainly also out of fear. Then it all ends

up in court in an artificial state where everything is in shambles, where there are relatives, godfathers and they work in court, and logically they will let him go. She just needs to end up like the one from Gradačac and there you have it, another sad story from the failed Balkans.

(Pazite kombinaciju, ona sva izoperirana, naslikavanje po društvenim mrežama, putovanja, laki život, svakom jasno da tu nema grama ljubavi nego čisti materijalni interes, on popularan sportaš, sređeno financijsko pitanje, željan da ima top skockanu ženu makar imala brdo plastičnih operacija, iz tog interesa se razvila ljubomora, kontrola supruge, alkohol možda i droga, odao se zlu, zapustio se fizički, počinju maltretiranja, fizičko nasilje koje traje godinama, ona odbija odmah prijaviti možda iz toliko spominjanog interesa ali sigurno i straha. Onda sve to završi na sudu u umjetnoj državi u kojoj je sve u hurcu, gdje su rodbina, kumo i rade na sudu i logično da će ga pustiti. Još samo fali da ona završi kao ona iz Gradačca i eto ti još jedne tužne priče sa propalog Balkana.)

A significant number of comments (34.6 %) referred to insulting the woman's intellect. Here are the examples of that kind of comments:

- (13) **She's too stupid** to have a normal husband.

(Ova je preglupa da bi imala normalnog muža.)

- (14) The **stupid woman** quarreled him with his friends, like all women do ... **she deserved it, the bitch** ... Mr. Buntić was destroyed by his wife and now he is suffering.

(Glupača ga je posvadila sa prijateljima ... dobro je zaslužila kuja jedna ... gospodina Buntića je uništila žena i sada on ispašta ...)

19.2 % of the comments referred to women's sexuality.

- (15) That's not a wife, **that's a prostitute**.

(Ovo nije žena, nego prostitutka.)

- (16) I ask for a curious friend: are these beautiful cheeks obtained by genes, botox or **excessive blow job**?

(Pitam za radoznalog frenda: da li se ove lijepe čubice dobiju genima, botoksom ili pretjeranim pušenjem?)

In 17.9 % of the comments, mental stability of the victim of violence is questioned.

- (17) **She chose this psycho herself**. She is **also definitely not right in the head** and **should be committed to a mental institution**.

(Sama je izabrala ovog psihopatu. Ona sigurno isto nije čista u glavi i trebala bi u ludaru.)

Only 2.5 % comments referred to her age as gender-based insult.

- (18) She **was young and stupid** and only thought about her status when she met him.
(*Bila je mlada i glupa i mislila je samo na svoj status kad ga je upoznala*).

The final analysis we conducted concerned the offender's sporting success and justification of the violence. We looked for comments that were positively or negatively related to sports. Here are the examples:

- (19) **Positive:** Buntara legend. I am sure he just wanted to play handball with the lady, and we all know what a lefty he was.
(*Buntara legenda. Siguran sam da je samo htio igrati rukomet s gospođom, a svi znamo kakvu ljevicu je imao*).
- (20) **Positive:** Handball is a contact sport, you can always give two slaps when the referee is not looking :)
(*Rukomet je kontaktni sport, uvijek možeš čušnuti dvije kad sudac ne gleda :)*)
- (21) **Negative:** Take away all his medals and trophies and kick him out of all sports and the public eye. The worst scum among men are those who attack women and children, especially because they grow balls after drinking.
(*Uzmite mu sve medalje i trofeje i izbacite iz sporta i javnosti. Najgori šljama među muškarcima su oni koji napadaju žene i djecu, pogotovo nakon što su dobili muda zbog alkohola*).

The analysis showed that 1.8 % of the comments had a positive reference to the violent offender's sporting success, while 2 % of the comments had a negative reference to his sporting success. Other comments did not refer to the perpetrator as an athlete.

6 Discussion

Feelings and emotions on the topic of violence against women in our case study and sentiment analysis were predominantly negative (60 %), but 17 % of commenters also had a negative emotions towards the victim. The results of this research can be compared with the research conducted by Kunić (2022) among reader comments on news sites, where a total of 4.7 % insults against women victims of violence were found, which shows the significant increase in gender-based hate speech in Croatian online spaces. In almost 8 % of comments, readers used misogynistic language when referring to the victim, indicating that unacceptable comments are repeatedly made towards women on news sites. The insults are directed at the victim's appearance and intellect and often refer to her as a gold digger, portraying the victim of a violent crime in a negative light. Online violence often spills over into real life and such rhetoric, when it occurs in the national media, is dangerous because it can give like-minded people a justification to use the same rhetoric in real life and lead to real violence. What is very disturbing is the fact that some of the readers have also commented positively on the sporting achievements of the perpetrator of the violence and justified the physical violence with his successes. Insults, threats and name-calling against women show the presence of misogynistic rhetoric in the public

digital space and require more attention from researchers, legislators and the public to condemn such phenomena in the digital world, as they have profound and lasting consequences for the victims, but also send a message to society that such communication is acceptable. It is implicit that victims in similar research around the world feel a sense of blame, which is encouraging victims to take responsibility for the abuse and act by removing themselves from the online space where the attack took place, perhaps denying them the opportunity to use digital forums for exchanging of ideas and debating about important social issues.

In conclusion, we developed and proposed an ethical framework that can help in preventing and dealing with hateful tendencies in media comments sections against the vulnerable persons like the women in our case.

7 Conclusion and ethical framework for comments sections

Since the 1990s, scholars have developed principles to guide media in maintaining integrity, reliability, and trustworthiness. Consensus has been reached on five key criteria. First, 'truth-seeking and accuracy' demands that journalists be courageous in finding reliable evidence and consistently and carefully fact-check to ensure objectivity (Berry, 2008, p. 111; McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, pp. 23–121). Second, 'integrity and independence' involves presenting multiple viewpoints and competing perspectives, adhering to the principle of perspectivism (Berry, 2008, p. 72, 130; McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 123). Third, 'minimizing harm' to affected parties requires approaching subjects with empathy and respect, particularly vulnerable individuals (Berry, 2008, p. 58; McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 118). Fourth, 'community engagement' directs journalists to engage with the community as an end in itself, promoting diversity and tolerance without causing destabilization (Berry, 2008, pp. 85–86; McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, pp. 213–280). Lastly, 'transparency and honesty' are essential for maintaining trust and integrity in journalism (McBride & Rosenstiel, 2014, p. 122). However, established principles don't fully address our particular case of hate speech against women on news sites. That is why we suggest developing an ethical framework and guidance for all cases of aggression and violence (Butler, 2004) against the vulnerable in the readers' comments section. In creating this framework, we draw on the ethics of vulnerability (Gilson, 2014), moral sentimentalism and the ethics of empathy (Slote, 2010), along with the principle of minimizing harm.

Our standpoint is that to avoid and prevent hate speech, it is not enough to merely censor specific comments in the comment section. We believe that the best foundation for building such a framework lies in moral sentimentalism, the ethics of vulnerability, and the ethics of empathy and care. Our proposition, based on the described footholds, is a five-criteria ethical framework for the readers' comments on journalistic pieces:

- 1) **Anticipating Potential Situational Vulnerabilities:** Based on the journalist's text, it is possible to predict certain negative impacts on different human vulnerabilities that could arise within specific situations and contexts. This type of consideration can develop deeper insights, leading to better prevention of anticipated negative scenarios.

- 2) Detecting and Acknowledging the Vulnerable: Recognizing who is vulnerable, in what ways, and why is fundamental. This increases understanding of vulnerabilities in general, helps differentiate between types of vulnerabilities, and provides insights into their causes – not only for others but also for oneself.
- 3) Protecting the Vulnerable: Any form of hate speech or aggression against the vulnerable persons should prompt the immediate implementation of protective measures such as prohibition or exclusion. It is crucial to develop concrete and effective protection measures for different situations.
- 4) Caring Reactions and Tendencies: It is essential to express empathy and compassion in response to vulnerability and to take concrete actions to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable individuals. For instance, in the case of hateful comments, one could respond by posting a comment that protects the vulnerable, denounce aggressor and explains why the aggressor's actions are unacceptable.
- 5) Developing Responsibility: Cultivating the belief that it is our moral duty to protect and care for the vulnerable will lead to caring actions and tendencies toward those who are vulnerable. This sense of responsibility is crucial for fostering a compassionate and supportive environment.

Although it was expected that the internet would democratically connect citizens around the world and provide an arena for the exchange of opinions accessible to everyone, without discrimination on the basis of age, religion and ideology, and that it would become a place of deliberative public discussion, it has been shown that the digital space is still a place of flaming, heightened tensions, patriarchal attitudes and, unfortunately, unacceptable speech and hate speech. Of particular concern is that the most vulnerable groups in society are exposed to hate speech and unacceptable speech – women, victims of domestic violence. The rhetoric researched in this chapter shows that a large number of comments contain unacceptable characteristics based on gender factors, such as appearance, behavior, intellect, which are associated with the victim's femininity, and we can assume that this form of unacceptable speech is misogynistic towards the victim and constitutes hate speech. The problem of communication on the internet, in the comments of readers should be addressed by the media through the editorial practice of controlling comments and moderating the space for commenting, by hiring additional moderators or by implementing artificial intelligence that will automatically de-textualize problematic forms of speech. It is also necessary to raise awareness in the media of the need for open communication in the media, to consider the virtual public sphere as a real life places and to regulate behavior in the digital arena through laws, self-regulation in media organizations, but also through the personal ethical principles of everyone who decides to enter a space for commenting and write something.

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The syntax of violence and hate: A focus on Lithuanian

This chapter investigates the syntactic features characteristic of hate speech in Lithuanian and aims to relate them to extreme emotions and verbal violence. The data used for the present research has been collected from publicly available court cases dealing with hate speech between 2009 and 2019 and includes 220 hate speech messages. The results show that hate speech is characterised by a high degree of dysfluency and error indicative of conversational grammar and high emotional involvement. Hate speech messages tend to be expressed in clause-like units with minimal punctuation, resulting in syntactic blends. On the other hand, some hate speech comments are fully fluent, but then they take a syntactically reduced form. These structures typically express overt threats of physical violence. Chaotic syntax and some linguistic categories such as imperatives, modals, infinitives, and vocatives are linked to impoliteness strategies such as threats, incitement, and insults. It is argued here that syntactic properties, alongside other linguistic features, can assist linguistic experts in legal proceedings by providing evidence of the speaker's prejudiced attitudes, emotional involvement, and intentionality.

Keywords: *hate speech; violence; expressivity; emotional involvement; syntax; dysfluency; Lithuanian*

1 Introduction

The present study aims to examine syntactic properties that are indicative of extreme emotions and verbal violence by focusing on hate speech in Lithuanian. This chapter explores a range of sentence structures in hate speech, which primarily reflect conversational grammar (as outlined by Biber et al., 1999) in terms of form, but also have some specific communicative functions, such as degrading, insulting¹, and threatening a target. The broader goal is to consider how these structures impact the tone of hate speech messages and express the negative emotional load of the speaker.

In recent years, hate speech has been addressed from different disciplines and perspectives (see, for instance, Perry & Scrivens, 2017; Paz et al., 2020; Castaño-Pulgarín

1 Degrading and insulting are tightly interrelated and to some extent overlapping concepts. Some of the differences between the two lie in the intent, effect, and degree of overtness of the message. Insulting language aims to cause more immediate offence, hurt feelings, and provoke a reaction, and is more overt. Degrading remarks, often expressed in subtler forms than insults, aim at long-lasting effects. They contribute to systematic discrimination against a group, perpetuate a belief in the group's inferiority, and have an impact on societal norms and attitudes.

et al., 2021), including a number of linguistic studies applying discourse analysis and pragmatics, and an outstandingly rich body of research on automated hate speech detection (for an overview, see Jahan & Oussalah, 2023). The amount of research focusing on morphosyntactic aspects of hate speech, however, is still limited. Some studies have touched upon some morphosyntactic forms such as neologisms, diminutives, and affixation (Vasilaki, 2014; Ruzaitė, 2021), but they have dealt with them just briefly in broader discussions of hate speech characteristics. So far, the most systematic and comprehensive research on grammar-related indicators of hate speech appears in Knoblock (2022).

Almost none of the studies so far has investigated syntactic properties of hate speech based on empirical materials obtained from legal cases, except for the research of Culpeper et al. (2017), who examined one type of hate speech – religiously aggravated speech. As will be shown in Section 3, research that would focus not on a single morphosyntactic category but that would aim to map out a comprehensive repertoire of different syntactic categories is also lacking. The present study thus is an attempt to contribute to the area by considering the syntax of hate speech in Lithuanian and by relating syntactic realisations of emotion in hate speech.

Hate speech can be of different degrees of severity thus forming a continuum from socially unacceptable hate speech to illegal hate speech (Allport, 1954; Fišer, 2017). The present study applies the legal definition of hate speech and thus examines legally punishable hate speech by looking into data obtained from court materials (as outlined in Section 3).

To address the research gaps defined above, the following **research questions** are raised in this study:

- 1) What syntactic features characterise hate speech?
- 2) Which categories indicate the speaker's emotional involvement and prejudiced attitudes?
- 3) How do syntactic categories relate to impoliteness strategies?

These research questions are addressed through a qualitative analysis of the syntactic features of hate speech, primarily aimed at discerning the repertoire of hate speech in Lithuanian. The identified categories in the data are further associated with impoliteness categories (presented in Section 4).

To elaborate on the concept of illegal hate speech in Lithuanian legislation, first the existing Lithuanian laws are presented in Section 2. Previous research on grammatical properties of hate speech is overviewed in Section 3, and Section 4 presents the data and methods that the current analysis is based on. The results of the empirical analysis are discussed in Section 5, which first examines the degree of fluency in hate speech, arguing that syntactic blends and generally chaotic syntactic structures are related to the speaker's emotionality (Section 4.1). The results are further analysed by discussing clausal and non-clausal units in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.

2 Hate speech legislation in Lithuania

In Lithuania, the legal concept of hate speech has been developing for a couple of decades. As Guliakaitė & Mikša (2020) point out, a fundamental change in the treatment of hate speech occurred in 2008 with the adoption of the Framework Decision of the Council of the European Union on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law². The Decision provides for the harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the EU Member States concerning acts related to racism and xenophobia. Its aim is to guarantee that severe instances of racism and xenophobia are punishable by effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties across the EU.

Under this decision, Lithuania, alongside other Member States of the EU, undertook to develop measures to ensure the criminalisation of offences related to racism and xenophobia, including public incitement to violence or hatred directed against a particular group of persons (Guliakaitė & Mikša, 2020, p. 13).

For this reason, some changes were made in the judicial regulation of hate speech in Lithuania. In 2009, amendments to the Criminal Code relating to incitement to hatred were adopted which criminalised incitement to hatred and introduced the motive of hatred as a qualifying element of the offence. The list of offences also included “hate motivated mockery and contempt” (Art. 170 of the Criminal Code, 2009³). In 2016, the offences of incitement to hatred and hate crime were expanded to include specific grounds of discrimination or incitement to hatred, with the addition of disability and age (Art. 170(1) of the Criminal Code) (Guliakaite & Mikša, 2020, p. 13), and skin colour and ethnic origin in 2022.

As stated in Article 170 of the Criminal Code, incitement to hatred includes different forms of expression that ridicule, stigmatise, incite discrimination, abuse, or violence against persons on the basis of certain characteristics protected by the law, such as age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, colour, nationality, language, descent, ethnic origin, social origin, social status, faith, beliefs or opinions.

As can be seen, this interpretation of the Criminal Code does not mention the term “hate speech” but only incitement to hatred and its various forms; however, hate speech includes not only incitement, but also the formation of contemptuous, discriminatory attitudes towards a certain group, the intention to provoke hatred against a group, and other forms. An explanation of the concept of hate speech was provided only recently by the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Lithuania (2022). In this study, it is thus important to keep in mind when interpreting the results in the empirical analysis, that, due to the legal regulations that existed until 2020, the data includes hate speech understood in a somewhat limited way. The research focuses on data that includes a high number of instances of hate incitement but much less other forms of hate speech.

2 Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, <https://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j9vvik7m1c3gyxp/vi3ojo6epnyy>.

3 170 str., Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamasis kodeksas [Article 170, Lithuanian Criminal Code], <https://www.infolex.lt/ta/66150:str170>.

3 Previous research on grammatical properties of hate speech

As has already been indicated, research on the morphosyntactic features of hate speech is scarce although some studies do touch upon some relevant categories. However, such studies often do not directly link the morphosyntactic categories analysed to hate speech. This is particularly the case in research on the expression of impoliteness, which often discusses categories that can be characteristic of both offensive content and hate speech but does not distinguish clearly between the two. For example, Vasilaki's (2014) study examines Greek YouTube comments written in response to a political video by applying impoliteness theory to analyse name-calling, or derogatory labels, classified by Culpeper (2011a, b) as insults. In her study, some grammatical aspects of insults are addressed, but name-calling is not related to hate speech. Besides, Vasilaki's (2014) results reveal more about the morphopragmatic aspects of name-calling (e.g. the derogatory use of diminutive forms) rather than syntax.

In hate speech, impoliteness categories have been examined in religiously aggravated speech (as a type of hate speech) by Culpeper et al. (2017). In their analysis of English data, they examine the most frequent types of impoliteness formulae (presented in Table 1 in Section 4). In Lithuanian hate speech, these categories have been investigated by Ruzaitė (2023). In neither of these studies, though, the morphosyntactic properties have been examined in a systematic manner as the primary focus in them is on pragmatic aspects.

To date, the most systematic and comprehensive research on grammatical features of hate speech is presented in Knoblock's (2022) edited volume. A few of the studies published in this monograph focus on English (Mattiello, 2022; Peterson, 2022; Tarasova & Sánchez Fajardo, 2022), but most of the papers focus on languages other than English, including Czech, Dutch, German, Greek, Ukrainian, and Russian.

The aspects studied in this monograph include mainly the following categories:

- grammatical gender (Christopoulou et al., 2022; Thál & Elmerot, 2022; Lind & Nübling, 2022; Knoblock & Sazonova, 2022);
- affixes, with a special focus on diminutive suffixes (Mattiello, 2022; Tarasova & Sánchez Fajardo, 2022; Christopoulou et al., 2022);
- word formation (Beliaeva, 2022; Korecky-Kröll & Dressler, 2022);
- pronouns (Ohlson, 2022);
- sentence structure and mood (Peterson, 2022).

These categories are investigated in texts that attack a group or individuals on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, or religion, as well as instances of misgendering. Different approaches to both quantitative and qualitative analysis are used, including corpus linguistics, stylistics, morphopragmatics, and sociolinguistics. The empirical material varies from case studies to corpus data. Although the spectrum of this research is quite broad, it is limited to single studies focusing on single morphosyntactic categories, and the only study that focuses more extensively on syntactic forms is that of Peterson (2022), who examines how space and time are configured in homophobic utterances through the use of Mood-Residue syntactic structures.

A methodology for examining emotions on the basis of hate speech examples has been developed within the framework of discourse analysis by Alcántara-Plá (2024). However, this study does not integrate morphosyntactic aspects, but focuses instead on larger discourse structures. Alcántara-Plá's (2024) research is important in relation to the present study in the sense that it links hate speech to specific emotions, a primary of them being fear. In hate speech, the feeling of danger is stimulated by discourses depicting a group as danger, a threat, an enemy, or generally the Other (ibid.).

4 Data and methods

The data for the present research has been collected from 160 court cases dealing with hate speech between 2009 and 2019 (publicly available at <https://eteismai.lt/>). In total, the dataset comprises 220 hate speech messages (6,087 words). The number of hate speech instances is higher than the number of legal cases, as in some cases there is more than one hate speech message made by the same person.

The hate speech messages under investigation are of different genres (oral attacks in public spaces, internet comments, Facebook posts, and posters), but predominantly these are internet comments. The number of oral statements is very small – only six items in the dataset. The fact that the analysis in Section 4 focuses mainly on online comments is thus due to the nature of the data collected.

In terms of hate speech targets, the largest part of the data consists of messages against groups based on sexual orientation ($n=147$), with a smaller proportion ($n=65$) of messages against groups based on race, religion or national identity. Groups attacked on the basis of national identity include Poles, Jews, Russians and Roma, and one comment against an Azerbaijani. Groups targeted on the basis of religion are Muslims and Jews. This is in line with statistical data⁴, which shows that in Lithuania, the highest number of cases of hate incitement is registered on the grounds of nationality, sexual orientation, and race.

It is important to note that this study does not link the analysis of the features of hate speech to the verdict of the case and does not take into account the legal reasoning. Rather, the collected material available on the portal is used as the optimal source of hate speech that meets the criterion of high severity by being included in legal proceedings. It was also considered that if a case had been acquitted in a court of first instance or higher, it was still worthwhile to analyse such cases in the study, because the content, whatever the court's decision, was identified by the prosecutor's office as being in violation of the Criminal Code and the case therefore reached the courts rather than being dropped. It can therefore be assumed that such content involves quite radical and dangerous expression of hostility and thus can be considered hate speech. However, in future research it would certainly be important to analyse hate speech in the light of court decisions and the arguments they provide, with a particular focus on cases with acquittals and on controversial cases where different courts of different instances have reached different decisions.

4 *Institucinis atsakas į neapykantos kalbos reiškinių Lietuvoje: nepriklausoma apžvalga.* <https://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2021/03/institucinis-atsakas-i-neapykantos-kalbos-reiskini-lietuvoje-nepriklausoma-apzvalga.pdf>

The data was analysed by adopting some categories of conversational grammar introduced by Biber et al. (1999) in combination with impoliteness theory (Culpeper 2011a, b). The latter is used as an interpretative framework that allows relating syntactic realisations to impoliteness strategies, which further disclose speakers' attitudes, prejudice, and aggression.

Culpeper provides a systematic linguistic repertoire of impoliteness forms represented in Table 1 (square brackets are designed to give an indication of some of the structural characteristics of the formulae; slashes are used to indicate alternatives). In addition to these categories, in their research on hate speech, Culpeper et al. (2017) also include incitement, which is also relevant in my study.

Table 1. Impoliteness formulae in English (based on Culpeper 2010, pp. 3242–3243)

Category	Formulae
Insults	
1. Personalised negative vocatives	– [you] [fucking/rotten/dirty/fat/little/etc.] [moron/fuck/plonker/ dickhead/ berk/pig/shit/bastard/loser/liar/minx/brat/slut/squirt/sod/ bugger, etc.] [you]
2. Personalised negative assertions	– [you] [are] [so/such a] [shit/stink/thick/stupid/bitchy/bitch/hypocrite/ disappointment/gay/nuts/nuttier than a fruit cake/hopeless/pathetic/ fussy/ terrible/fat/ugly/etc.] – [you] [can't do] [anything right/basic arithmetic/etc.] – [you] [disgust me/make me] [sick/etc.]
3. Personalised negative references	– [your] [stinking/little] [mouth/act/arise/body/corpse/hands/guts/trap/ breath/etc.]
4. Personalised third-person negative references (in the hearing of the target)	– [the] [daft] [bimbo] – [she] ['s] [nutzo]
Pointed criticisms/ complaints	– [that/this/it] [is/was] [absolutely/extraordinarily/unspeakably/etc.] [bad/ rubbish/crap/ horrible/terrible/etc.]
Challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions	– why do you make my life impossible? – which lie are you telling me? – what's gone wrong now? – you want to argue with me or you want to go to jail?
Condescensions	– [that] ['s/is being] [babyish/childish/etc.]
Message enforcers	– listen here (preface) – you got [it/that]? (tag) – do you understand [me]? (tag)
Dismissals	– [go] [away] – [get] [lost/out] – [fuck/piss/shove] [off]
Silencers	– [shut] [it]/[your] [stinking/fucking/etc.] [mouth/face/trap/etc.] – shut [the fuck] up

Category	Formulae
Threats	– [I'll/I'm/we're] [gonna] [smash your face in/beat the shit out of you/box your ears/bust your fucking head off/straighten you out/etc.] [if you don't] [X] – [X] [before I] [hit you/strangle you]
Negative expressives (e.g. curses, ill-wishes)	– [go] [to hell/hang yourself/fuck yourself] – [damn/fuck] [you]

The categories central in the current research are highlighted in grey. Insults are also important in hate speech, but they are more relevant regarding morphology. Here, however, my focus is on sentence structures, and these are especially related to challenging or unpalatable questions, dismissals, threats and negative expressives (especially ill-wishes).

5 Results

5.1 Fluency or chaos?

As the results of this study have revealed, hate speech is strongly characterised by general dysfluency and errors. A large proportion of hate speech comments consist of long sequences of sentence-like units with no or very limited punctuation, often resulting in multi-unit syntactic blends. Alongside syntactic dysfluency, such clauses normally contain a large number of errors in spelling and grammar.

Dysfluency in hate speech is so extensive that it can reach extremes typical of spoken interaction (cf. dysfluency observed in English spoken discourse in Biber et al., 1999, p. 1052). In spoken conversation, inarticulate speech is mainly influenced by the lack of planning and a high degree of spontaneity. Technically, in online interaction, speakers can plan their utterances, so dysfluency in internet hate comments cannot be explained solely by spontaneity and is treated in this chapter as one of the indicators of emotional expressivity. A typical example of such emotion-driven syntactic dysfluency is provided in example (1). This comment consists of a rather long syntactic blend where the only punctuation mark is an emoji (: D). Some of the words do not even have spaces between them, resulting here in a five-word blended fragment in the sentence-initial position and a two-word blend in the subsequent utterance (highlighted in bold):

- (1) oj **gaidžiukaikasjuslaukiarytoj**: D ble ble isgamu festivaly matai **susiruosedaryt** pedarastai : D man atrodo po situ ju gejisku eisenu daugiau vaikscioti nebenores ir viesintis bus baisoka: D sumauti pederastai gaidzei nx
 “oh **littlecockswhatiswaitingforyoutomorrow**: D fuck fuck pederasts **planhav-**
ing the perverts’ festival: D I think after these gay parades they won’t want to walk again and will be a bit scared to go public: D damned pederasts cocks fuck”

The boundaries of different clausal units in this comment are unclear not only because of missing punctuation marks but also because no upper-case letters are used to mark the beginning of different clauses. As example (1) shows, in addition to punctuation inaccuracies, several other indicators of dysfluency occur in online hate speech, one of them being numerous **misspellings** (*jus* (= jūsq “your”), *isgamu* (= išgamų “degener-

ates”), *susiruose* (= *susiruošė* “plan”), *situ* (= *šitų* “these”), *gejisku* (= *gėjiškų* “gay”), etc. These misspellings are mainly a result of the lack of Lithuanian diacritics, but some of them involve misspelt inflections, e.g. *gaidzei* (= *gaidžiai* “cocks”) and *festivaly* (= *festivalį* “festival”). Such language may be interpreted not only as an indicator of emotional involvement but also as a marker signalling limited spelling skills and, consequently, a lower social and/or educational background.

Another feature of conversational style illustrated in example (1) is the use of **utterance launchers** (Biber et al., 1999, pp. 1054, 1073-1076), which here include the misspelt interjection *oj* “oh” (most probably aiming to represent more accurately its phonological realisation in spoken language rather than its standard written form) and the repeated swear *ble ble* (“fuck fuck”). The repeated swears are clearly used here for emphasis and indicate a high emotional involvement of the speaker.

Such a dysfluency can be seen as a sign of high emotional involvement, an expression of a spontaneous, hyperbolic reaction. It is particularly characteristic of colloquial speech, which usually has an emotional load (cf. Župerka, 1983, p. 18).

Though dysfluency and error are prevailing features in hate speech, some comments are fully fluent. Such messages tend to be very concise and take a highly reduced syntactic form. Often, these are non-clausal units constituted by a noun phrase (NP) or prepositional phrase (PP) used as:

- a) a condensed directive usually realised by an infinitive, e.g. *Pagauti ir išpjauti kiaušus* (“To catch and cut out the balls”);
- b) disparaging or abusive insults, e.g. *Kandonai panaudoti* (“Used condoms”).

If viewed from the perspective of impoliteness categories, these fluent structures are predominantly **insults** (as in *Kandonai panaudoti* “Used condoms”) or condensed emphatic **threats**, referring to different forms of physical violence to be inflicted on the target group (as in *Pagauti ir išpjauti kiaušus* “To catch and cut out the balls”).

A more detailed analysis of different syntactic structures used in hate speech is provided in Section 4.2, which examines clausal and non-clausal units identified in the data.

5.2 Clausal units

The analysis has revealed that hate speech can be realised using syntactic structures of different complexity, including relatively well-developed clausal units as well as non-clausal units, such as phrases, slogans, and infinitive structures. Sections 4.2.1-4.2.3 focus on clausal units: declaratives, imperative clauses and interrogative clauses. Non-clausal units, meanwhile, are discussed in Section 4.3.

5.2.1 Declarative clauses with different degrees of modality

In declarative statements, which often adopt the most direct form of threats and hate incitement, various levels of intentionality can be conveyed through different verb forms, one of which is the future tense. Typically, the future tense is employed to discuss forthcoming events, express predictions, promises, and resolutions. In hate speech, several

patterns have emerged, involving different grammatical persons, thereby rendering some claims more personal than others:

- a) Threats using a verb in the second person plural addressing the target group (with or without a vocative) and specifying a threat:
 - *Būsit nušluoti nuo žemės paviršiaus* “You will be wiped off the face of the earth”
 - *nesirodykite gėjai ir lesbietės gatvėse, nes jusu iškripeliu vieta ligoninėse* “stay away, gay and lesbians, from the streets, because you perverts belong in hospitals”
- b) Threats using the verb in the first person plural to refer to the actions planned and intended by haters:
 - *Imsim kalašnikovus / išgaudysim pederastus* “we’ll get Kalashnikovs/catch pederasts”
- c) Threats using the verb in the third person to specify the threat or negative consequence to the target (without explicitly naming the agent of the action):
 - *mirs daug pyderių* “a lot of pederasts will die”
 - *išsigelbėjusių nebus* “there’ll be no survivors”
- d) Incitement using the future tense:
 - *Kas užvers tą iškrypėlį, taps nacionaliniu didvyriu.* “Whoever kills that pervert will be a national hero.”

The most personal forms appear in clauses formulated using first-person verbs, as in set (b), while all the other realisations are impersonal, as they do not specify the agent of the action referred to.

Hate speech realised in the form of declaratives is characterised by the frequent use of **modal verbs** expressing necessity. Following Župerka and Kvašytė (2006, p. 319), in Lithuanian, necessity is usually conveyed using the verbs *reikėti* “need”, *turėti* “have”, and *privalėti* “must”. These modals can be softened or weakened by using them in the conditional form; however, in hate speech, no such forms have been encountered.

Reikia “need”, which clearly dominates in the data (in total, 54 occurrences), is typically used with verbs referring to an abusive action, as in examples (2)–(3):

- (2) Ne nu ;(;(..Zudyti juos **reikia**
“Well no ;)...)They **need** to be killed”
- (3) <...> dusinti **reikia** tuos homoseksualizmo propaguotojus
“one **needs** to choke those promoters of homosexuality”

In Lithuanian, *reikėti* “need” is typically used as an impersonal verb (*reikia* “it is necessary”), without attributing agency to the speaker (cf. *reikia žudyti X* “X needs to be killed” vs. *nužudysiu* “I will kill X”). Interestingly, the use of *turėti* “have”, which always requires a subject unless used in the passive voice, is also found in impersonal constructions (e.g. *X turi būti sunaikinti* “X have to be destroyed”), thereby avoiding direct attribution of responsibility to the speaker.

The verb phrase following a modal sometimes requires a less explicit interpretation, as in example (4), where a reference is made to Breivik:

- (4) **Reikia** paskambinti Breivikui, kad prasineštų tam parade
 “One **needs** to call Breivik so that he gives a beat down in that parade”

The name *Breivik* carries the connotation of a violent act with contextual knowledge of Anders Breivik, the Norwegian ultra-right extremist who carried out a double terror attack in 2011, killing 77 people, and was sentenced to 21 years in prison in 2012. The mention of Breivik here, however, does not explicitly refer to a specific individual but rather to the actions attributed to him, implying physical reprisal or harm against the target of the hate speech. While a direct interpretation of this statement might suggest that it fails to meet the felicity conditions and that implementing such a call is impossible due to Breivik’s imprisonment, it is important to note, in the context of assessing hate speech, that it is not always overtly expressed. As recent research indicates, both manual and automatic detection of hate speech requires models capable of identifying not only overt but also covert instances (Baider, 2022; 2023).

A grammatical form that is employed to make threats in hate speech less straightforward is the **conditional** form of the main verb. For such mitigated instances of threats, consider examples (5)–(6):

- (5) dantis iškart išbarškinčiau
 “I’d **knock out** their teeth right away”
 (6) čia tokius užmuštų
 “here such people **would get killed**”

In such cases, an act of assault is projected by considering a hypothetical act of violence, where the speaker’s intentions are specified by using the verb in the first person (as in (5)) or by using an impersonal form (as in (6)). The negative assertions are mitigated through the choice of the conditional form, but they still express strongly negative attitudes towards the target.

The majority of verbs specifying the act of abuse form a lexical set of references to physical assault and violence. However, some instances (which form just a paucity of instances in the present dataset) involve historical allusions, the interpretation of which is not necessarily straightforward. For instance, references to Hitler and Stalin are sufficiently explicit in the following structures of hate speech argumentation:

- [reikia / reiktų] [dar vieno] [Hitlerio / Hitlerio su Stalinu ir eitynių į Sibirą]
 “[we need/we’d need] [one more] [Hitler/Hitler with Stalin and a march to Siberia]”

However, some references to historical figures, as in example (7), require some specific background knowledge to successfully interpret the intended meaning of the utterance:

- (7) Padaryt, kaip senovėje lietuviai su Brunonu padarė.
 “To do as the Lithuanians did with Bruno in the ancient times.”

Here a reference is made to Bruno, a Christian missionary bishop who met opposition in his efforts to spread Christianity in Lithuania and was beheaded in 1009 for his continuous attempts to evangelise the locals.

5.2.2 Imperative clauses

Formally, in Lithuanian, the imperative mood can have three main grammatical realisations: the form of the 2nd person singular (*daryk* X “do X”), the 2nd person plural (*darykite* X “do X”), and the 1st person plural (*darykime* X “let’s do X”). In informal style, the plural form is usually abbreviated to *darykit* X “do X”.

Imperatives are typically used to urge the addressee to perform (or not to perform) an action. The addressee may be specified in a vocative but can also be omitted. Imperatives relate to the will of the speaker and therefore also relate to the intentionality of the utterance, which is particularly important in relation to hate speech. Additionally, as pointed out by Ambrazas (1997, p. 574), imperative structures are usually very expressive and emotionally loaded.

When using the imperative mood in hate speech, the verb is either plural or singular, but when the plural form is used, it is always abbreviated, as is typical of the colloquial and informal style, as in *imkit* “take” in example (8). It is important to note that example (8) contains a fragment from an old anti-Semitic counting-out rhyme, only that here the rhyme is completed with the homophobic slur *pidariuka* “pederast” in the diminutive form replacing another diminutive noun *žyduka* “Jew” in the original. This way, an attempt is made to normalise hatred of LGBTI+ members by using the easily recognizable reference to anti-Semitic folklore.

- (8) **Imkit** vaikai pagaliuka ir **užmuškit** pidariuka
“Kids **take** a stick and **kill** the pederast”

The use of imperatives in such instances is the most straightforward form of hate incitement as they are a direct call for action. Therefore, it is not surprising that in such constructions the main verb usually refers to a physical assault or some other aggressive action.

A form that is closely related to imperatives is the first-person plural form of the indicative mood; consider example (9):

- (9) **mūsam** pydarus ir viskas, o ne px. Bus tu geju ne karo metas
“**let’s beat** pederasts and that’s it, and no shit. We won’t run out of faggots, it’s not wartime”

The present tense here implies an immediacy of action, thereby expressing a call for action or incitement in a more forceful and emphatic manner than the imperative form of the same verb (cf. Dumašiūtė, 1971, pp. 86–87).

Another alternative form used to express imperatives is the 3rd person imperative, which is sometimes called the “**optative mood**” and is used to indicate a wish or hope regarding a certain action. It can be formed by adding the grammatical prefix *te-* to the

verb or by inserting one of the particles *te*, *tegu*, *tegu*, or *lai* (“let”) before the 3rd person of the present tense verb.

In hate speech, the particle *tegu* “let”⁵ prevails, while the other alternatives do not occur in the data most probably because they would be too formal for such context. Optative structures with *tegu* are characteristic of dismissals or ill-wishes, as in example (10):

- (10) Lauk išsigimėlius is LT!! **tegu** emigruoja visi iki vieno kam blogai!! <...>
 “Get those degenerates out of LT!! **let** everyone who feels bad emigrate!! <...>”

Clauses in the optative mood, as demonstrated in example (10), tend to end in single or multiple exclamation marks, which additionally signal the expressive-evaluative load of the utterance.

5.2.3 Interrogative clauses

Interrogative clauses are an important category because they can be related to modality. Since questions are often used to avoid liability for accusatory or derogatory language, they can be treated as an indirect expression of hate, and due to their indirectness, they can raise legal problems in determining hate speech.

As the current study shows, questions in hate speech are used to stimulate doubt, avoiding categorical generalisations and straightforward statements, as in example (11):

- (11) as nesuprantu kodėl tie peredastai negali gyventi, ir nelysti i visuomene? Kodėl neskelbe, kai as apsivedžiau su žmona? Del to ir norisi tuos peredastus daužyti, kad visur kiša savo smirdinčius, isvazinetus užpakalius ...
 “I don’t get it **why those pederasts can’t just live and stay away from society? Why didn’t they announce it when I married my wife?** That’s why there is this urge to batter those pederasts, because they display their stinky, worn-out asses everywhere ...”

In hate speech, such clearly discriminatory statements formulated in the form of a question often aim to justify the speaker’s negative attitudes towards the LGBTI+ group, thus serving as a strategy of legitimization. These constructions can also be related to unpalatable questions, one of the above-mentioned impoliteness strategies distinguished by Culpeper (2011a; 2011b).

Interestingly, a previous study on offensive language and hate speech in online comments (Ruzaitė, 2023) shows that questions are particularly frequent in hostile comments, comprising 42 % of all impoliteness strategies in offensive and hateful content. The present results, however, indicate that unpalatable questions are not common in cases of illegal hate speech but tend to be more prevalent in offensive content that is less likely to qualify as hate speech.

5 Both the present tense form in example (9) and the structure with *tegu* in example (10) are translated into English using *let*, but in Lithuanian, these are two distinct grammatical realisations. The first-person plural present tense form expresses a call for action (an invitation to perform an action together with the speaker), while *tegu* is used with the third-person subject to express a dismissal.

The form of the question is a mitigating device used to avoid moral or legal responsibility for the attitudes expressed; in other words, questions are used as a convenient way to indirectly make certain accusations and discriminatory claims about the target group and can therefore undoubtedly be useful in the study of discriminatory discourses in general. However, in many cases, the use of such questions or assumptions may not be sufficient for a comment to meet the legally defined criteria of hate speech in terms of content and form, which is also suggested by the low incidence of questions in the court case materials used for this study.

Also, the relatively small number of questions in the current data may have been influenced by the period of data collection and prevailing legal practices at that time (especially prior to the judgement published in 2020 in the Case of Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania, petition No 41288/15). Therefore, in the future, it would be important to compare the results of this study with those of later years. During the period under investigation, the texts that reached the courts were mainly those that explicitly identified violent acts against the LGBTI+ group, while pre-trial investigations into texts that did not mention such acts were usually discontinued. As noted in the most recent guidelines of the Prosecutor General's Office (2023), however, incitement to hate does not necessarily imply incitement to commit a specific violent or other criminal act. Attacks on individuals committed by insulting, ridiculing, or denigrating certain groups of the population is sufficient to justify the restriction of freedom of expression (2023, p. 11).

To generalise the findings in this section, threats realised using declaratives can be expressed with different degrees of directness, depending on grammatical and lexical choices made by the speaker. Grammatically, the most straightforward threats are those made in the first person, in the imperative or future tense, and those made directly to the victim. In contrast, the subjunctive mood expresses an unreal, possible, conditional, desired action or goal, and in threats it softens the speaker's intent and the imminence of the threat. In lexical terms, threats are most straightforward when they directly refer to an act of (physical) aggression, and less straightforward when they involve allusions to historical figures or facts (especially less well-known ones).

Some threats, as demonstrated in the examples above, contain modal verbs of necessity, with the most common being *reikėti* "need" and the less frequent *turėti* "have". These modal verbs lend the statements a high degree of directness, with only impersonal sentence constructions and/or adverbial clauses serving to mitigate their straightforwardness.

5.3 Non-clausal units

The main non-clausal units that have emerged in the present study include infinitives, noun phrases and prepositional phrases, which are discussed in this section. An important property of these structures is their "fragmentary nature" (Biber et al., 1999, p. 1099), a trait that can be related to the spontaneity of expression.

When **infinitives** are used in non-clausal units, they precede or follow an object, which typically refers to the target. These fragmentary syntactic structures are often reduced to the minimum, referring only to the violent action called for (highlighted in

bold in examples (12) and (13). In some instances, a comparative is included to make the call for action more suggestive, as in the first sentence in example (13):

(12) TOKIUS TIK KASTRUOTI....

“MERELY TO CASTRATE THESE....”

(13) **Issaudyt** leizbietes ir pyderus, kaip vokiečiai žydus prie sienos. **Naikynt, traiskynt** sia kasta be pasigailėjimo

“**To shoot** lesbians and pederasts at the wall like the Germans did with the Jews.
To exterminate, crush this caste without remorse”

Such reduced structures, lacking subjects and using impersonal verb forms, resemble slogans due to their concise and easily memorable form. These short and catchy statements serve as effective tools for communication when advocating violence, as they convey messages in a clear and straightforward manner.

The emotional load of such structures is further confirmed by the trend observed in general Lithuanian by Ambrazas (1997, pp. 574-576), who note that infinitives used as directives are primarily used in expressive language and convey commands (or prohibitions) more forcefully than the imperative mood. In spoken interaction, therefore, they are usually marked by emphatic intonation (ibid.). In internet comments, as revealed in this study, such emphasis is achieved through written language resources, such as capitalising entire clauses, employing intensifiers like *tik* “merely”, and listing verbs from the same lexical set (*Naikynt, traiskynt* “to exterminate, crush”), alongside frequent orthographic errors as in example (13), and comparisons to events like the Holocaust.

Non-clausal units containing infinitives are thus used mainly for incitement. They are intended to capture attention and evoke negative emotions or associations related to the target group and prevailing attitudes towards them.

Similar fragmentary nature is characteristic of non-clausal units consisting of **noun phrases and prepositional phrases**. In English grammar, these are termed “condensed directives” (Biber et al., 1999, p. 1101), a designation that aptly applies to Lithuanian clauses of this nature and is therefore adopted in this study.

The data has revealed that such units have the force of commands and are highly insistent due to their reduced form, as demonstrated in examples (14)-(16), illustrating different patterns identified in hate speech:

a) *NP as the Object + PP (the verb is often omitted)*

(14) **visus pyderastus ant laužo** ir sudegint kad nebutu situ šlykštynių!

“**all pederasts on fire** and burn them so that all these denigrates are gone!”

b) *PP*

(15) I verdanti Katila

“Into the boiling Kettle”

c) *NP*

(16) visiems p... po kankorezi ir deportas i grenlandija!!!

“a pinecone and deportation to Greenland for all p...!!!”

These structures are especially characteristic of incitement and threats.

Hate speech also uses non-clausal units containing only a reference to the object of the verb (namely, the target group of hate speech) and the circumstances of the action called for. In such constructions, the **adverb** *lauk* (the grammaticalised form of the illative *laukan* “to the field” or “outside”) is used, as in examples (17)–(18):

- (17) **lauk** pydarastus iš Lietuvos
 “Get those pederasts **out** of Lithuania”
- (18) **Lauk** iš Lietuvos tuos išgamas pidarastus <...>
 “Get those perverts pederasts **out** of Lithuania <...>”

This syntactic pattern is very basic and straightforward, constituting only the adverb *lauk* followed by an insult referring to the target group (e.g. a homophobic slur) and the place which the group is supposed to be driven out from. Thus, as examples (17)–(18) suggest, these constructions are a common realisation of dismissals used in hate speech. It needs to be noted, though, that these dismissals are by default highly impersonal, as neither the addressee, nor the agent of the action is specified. The only nominal reference that this structure allows for is a noun phrase specifying the object of the action (which is realised as an insult, following Culpeper’s terminology).

6 Conclusion

The results show that hate speech messages are overwhelmingly marked by dysfluency and error, which can be considered as features of conversational grammar and indicators of a high level of emotionality. A large portion of hate speech consists of extensive sequences of clause-like units without any or with a highly limited amount of punctuation, often resulting in syntactic blends. Alongside syntactic dysfluency, such clauses normally contain many errors in spelling and grammar.

On the other hand, there are some comments that are very concise, take a highly reduced syntactic form, and are fully fluent. Often, these are non-clausal units constituted by a noun phrase or prepositional phrase used as a condensed directive usually realised by an infinitive. Predominantly, these structures are reduced emphatic threats referring to different forms of physical violence to be inflicted on the target group.

Chaotic syntactic structures signal limited planning arguably arising from the high emotional involvement of the speaker. Such categories as imperatives, some modals, infinitives, and vocatives can be linked to such impoliteness categories as threats, incitement, and insults.

Incitement and threats can take diverse forms, but the most prevailing ones include affirmatives with modals of necessity and infinitives. The most dominant modal is the present tense form of *reikia* (“need”) in collocational patterns with the main verb specifying the act of assault. The future tense is used for making resolutions, more personalised threats, to act against the group. The subjunctive mood (formed by using *tegu* “let”) is prevalent in dismissals.

An important category that emerged in the data is that of questions, which are used as a discursive strategy of argumentation for justification of prejudices. It has been observed that in the current data question are not as pervasive as in offensive content examined previously (Ruzaitė, 2023), which suggests that being a less direct form of expression, comments taking the form of interrogatives are not considered hate speech in pre-trial investigations. Some of these findings (e.g. the prevalence of the modals expressing necessity and the low frequency of questions) can also be explained by the legal practices that existed during the time period represented by the current data. Some more recent data need to be examined to test if this is really the case.

The syntactic features identified in this study are not definitive criteria for identifying hate speech, but they could serve as supporting evidence for linguists acting as experts in legal proceedings, particularly when assessing the intent behind hate speech. General dysfluency, reduced syntactic structures, and particularly non-clausal units may indicate rapid communication, reflecting a swift and emotional response to a trigger, resulting in an emotional reflex. Regarding the conventional nature of insults, Martínez & Yus (2000) argue that “[s]tandardized or conventionalized insults are thus likely to be detected within the insulting strategy characterized by a high degree of anger” (2000, p. 10). Dysfluency and reduced syntactic structures emerge in this research as conventional syntactic forms, lacking polishing and elaboration but serving the purpose of an immediate reaction under a strong emotional strain.

What remains unexplored in this chapter is the use of derogatory noun phrases employed as insults. They constitute a substantial category of both conventional and creative derogatory nominal items, which, being highly diverse, deserve a separate piece of research. Another avenue for future research entails a typological comparison between languages to determine what syntactic aspects of hate speech expressions are “global” versus “local”, and to explore whether there are any cultural constraints that operate in hate speech.

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Part II

Affective communication in political context

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Trump vs. Biden: an acoustic analysis of candidates' affective attitudes in the final presidential debate, Nashville, 2020

This chapter provides an analysis of selected acoustic parameters extracted from the recording of the final presidential debate between D. Trump and J. Biden held at Belmont University, Nashville, Tenn., on October 22, 2020. The aim of the study is to verify a hypothesis, according to which certain affective states, as well as the speaking style of the candidates ('challenger' vs. 'opponent'), are encoded and can be detected in the signal. In line with earlier research, it is assumed that the most conspicuous acoustic parameters which robustly reflect the emotional attitude of the speaker pertain to F0 and intensity levels/fluctuations, the durational characteristics of vowels (especially those carrying primary stress) and the overall acoustic energy. This is because the above parameters are naturally derivative of the psychophysical tension, which is characteristic of emotional arousal of the speaker. The results indicate, however, that none of these parameters alone can be directly linked to the speaker's affective state. Thus, duration is claimed to serve as a mere temporal plain, which is necessary for the realisation of pitch and intensity excursions. The candidates speaking styles were postulated on the basis of a complex network of interrelations between the acoustic parameters, whose correlations point at a particular emotional attitude of the speaker. In conclusion, it is claimed that D. Trump, despite being the President at the time of the debate, presented the 'opponent' speaking style, which J. Biden succeeded at presenting himself as the challenger.

Keywords: *emotions, challenger/opponent speaking style, acoustics, F0 (pitch), vowel duration, intensity*

1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the acoustic analysis of emotional attitudes and expressive dominance of the two presidential candidates (D. Trump & J. Biden) during the final debate at Belmont University, Nashville, Tenn., on October 22, 2020. The original recording has been segmented in *Audacity* in order to extract relevant samples of speech uttered by the candidates and to eliminate the voice of the moderator. Then, the fragments in which both candidates describe their idea of leadership were fed into *PRAAT* speech analyser. The spectrographic analysis involved numerous parameters, which (according to earlier studies) may indicate the affective attitude of the speaker and the 'challenger/opponent' position in the debate. These pertain to (i) stressed vowel duration and its mean and maximal pitch (F0), (ii) mean rate of delivery (expressed in

the number of syllables per second), (iii) pause-to-speech ratio, (iv) intensity and (v) energy expenditure while producing an utterance. The above acoustic parameters were then measured manually and compared. While both candidates seem to speak in an apparently neutral and unemotional manner, various emotional states can be detected in the signal. These include anger, fear, dominance (related to 'challenger/opponent' style) all of which may be encoded in durational cues, F0 (Hz) and intensity (dB) fluctuations and the overall tempo of delivery. No individual parameter, however, can be claimed to underlie an emotional attitude of either candidate. It is rather a fairly complex network of interrelations of parameters that points at a particular emotional attitude attached to a particular extract. Especially indicative of the candidates' speaking style, however, turns out to be the stressed vowel pitch (F0) and intensity, from which with the overall acoustic energy may be derived.

2 Detection of emotional/affective state in acoustic signal

Human perception of speech is naturally sensitive and able to correctly identify the affective attitude encoded in human voice.¹ Early studies, e.g., Lieberman & Michaels (1962), point at pitch (F0) as the most conspicuous acoustic parameter, whose perturbations (both natural and synthetically manipulated) were found to be correctly identified and mapped onto corresponding emotional states by listeners in forced judgement tests. However, the judgements based on reactions to real human input were significantly higher (85 %), than those based on the synthesised stimulus (44 %). Moreover, adding amplitude information to the synthesised stimulus did not improve the correctness of judgements and rose by a mere 3 %. Similar results pertaining to F0, as a physiologically natural and acoustically robust parameter, were obtained by Sigmund (2013) in his study on speaker-independent stress detection.

However, Bänziger & Scherer (2005) argue that, while both mean F0 and F0 range (especially its significant increase) are indeed reliable indicators of emotionally marked speech, they are not sufficient clues to label or categorise particular affective states. Thus, their results should rather be interpreted as pointing at the role intonation plays in expressing emotions in general.

An interesting study by Banse & Scherer (1996) showed that as many as 14 different affective attitudes can be indexed and evaluated in terms of their intensity and valence. In their analysis they used 224 recordings provided by professional actors and proved that the analysis of vocal parameters only could successfully decode the imitated emotional expressions.

¹ For a comprehensive overview of research paradigms pertinent to analyses of affect-marked speech see Scherer (2003). Emotions are argued to be tripartite in nature, i.e. to have a psychophysio-linguistic manifestation (Johnston & Scherer, 2000). A generalised psycholinguistic approach, referred to as Brunswikian lens model, was also proposed by Scherer, Johnstone, and Klasmeyer (2003) to integrate kinesic, vocalic and linguistic signals in encoding and decoding emotional states. All these analyses draw, naturally, on Darwinian ideas, which were further developed and systematised in Ekman's seminal work (Ekman, 1992).

However, while emotionally neutral vs. emotionally aroused speech distinction observed in the acoustic signal was shown to be uncontroversially discriminated and mapped onto corresponding physiological parameters, Johnstone (2017) claims that these correlations cannot be successfully explained by 'sympathetic arousal' as far as F0 changes, spectral features or intensity are concerned and are independently related to cognitive processes, e.g. those involved in speech planning. Johnstone (2017) also points at difficulties pertaining to the identification of different emotions (anger, happiness and fear). In chronological terms Johnstone's scepticism was rather late, since much earlier Sobin and Alpert (1999) published a chapter in which they showed that human decoders were able to correctly identify various emotions in speech artificially manipulated speech samples. Similar, positive results were obtained by Yildirim et al. (2004), who argued that the four basic affective states, i.e. sadness, anger, happiness and neutrality, can be identified by analysing prosodic features (rate of delivery, pauses), vowel renditions, energy of articulation or even lip position.

Biasoni et al. (2016) went a step further in their attempt to show that the basic emotional states are gradable. They analysed pitch, energy and time to show that in anger-provoking driving sessions the subjects expressed two different types of anger, i.e. 'hot' and 'cold'. This distinction was acoustically encoded in pitch excursions and energy expenditure, but the temporal differences turned out to be significant.²

Parallel to the attempts to capture emotional attitudes in the acoustic signal, research was conducted on the synthesis of speech with various affective states. Cahn (1990), given the difficulties in mapping affect onto synthetically generated speech, devised an Affect Editor software in order to improve prosody and overall expressiveness. A much more advanced system (*EmoSyn*) was developed by Burkhard & Sendlmeier (2000). This was made possible by increasing the number of articulatory features which could be modified. These included: pitch (mean, range, variation and contour), F0-flutter, intensity, speech rate, phonation type, vowel precision and lip-spreading. Such approach facilitated not only the synthesis of clearly detectable basic emotional states, but also their gradience.

3 Selected research on affect in business and political context

Since emotions are part and parcel of real-life communication, various studies were carried out whose aim was to implement tools which could be used, for instance, in business and political contexts. Petrushin (1999) reports on an experiment in which the potentials of artificial neural networks were tested for their accuracy in recognising emotionally neutral expressions in opposition to happiness, sadness, anger and fear in utterances produced by professional actors. The neural network recognisers were first trained for pitch, vowel formants (F1 and F2), energy and speaking rate. The obtained average accuracy ratings of above 70 %. The results of the research facilitated prioritising voice messages, e.g. in call centers.

² A similar, classificatory approach was presented in Soliwoda (2018) in relations to a broader range of affective states, including not only anger, but also distrust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise.

Some research attention was also given to important business leaders, who were perceived as charismatic speakers. Defining ‘speech charisma’ is generally based on perceptual judgements and may be problematic to capture in terms of acoustic parameters. However, Niebuhr, Voße & Brem (2016) in their analysis of Steve Jobs’ pronunciation manage to pinpoint an array of features, most of which are what they call ‘melodic’, or prosodic. These include variation in the speaking rate, variable loudness, substantial pitch excursions, emphatic accentuation and variable rhythmical/metrical patterns which, in turn, modify the stressed vowel duration and the degree of vowel reduction in metrically weak/unstressed positions. Furthermore, effective non-hesitant, stylistically conditioned pausing contributes to the realisation of the above prosodic features.

However, while these acoustic parameters are generally agreed upon as markers of ‘charismatic speech’, the degree and proportions in which different speakers use them varies. Niebuhr et al. (2020) in their contrastive analysis of Steve Jobs vs. Mark Zuckerberg point out that while both their subjects are perceived as charismatic speakers (though Jobs uses rhythmical variability and emphasis to a greater extent), the actual values of particular parameters differ. The most conspicuous discrepancies pertain to mean pitch and intensity levels on the one hand (Jobs: higher, Zuckerberg: lower) and phrase duration and pausing on the other (Jobs: shorter; Zuckerberg: longer). Interestingly, slightly different results were obtained for each speaker, depending on whether the speech was delivered to investors or customers.

It comes as no surprise that political leaders were also subject to acoustic research attention. For instance, Duez (1997) analyses selected acoustic parameters in F. Mitterrand’s speeches. The main conclusions point at the importance of F0 contours and stylistic pauses as main indicators of charismatic public speeches. According to Duez, pause timing was used by Mitterrand in order ‘to maintain a balance between what was being said and what was left unsaid’ (Duez, 1997, p. 10). Moreover, pause timing was shown to change, depending on the position from which the speech was delivered, i.e. the president vs. the candidate. This underlies Duez’s distinction between ‘the challenger style’ and ‘the opponent style’. Dominance is claimed to follow from the differences in F0 characteristics, i.e. mean F0 and its range was found to be significantly higher in Mitterrand’s presidential speeches and lower in his speeches as a presidential candidate. This goes against the previous studies, e.g., Ohala (1984), where low pitch was associated with dominance.³

4 Methodological preliminaries

4.1 Data

For the present study a few extracts from the final presidential debate, held at Belmont University, Nashville, Tenn., on October 22, 2020, were selected. The extracts come from the final part of the debate, in which the moderator interviews the candidates on their vision of national leadership.⁴ Each candidate was given approximately one minute

3 In particular, Ohala (1984) argues that steep fall of F0 is a reliable indicator of dominant attitude of the speaker.

4 The acoustic data are provided in the Appendix.

to refer to the question. The timing was controlled by the moderator. Basic temporal and syntactic/lexical statistics of both extracts is presented in Fig.1 below.

Table 1. Temporal and syntactic/lexical statistics

Candidate	Total time (sec.)	Total pausing time (sec.)	Total speaking time	Number of utterances	Number of words	Number of syllables
Trump, D.	61.93	8.72	53.21	16	198	278
Biden, J.	56.77	12.14	44.63	14	174	249

It reveals some general tendencies in each candidate's speaking style. Trump exceeds the allotted total time limit by almost 2 secs., while Biden stops with a margin of 3.23 secs. Both candidates, however, remain within the time limit, once stylistic pauses are disregarded. The number of utterances is comparable, but Trump utters significantly more words and syllables. According to Cruttenden (2014, p. 54), a typical delivery rate for English is approximately four syllables per second for non-emotional speech, although it raises to 5.9 in an emotional or public speech context (Arnfield et al., 1995). The candidate's affective state in the debate naturally increases their syllables-per-second ratio. In our samples, Trump delivers his concluding statement at the average rate of 5.22 syll./sec., while Biden's coefficient is slightly higher and amounts to 5.56 syll./sec.⁵ Apart from the total pausing time (Trump: 8.72 sec; Biden: 12.14 sec), another interesting indicator is speech-to-pause ratio. As claimed by Gyarmathy and Horváth (2019), pausing strategies depend on the speaking style (conversational vs. narrative) and pauses (both syntactic and hesitational) are longer in the latter style. We find the difference between both candidates non-negligible. While Trump's pause-to-total time ratio is 0.14, for Biden it increases to 0.21, which suggests that Biden presents a more 'narrative' style. This, in turn, may be indicative of Biden's pre-planned speech, as opposed to Trump's *in promptu* 'conversational' mode and is additionally reflected in the percentage of primarily accented words in the sample (Trump: 50 %; Biden 44 %).

4.2 Acoustic measurements and statistics

In order to extract acoustic data, both samples were first manually imported from the original recording with *Audacity* software and further segmented into individual utterances, respecting syntactic as well as metrical boundaries. For detailed acoustical analysis we used *PRAAT* speech analyser (Boersma & Weenink, 2024). With the view to analysing the affective state and the speaking style ('challenger' vs. 'opponent') of each candidate, several acoustic parameters were measured and the significance of the differences was tested with One-Way ANOVA. Additionally, a potential correlation between the maximal F0 and intensity was tested with Pearson Correlation Coefficient test.

The parameters selected for the present study include:

⁵ The values were calculated with reference to Total Speaking Time, e.g. without stylistically motivated pauses.

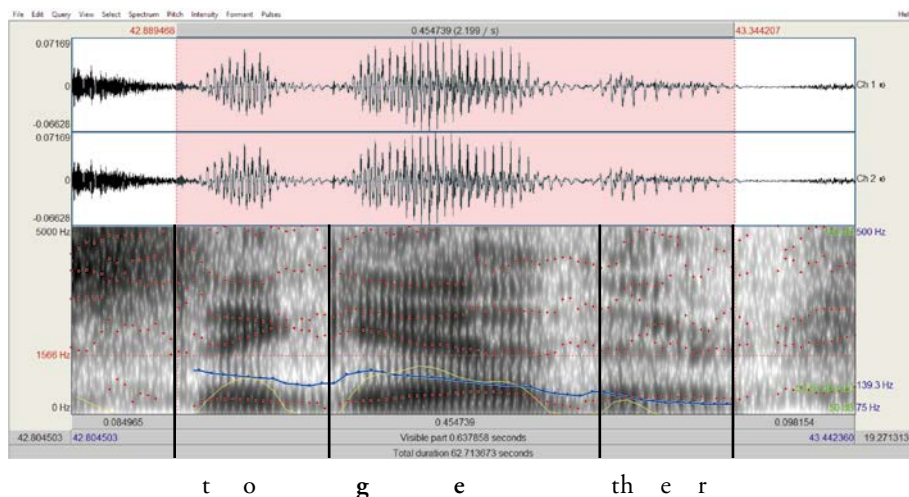


Figure 1. Spectrogram of the word 'together' uttered by D. Trump

- stressed vowel duration in msec. (99 items in Trump's speech and 77 items in Biden's speech),
- mean and maximal stressed vowel F0
- mean intensity (dB) in each sample and
- mean acoustic energy

The above acoustic parameters were measured manually, using spectrograms and waveforms. Below, two sample screenshots from PRAAT are presented. Segmental boundaries within the words 'together' and 'decency' uttered by Trump and Biden, respectively, are indicated with black vertical bars and transcription is supplied below each spectrogram.

In each spectrogram, blue lines represent F0 (fundamental frequency or voicing), yellow lines indicate the intensity level and irregular shadings in the upper frequencies (<2700–3000Hz) encode friction noise. Regularly spaced dark grey bands in lower frequencies, on the other hand, illustrate harmonic vibrations, which are characteristic for vowels and vowel-like articulations, e. g. sonorant consonants (nasals, liquids, semi-vowels and the lateral /l/). Red dots show formant frequencies: F1 (corresponding in the inversely proportional manner to the degree of vocal tract opening), F2 (the directly proportional degree of tongue advancement) and higher harmonics (F3, F4, ...).

For the stressed vowel duration the principles used in Ciszewski (2013, pp. 51–53) were used. The onset of the vocalic period was identified as the point where full formant structure appears, coinciding with the onset of periodic wave. Depending on the post-vocalic consonant different criteria were used as to the identification of the end of the vocalic period. For post-vocalic stops it was the abrupt cessation of higher formants and voicing, as well as a sudden downslope of intensity. When the stressed vowel was

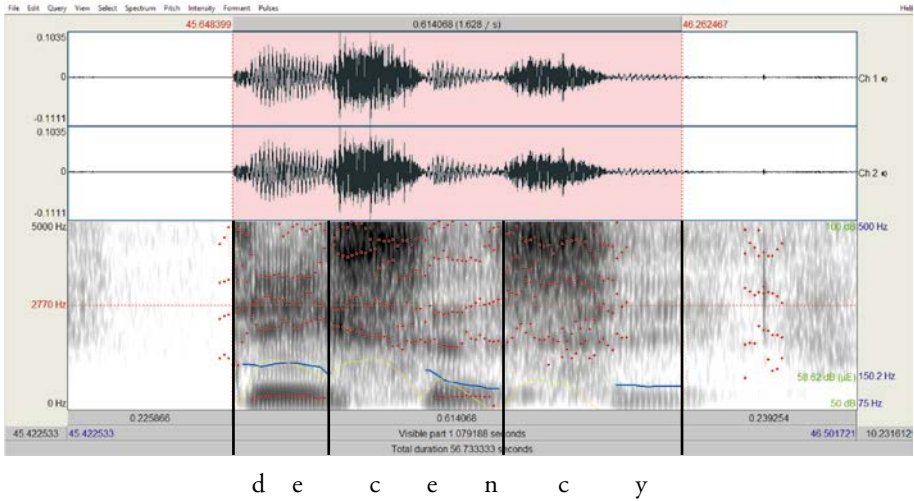


Figure 2. Spectrogram of the word 'decency' uttered by J. Biden

followed by a sonorant consonant, the identification was less reliable and it relied on F1/ F2 decrease, accompanied by a sudden drop of F3. Within each stressed vowel, mean and maximal F0, as well as mean intensity were also measured.

The complete database compiled for the present study includes 176 lexical items. For each of them six acoustic parameters were measured. Statistical significance of the differences was calculated with One-Way ANOVA; in order to test interrelations between selected acoustic parameters Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used. The raw data and measurements are presented in the Appendix.

5 Results and discussion

5. Duration

First, the temporal data pertaining to stressed vowel duration were analysed. Stressed vowel durations in both samples were compared and tested for statistical significance with *One-Way Anova* and *F-test*. The average stressed vowel duration was 114 msec. and 138 msec. for Trump and Biden, respectively. As far as contrastive vowel length is concerned, the proportion of long vowels and diphthongs was slightly higher in Biden's sample (24 %), than in Trump's (14 %).

One-Way ANOVA results indicate that the differences in temporal renditions of stressed vowels in both samples are highly significant at $p=0.5$ (F -ratio value is 13.30511; the p -value is .00035).

Table 2. Stressed vowel duration

D. Trump	J. Biden
N=99	N=77
Mean: 114 msec	Mean: 138 msec
Std. Dev. 33.64	Std. Dev. 52.12
<i>p</i> -value: 0.0035	
<i>F</i> -Test: 13.30511	

Variations in local speech tempo originates primarily from speaker's manipulation with stressed vowel duration. Various studies (Freeman, 2010; Mozziconacci & Hermes, 2001) point at temporal aspects of speech as being indicative of various emotional attitudes, e.g. boredom (which also increases unstressed vowel timing), dominance/emphasis, agitation or anger. However, the interpretation of temporal data may not be performed without reference to other acoustic parameters, especially pitch height and its intravocalic contour. For instance, while 'boredom' may indeed increase stressed vowel duration, it is not accompanied by significant increase and variation of F0. Similarly, agitation/anger result in lengthening and increase mean vowel pitch and intensity, but not their intravocalic slope. Thus, duration itself should rather be viewed as a 'plain' on which other features may be realised. For this reason, F0 and intensity data were mapped onto the durational variation in both samples. However, some general observations may be arrived at by looking at durational facts only. First, when compared to pause-to-speech ratio, stressed vowel duration seems to positively correlate with Biden's higher value of the former. This, in turn, may suggest that duration is used more emphatically by Biden, even though his average syllables-per-second ratio is slightly higher than Trump's tempo (5.56 vs. 5.22, respectively).

5.2 F0: mean and maximal in stressed vowels

As argued above, duration is only subsidiary to the realisation of other acoustic parameters. Another, and perhaps far more important, parameter is mean and maximal fundamental frequency (F0). In this respect, One-Way ANOVA mean F0 results point at highly significant differences ($p < .00001$; $F = 28.59693$) between the candidates. The results are presented in Table 3. below.

Table 3. Stressed vowel mean F0

D. Trump	J. Biden
N=99	N=77
Mean: 173 Hz	Mean: 151 Hz
Std. Dev. 32.6	Std. Dev. 17.31
<i>p</i> -value: .00001	
<i>F</i> -Test: 28.59693	

What is also important for an emotionally-oriented interpretation of these results is the standard deviation value, which is over 50 % higher in Trump's sample than in Biden's (32.6 vs. 17.31, respectively). Thus, the mean F0 data indicate that Trump speaks in a more agitated, and perhaps also slightly hesitant, manner. Moreover, the differences in the average pitch level over stressed syllables are not only acoustically, but also perceptually robust. When mapped onto the average durations (24 msec. difference), the difference in mean F0 values of 22 Hz is well above the minimal perceptual threshold, as calculated by Fyk (1987).

Not surprisingly, the results obtained for maximal F0 do not diverge from mean F0. The difference between the two candidates is also highly significant ($p < .00001$; $F = 34.58751$), although here Biden's *Sdt. Dev.* 19.71 value is much lower than his mean F0 *Sdt. Dev.*). This suggests that Biden's sample is tonally more controlled (hence, more carefully planned) than Trump's, even though his mean pitch level remains lower. The statistics for maximal F0 is shown in Table 4. below.

Table 4. Stressed vowel maximal F0

D. Trump	J. Biden
N=99	N=77
Mean: 188 Hz	Mean: 163 Hz
Std. Dev. 33.1	Std. Dev. 19.71
p -value: .00001	
F -Test: 34.58751	

5.3 Intensity in stressed vowels

As for the stressed vowel intensity, the differences in the analysed samples proved insignificant at $p = .05$. Standard deviations and mean intensity values for both candidates also remain comparable (*Std. Dev.*: Trump 23.38; Biden: 21.46 / Mean Intensity: Trump 52.41 dB; Biden: 53.38 dB).

Table 5. Stressed vowel mean intensity

D. Trump	J. Biden
N=99	N=77
Mean: 52.41 dB	Mean: 53.38 dB
Std. Dev. 23.38	Std. Dev. 21.46
p -value: .69224	
F -Test: 0.15693	

Although intensity is often argued to encode highly emotional speech (cf. Jasdeep et al. 2018), the parameter is normally associated with 'hot anger' at levels above ≈ 80 –90 dB, on the one hand, and with 'fear' at the level of approximately 70 dB, on the other.

In the context of a political debate, especially if the stake is extremely high, candidates are expected to remain calm and certainly refrain from demonstrating hot anger or fear. The results, pointing at fairly low intensity levels in both samples, may not be correlated with ‘sadness’, either, since in this affective state F0 is expected to be much higher than in our data. An explanation to these findings may be found in Chen et al. (2012), where it is argued that intensity alone is neither a sufficient nor a categorical marker of the speaker’s emotional attitude. Only when combined with F0 characteristics, does it provide information on the speaker’s affective attitude. Thus, despite comparable mean intensity values in both samples, it is Biden’s performance which is perceptually more dominant (‘challenger style’) due to his significantly lower pitch level (cf. Ohala 1987, who associates low pitch and radical pitch slope with dominance).⁶

Pitch and intensity, however, proved inextricably related in both Trump’s and Biden’s speech. The correlation between stressed vowel maximal F0 and its mean intensity was analysed with Pearson Correlation Coefficient test. This particular intravocalic relation point at a moderate, positive correlation between the two parameters. They naturally reflect the investment of articulatory energy (increased airflow) over stressed syllables. The increased airflow through the vocal tract simultaneously boosts the amplitude of the sound wave (intensity) and, due to Bernoulli’s effect, the rate of vocal fold vibrations (pitch). The correlation strength is summarised in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Correlation: maximal F0 vs. mean intensity: Trumps vs. Biden

D. Trump	J. Biden
N=99	N=77
Maximal F0: 188 Hz	Maximal F0: 163 Hz
Mean intensity: 60.81 dB	Mean intensity: 60.88 dB
R-value: .5782	R-value: .6704
p-value: <.00001	p-value: <.00001

Finally, an attempt of calculating the overall acoustic energy in stressed vowels was also made. The generally used formula, i. e. $E = \text{time (sec)} \times \text{intensity (dB)} \times \text{area (m}^2\text{)}$, however, could not be employed since the last variable was unknown. Thus, we simply multiplied time and intensity as an approximate measure. Surprisingly, even though both stressed vowels duration and intensity differences between the candidates proved significant at $p=.05$, the differences in the acoustic energies of stressed vowels turned out insignificant.

⁶ Interestingly, as reported by Crystal (1975) in one of the Bolivian languages men use nasalised articulation while addressing a person with a higher status and women while they address their husbands.

Table 7. Stressed vowel mean acoustic energy

D. Trump	J. Biden
N=99	N=77
Mean: 6930.714	Mean: 8384.196
Std. Dev. 3773.9392	Std. Dev. 4779.2776
<i>p</i> -value: .246642	
<i>F</i> -Test: 1.34693	

If we equate acoustic energy with a perceptual concept of the force of articulation (Debrock, 1977), the statistically insignificant result obtained for acoustic energy differences in both samples may be interpreted as an indicator of perceptually comparable force with which both candidates delivered their utterances. Thus, the main parameter on the basis of which the candidates' speaking style, i.e. 'challenger' vs. 'opponent' (to use Duez's (1997) terminology), may be established remains mean and maximal F0.

6 Conclusions

Despite the limitations of the present study (the length of samples), certain acoustic clues turned out significant markers of the candidates' emotional attitudes and speaking styles. In particular, the results indicate that no individual acoustic parameter pertaining to stressed vowels encodes emotions or the 'challenger'/'opponent' position in the debate. Duration alone was found subsidiary to pitch and intensity. Moreover, while both pitch and intensity mean values (when analysed separately) do differ, the differences proved statistically insignificant and unlikely to be perceptually salient (average difference <10 Hz). What makes Biden's speech more powerful is his control of stylistic pausing (over 12 sec. in the sample, compared to Trump's 8 sec.). In contrast, Trump's pauses are shorter and point at higher hesitation level (also supported by slower delivery rate of 5.22 syll./sec.) What makes Biden more effective and convincing in the analysed samples is his significantly lower F0 (mean and maximal). Finally, these observations were not directly confirmed by the differences pertinent to the acoustic energy expenditure and its perceptual salience, which, however, was found higher in Biden's speech. On the basis of the above findings a general conclusion seems justified to claim that it was Biden who spoke with the 'challenger' style, as opposed to Trump, who spoke from the 'opponent's' position.

The present findings may be directly applicable and potentially useful for political spin doctors and voice coaches in preparing candidates for electoral campaigns.

In further research attention should be paid to prosodic and metrical aspects of political debates. In particular, the structure and acoustic characteristics of metrical feet should be analysed, in both its temporal and tonal dimensions. As a portion of time stretching from the beginning of accented vowel to the beginning of the next accented vowel, containing a contour tone (measured as the difference between the maximum F0 within the stressed vowel period and the minimal F0 within the final unaccented vowel period, the foot directly contributes to the impression of isochronous delivery and is characteristic of self-assurance and pre-planning of utterances. This obviously requires an analysis of much longer, metrically diversified, samples.

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Appendix

Table 1. Acoustic data: D. Trump vs. J. Biden

	D. Trump	DUR	F0 mean	F0 max	INT		J. Biden	DUR	F0 mean	F0 max	INT
T1	make	166	199	205	60,57	B1	say	386	143	162	58,17
	country	125	173	179	58,32		Ameri-can	120	160	165	60,46
	totally	107	179	184	60,11		president	93	128	139	54,83
	successful	103	152	160	53,69	B2	represent	110	138	149	59,75
	prior	150	148	153	58,46		all	131	156	163	62,52
	plague	146	150	157	58,29		whether	80	139	144	58,01
	coming	81	143	152	57,52		voted	101	136	139	57,8
	China	168	125	134	55,08		against	127	148	154	59,26
T2	now	90	159	174	57,96		make	135	139	144	59,49
	rebuildig	149	151	165	61,56		sure	125	149	160	62,89
	doing	140	128	132	58,06		repre-sented	122	138	143	59,37
	record	79	150	167	61,96	B3	give	96	142	148	59,41
	numbers	82	158	174	57,64		hope	112	141	151	62,65
	eleven	84	138	144	59,73	B4	move	194	140	149	64,1
	four	113	153	158	59,66		choose	141	151	179	57,73
	million	72	151	155	58		science	226	151	158	61,18

	D. Trump	DUR	F0 mean	F0 max	INT		J. Biden	DUR	F0 mean	F0 max	INT
T2	jobs	148	145	147	57,88	B4	fiction	83	159	190	59,47
	short	104	105	167	58,29	B5	choose	122	154	180	61,07
	period	109	105	161	56,43		hope	128	157	169	63,9
	time	100	140	146	54,02		fear	151	151	187	63,92
	cetera	97	124	145	52,22	B6	choose	299	160	203	64,61
T3	tell	107	142	161	57,26		move	175	146	151	60,82
	go	102	151	162	58,45		forward	150	150	163	63,06
	back	132	147	171	58,12		enor- mous	138	159	162	64,44
T4	before	143	197	224	65,09		opportu- nities	127	147	162	59,46
	plague	132	196	201	65,83		enor- mous	131	169	175	67,37
	in	103	190	191	63,04		make	122	138	144	57,34
	just	82	159	174	61,07		better	118	128	146	59,54
	before	137	159	187	63,1	B7	grow	114	164	168	64,46
	getting	111	208	225	63,26		economy	103	163	166	63,77
	calls	212	141	168	57,84		deal	98	156	165	62,47
	people	85	211	218	56,48		systemic	75	165	178	60,67
	not	114	216	235	56,92	B8	racism	108	160	164	62,24
	normally	127	174	178	63,6		same	153	178	182	66,46
	people	80	163	168	59,38		time	217	165	168	62,78
	call	145	144	151	56,66		make	140	158	165	59,66
T5	wanted	108	172	191	61,13		sure	176	160	179	60,58
	get	102	166	172	59,13		economy	106	166	166	58,78
	together	162	128	153	56,95		being	209	153	157	61,22
T6	best	126	189	194	66,91		run	136	160	162	62,7
	black	164	167	180	62,17		moved	234	154	159	62,6
	unem- ployment	116	167	170	58,34		motiv- ated	116	150	157	61,6
	numbers	79	152	157	56,37		clean	216	165	184	63,18
	history	79	191	202	62,5		energy	110	147	154	57,43
	country	98	146	168	58,82		creating	149	157	169	62,63
T7	Hispanic	129	200	228	61,52		millions	76	164	167	64,62
	women	103	230	238	64,9		new	172	139	147	61,88
	Asian	230	210	224	63,41		jobs	208	114	143	58,36

	D. Trump	DUR	F0 mean	F0 max	INT		J. Biden	DUR	F0 mean	F0 max	INT
T7	people	76	253	258	61,03	B9	that's	110	183	201	65,83
	diplomas	117	218	218	64,27		fact	162	169	180	64,35
	no	119	207	214	64,87		that's	107	159	173	60,6
	diplomas	115	205	208	63,59		do	174	128	154	58,79
	graduates	112	149	199	63,39	B10	say	202	162	198	63,27
	number	73	188	197	62		said	128	174	187	63,03
	one	64	197	199	64,75		begin- ning	113	148	164	60,57
	class	144	188	194	62,62		ballot	165	171	172	63,26
	every- body	128	198	215	67,09		here	189	142	145	59,34
	best	114	155	165	59,11		charac- ter	140	170	174	63,69
	numbers	77	151	157	57,73		country	111	138	158	58,05
T8	know	75	182	199	61,1	B11	decency	105	174	182	61,73
	what	101	192	194	58,15		honor	167	171	220	62,12
T9	other	68	191	201	64,65		respect	151	157	181	63,45
	side	204	165	165	62	B12	treating	78	190	197	62,89
	wanted	83	181	185	59,95		people	78	179	180	63,25
	together	131	170	173	58,24		dignity	86	175	178	65,62
T10	wanted	87	154	157	60,71		sure	107	165	194	62,25
	unify	87	149	155	58,51		everyone	70	158	161	62,4
T11	success	179	247	258	64,43		even	116	146	149	61,15
	going	107	177	184	63,88		chance	190	120	140	56,94
	bring	97	167	170	62	B13	sure	94	134	143	59,19
	together	129	148	164	59,91		get	103	127	148	56,82
T12	road	126	194	211	64,86		that	148	117	125	51,62
	success	137	157	195	61,73	B14	haven't	90	145	149	61,91
T13	cutting	111	213	279	63,72		getting	85	128	142	56,71
	taxes	150	148	186	62,62		last	127	116	119	56,86
	wants	67	224	232	62,49		four	110	120	133	48,69
	raise	182	243	280	62,55		years	141	104	112	51,87
	every- body's	94	201	216	65,2				150,	162,	
	taxes	138	218	226	61,1		Mean	138	974	83	60,87
	wants	80	209	217	61,06						

	D. Trump	DUR	F0 mean	F0 max	INT
T13	put	72	195	199	57,76
	new	108	238	247	62,26
	regula- tions	108	182	241	60,95
	every- thing	82	155	159	63,32
T14	kill	79	215	234	62,05
T15	in	152	204	253	64,46
	Depres- sion	73	210	218	63,11
	likes	98	190	208	62,23
	never	100	158	166	59,1
T16	seen	171	146	169	55,91
	four	100	211	244	66,8
	one	72	185	187	60,25
	go	117	166	192	62,61
	hell	125	135	144	58,6
	very	86	167	177	64,72
	very	78	173	177	63,83
	sad	142	93,73	173	64,48
	day	134	149	159	63,92
	country	102	115	133	56,21
	Mean	114,1	172, 92	187, 89	60,76

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Investigating negative emotional framing in 2024 presidential election discourse on Reddit

This chapter employs computational methods to investigate emotional framing within the context of the 2024 Presidential Election discourse on the social media platform Reddit. Utilizing US-centric Reddit text data, a model trained on the GoEmotions dataset using the RoBERTa-base architecture for multi-label classification is applied. The investigation focuses on identifying emotional expressions such as disappointment, anger, fear, and other negative emotions to discern the prevalence and distribution of negative emotional framing. The study then leverages a topic modeling algorithm, Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), to identify themes and subjects discussed in relation to these emotions. This research sheds light on the role of emotions in shaping online discussions on significant political events, contributing to the understanding of emotional dynamics in digital political discourse.

Keywords: *political discourse, computational linguistics, topic modeling, emotion classification, social media analysis, online discourse, Reddit*

1 Introduction

1.1 Emotional Framing and Politics

As argued by Shah (2024), emotions are not merely incidental to political processes, but rather constitute a fundamental aspect of political interaction. Shah (2024), similarly to this study, claims that emotions can not only influence how people interpret political events but also frame political issues. Marcus (2000) posits that political emotions are not solely personal reactions but are significantly shaped by external factors within the political arena; in Marcus' understanding, emotions arise in response to political institutions like Congress and their actions. Following both Shah's and Marcus' reasoning, emotions analyzed within the context of political discourse do not exist as separate entities but are rather seen as products of political interaction and a response to "shaping" political events.

In "The Politics of Negative Emotions", Degerman (2023) acknowledges that emotions have an inherent valence – they can be classified as positive or negative. This means that experiences like fear or anger, traditionally labeled as "negative", are essential aspects of the emotional spectrum. Furthermore, understanding the nature of these emotions helps explain their impact on our motivations, knowledge, and how we communicate.

While some researchers perceive negative emotions as typically conservative-leaning (e.g., Joel et al., 2014), Dagerman challenges the assumption that negative emotions are inherently morally or politically wrong. That is why, negative emotional framing in the context of this study is explored within a larger context of political orientation – from all-party subreddit discussions on /r/politics and /r/uspolitics to party-based subreddits of two major US politics players, Democrats and Republicans. In turn, the following study will argue that as long as a polarizing event is the focal point such as the upcoming 2024 elections, negative framing can be perceived in all groups. Crucially, this research aims to underscore the importance of understanding how emotions are distributed in political discourse and further link particular emotional framing to overarching topics being an indicator of political perceptions. Overall, in the context of this study, negative emotional framing refers to the use of language that evokes negative emotions within online discussions, particularly surrounding the polarizing topic of elections.

1.2 Social Media and political discourse

According to Papakyriakopoulos et al. (2023), social media platforms have become the primary spaces where political discourse unfolds. They are not simply mirrors of offline political activity, but rather active curators of political communication. Online platforms tend to influence how people engage with political issues, shaping political campaigns, social movements, and the general nature of political discussions.

Weeks and Garrett (2019) state that social media platforms act as amplifiers, where uncivil expressions, attention-grabbing headlines, and disagreement in discussions can further stoke negative emotional framing including emotions like anger or anxiety. Importantly for the context of this study, Weeks and Garrett (2019) discuss the American political landscape by highlighting the increasing affective polarization (deep animosity between political parties), alongside an emotionally charged new media environment, which in turn lead to a climate garnering emotional responses to political information.

In order to grasp the idea behind analyzing politics through the lens of social media text, the concept of political discourse has to be defined. Political discourse represents a specialized field of discourse analysis that investigates the ways language is wielded within political contexts spanning from parliamentary debates to public hearings (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). Importantly, political discourse analysis focuses on how political actors, and those who influence the political process, use language as a tool to shape public opinion, promote particular ideologies, and potentially obscure agendas (Van Dijk, 2006). While a considerable number of researchers tends to pay more attention to those performing political actions (i.e., politicians), the following study recognizes that the public, as seemingly “passive” or “indirect” (as coined by Van Dijk) actors, play a crucial role in constructing political discourse, with users actively shaping (or framing) political conversations through their comments and online engagement.

1.3 Research objectives

In this subsection, the research objectives that guide the following investigation into emotional framing within the context of U.S. elections on Reddit will be outlined:

1. Exploring emotional framing in U.S. election discourse on Reddit:

One of the primary objectives of this study is to investigate how emotions shape discussions surrounding polarizing political events particularly in the context of US presidential elections. By utilizing the RoBERTa-base-GoEmotions model to classify comments into emotional categories, particularly negative emotions, and employing Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) analysis, the study aims to identify prevalent emotional themes within these discussions. The goal is to understand how negative emotions are used to frame political discourse during election periods in both general political subreddits and party-specific subreddits.

2. Comparing emotional framing patterns between general and party-based political subreddits in the context of U.S. elections:

In this objective, the main goal is to compare how emotions are used to frame discussions in general political subreddits and party-based subreddits during U.S. election seasons on Reddit. By employing the GoEmotions model for emotion classification and conducting LDA analysis, this study seeks to identify differences (or similarities) in emotional content and framing approaches within broader political discussions versus those within party-aligned communities on Reddit.

2 Literature review

2.2 Perspectives on political discourse analysis

Political discourse is a term used in linguistics to refer to the language used in political contexts (Randour et al., 2020). Randour et al. observe, however, that according to their study spanning twenty years into political discourse theory, most research on political discourse focuses on speeches given by political elites (“active” political actors). As Randour et al. (2020) further argue, given the evolving political landscape of both offline and online citizen engagement, it is necessary to broaden the scope of political discourse analysis by prioritizing the perspectives of the “dismissed” public.

Korneliaeva (2023) considers central trends and methodologies used in analyzing political discourse, presenting political discourse as a type of discourse that serves to reflect a nation’s socio-political landscape, cultural values, and characteristics. Importantly, Korneliaeva (2023) explores diverse genres of political discourse. Specifically, three key areas where these genres manifest are recognized within the study: political system genres (e.g., official political documents, parliamentary debates), mass media genres (e.g., political news and interviews), and public sphere genres (e.g., public meetings and forums). As can be seen, social media as such are omitted within the presented three overarching genres. Even so, in order to reflect the evolving media landscape, the categorization of mass media genres should be expanded to encompass the influential role of social media platforms, with submissions and comments available on Reddit, particularly in political subreddits, included as a valid genre within political discourse research.

2.2 *Emotions, social media, and politics*

In “Visual Citizenship Communicating Political Opinions and Emotions on Social Media”, Bouko (2023) maintains that the information individuals (users) receive and respond to via social media predominantly is related to contemporary political affairs. Importantly from the perspective of this study, as stated by Bouko, such engagement typically occurs within the context of routine governance or during notable political junctures such as elections. Moreover, Bouko highlights the importance of the work done by researchers like Papacharissi (2010) who challenge the “traditional” view of an idealized model of the public sphere as proposed by Habermas (1991), with Habermas’s model focusing on organized discussion and seen as anachronistic in the face of constantly evolving digital communication practices.

In order to adapt to a more modern context with the emergence of social media, Papacharissi (2010) suggests that modern civic habits, enabled by digital technologies, do not align with the traditional public sphere model. This misalignment necessitates a shift in focus towards alternative forms of information and opinion exchange within late modern democracies; such alternative formats would, in turn, prioritize informal, culturally situated, and emotionally driven expressions over rational deliberation. This paradigm shift is, thus, present in “everyday” political expressions, which are seen as rooted in emotional engagement. Due to this, the following study chooses to focus on a particular cultural context and emotion classification, with US-centric data analyzed in the context of negative emotional framing.

Jost et al. (2022), on the other hand, investigate the role of emotions in fueling political polarization. As stated by the authors, individuals demonstrate a strong positive affect toward their in-group while exhibiting negative affect towards identified out-groups (“opposing” groups in an ideological sense). Such dynamics can precipitate intense conflict, particularly when numerous disagreements coalesce into a singular “us versus them” mentality. Jost et al. (2022) further discuss media and its potential to exacerbate political polarization. Despite the fact that social media platforms allow people to share information and opinions easily, they also create echo chambers where people are exposed primarily to information that confirms their existing beliefs. This, in turn, can lead to increased affective polarization, as people are more likely to be exposed to negative messages about opposing groups. That is why, negative emotional framing ought to be investigated on the party-based discourse examples as well.

Indeed, prior research on emotions within social movements has predominantly focused on the role of negative emotions, such as anger and indignation, in driving mobilization, collective action, and strengthening polarization. These emotions have been conceptualized as catalysts for participation, arising from perceived injustices or grievances. It is crucial, however, to also analyze negative emotions in a broader context of how these emotions are distributed and topics on which such discussions focus on.

2.3 *Computational methods, emotions, and political discourse*

Nandwani and Verma (2021) explain the task of emotion detection in natural language processing (NLP) as a subset of sentiment analysis that focuses on recognizing and clas-

sifying specific emotions expressed in text, such as joy, anger, sadness, fear, and others. Unlike basic sentiment analysis, which broadly categorizes text as positive, negative, or neutral, emotion detection aims to pinpoint precise emotions and their intensities. Nandwani and Verma (2021) emphasize the immense potential of emotion detection in various applications; for instance, in social media analysis, it can be used to track public sentiment towards specific topics or events. Additionally, the authors discuss the employment of advanced machine learning and deep learning techniques, such as recurrent neural networks (RNNs) and transformers, to overcome the challenges related to emotion detection. As they explain, these models are capable of learning complex patterns in language and context, enabling them to identify emotions with greater accuracy; that is why, this study will utilize the transformers-based RoBERTa-base-GoEmotions model discussed in the Methodology section.

Bhaumik et al. (2023) explore the role of emotions in influencing public opinion during events like political campaigns, particularly focusing on the 2017 French Presidential Elections and investigating Tweets around the time of elections, utilizing the GoEmotions (Demszky et al., 2020) dataset for analysis, the dataset used in this study as well. As Bhaumik et al. argue, emotions play a crucial role in political discourse, with emotionally charged messages significantly influencing public opinion on agendas or candidates. Furthermore, the authors argue that existing emotion detection models often rely on traditional emotion categories (Ekman or Plutchik “basic emotions” labels) and may not capture the nuances of emotions in specific domains like politics. Even so, Bhaumik et al. (2023) point to GoEmotions being “an ideal choice for creating a base emotion model suitable for specialized emotion tasks” (p. 443) since it offers fine-grained emotion categories. According to the authors, by investigating emotions in political campaigns, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological and social factors that influence public opinion and voting behavior.

As can be seen, understanding the emotional tenor of political discussions online has become increasingly crucial in contemporary discourse analysis. Researchers utilize various NLP methodologies to analyze political discourse, shedding light on sentiment, emotion, and the intensity of expressions within online conversations.

2.3 Attitudes towards 2024 U.S. elections

According to a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2024), the presidential race remains tightly contested, with 49 % of registered voters expressing support or leaning towards Donald Trump, while 48 % favor or lean towards Joe Biden. Notably, a prevailing characteristic of this electoral contest is the lack of confidence exhibited by voters in either candidate across various key attributes, such as fitness for office, personal ethics, and commitment to democratic principles. A significant number of registered voters are unhappy with the choice of candidates between Biden and Trump, and almost half of them would prefer to have different options to choose from. This feeling is more prevalent among younger voters and Biden supporters, indicating a growing demand for change and new candidates to consider for a presidential race.

Similarly, as stated by Ipsos (2024), the forthcoming 2024 United States Presidential Election is anticipated to be a closely contested race featuring the incumbent President, Joe Biden, and former President, Donald Trump. Recent data from U.S. Presidential approval rating surveys conducted in April 2024 reveal that a majority of respondents, comprising 56 percent, express dissatisfaction with President Biden's performance in office. It is worth highlighting that the public opinion towards the two political candidates is rather nuanced. Research conducted in January 2024 suggests that a significant proportion of the American populace holds reservations about the viability of either candidate seeking re-election.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data collection

The data for this study was collected from four politics-oriented subreddits on Reddit, a social news aggregation and discussion platform functioning as a multifaceted online community. The selection of subreddits was based on their relevance to political discourse and partisan discussions. The following subreddits were included in the data collection process:

- **US Political Subreddits:** Data was collected from subreddits */r/politics* and */r/uspolitics* specifically focused on US politics, providing a more focused lens on domestic political affairs.
- **Party-Based Subreddits:** In order to capture partisan perspectives, party-based subreddits for both Republicans, */r/republicans* and */r/republican*, and Democrats, */r/democrats*, were included. This encompassed communities dedicated to discussions and support for each respective party.

3.1.1 Data collection using PRAW

To gather the necessary data, this study employs the Python Reddit API Wrapper (PRAW). PRAW facilitates targeted data collection by enabling programmatic access to Reddit's API. First, authentication credentials from a registered Reddit app are necessary to initialize a Reddit instance. The study then specifies subreddits relevant to the research domain and defines a set of keywords as explained in subsection 3.3 to refine the comment search process. PRAW's search functionality is used to retrieve comments matching the criteria, extracting the textual content along with crucial metadata such as anonymized author information, timestamps, and content type (submission/comment). The collected data is systematically stored for subsequent analysis.

3.1.2 Specified time frame

The data collection period spanned from April 2023, coinciding with the announcement of Incumbent Democratic President Joe Biden's bid for re-election in 2024, up to April 2024. This timeframe was chosen to encapsulate significant political events and discussions leading up to the presidential election in November 2024.

3.1.3 Keywords

The data collection process utilized relevant keywords to filter and identify relevant discussions within the selected subreddits. For US political subreddits, keywords such as “presidential” and “elections” (singular and plural variations) were employed to capture discussions related to the electoral process. Additionally, specific keywords including “Trump” and “Biden” were utilized within party-based subreddits to focus on discussions pertaining to the main candidates for each party.

3.2 GoEmotions dataset and emotional framing focus

Plaza-del-Marco et al. (2024) discusses the importance of Emotion Analysis (EA) in NLP exploring how to identify emotions within text. Furthermore, Plaza-del-Marco et al. (2024) highlight the growing interest in this field, noting a surge in studies since 2018. This study leverages the GoEmotions dataset for emotion classification purposes, a manually annotated corpus of 58k Reddit comments with labels for 27 distinct emotions available to be used on Hugging Face (Demszky et al., 2020). The dataset’s rich emotional annotations are crucial for fine-grained analysis of sentiment within online discussions. The 27 emotion categories (and a neutral category) labeled in the dataset comprise the following: admiration, amusement, anger, annoyance, approval, caring, confusion, curiosity, desire, disappointment, disapproval, disgust, embarrassment, excitement, fear, gratitude, grief, joy, love, nervousness, optimism, pride, realization, relief, remorse, sadness, and surprise.

This rich dataset will function as the basis for classifying the emotions expressed within separate datasets of political discourse (US Political Subreddits Dataset and Party-Based Subreddits Datasets). A classification model trained on the GoEmotions dataset, RoBERTa-base-GoEmotions, will be used to identify and categorize these negative emotional expressions within our datasets of political discourse. This model is particularly well-suited for this task due to its extensive training on Reddit comments. Then, each comment within those datasets will be assigned a primary emotion label reflective of the most prominently expressed emotion. The analysis will prioritize negative emotions including anger, annoyance, disapproval, disgust, embarrassment, fear, grief, nervousness, remorse, and sadness, as elections are often seen as polarizing events. It is assumed at this point that such events can heighten tensions and exacerbate divisions, leading to intensified expressions of negative emotional framing.

3.3 Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA)

In an effort to derive meaningful insights from the substantial volume of textual data amassed from Reddit, Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), a probabilistic topic modeling technique implemented in Python, will be employed. LDA operates under the assumption that each document (in this case, each Reddit comment) is a mixture of various topics, and each topic is characterized by a distribution over words. The algorithm’s objective is to discover these latent topics and determine their prevalence within each document. While other topic modeling techniques exist, such as Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) and Non-Negative Matrix Factorization (NMF), LDA is preferred for this

analysis due to its probabilistic nature, interpretability, established track record in social media research, and convenient implementation in Python.

The LDA model is implemented using the Scikit-learn library in Python. Scikit-learn was chosen for this analysis due to its user-friendly interface, robust text preprocessing capabilities, and seamless integration with other machine learning tools. While Gensim offers advantages in handling very large corpora and online learning, the size of our dataset, the convenience of Scikit-learn's integrated toolkit, and the absence of a need for online learning, a type of machine learning where the model continuously updates itself as new data becomes available, make it the preferred choice for this analysis.

3.3.1 LDA for /r/politics and /r/uspolitics

The initial application of LDA will focus on comments sourced from the general political subreddits, /r/politics and /r/uspolitics. This analysis will reveal the overarching themes that permeate political discourse on Reddit, irrespective of partisan affiliation.

3.3.2 Party-based LDA for /r/democrats and /r/republicans

Subsequently, LDA will be applied independently to comments extracted from /r/democrats and /r/republicans and /r/republican, with the second Republican subreddit added in order to balance the number of comments in comparison with Democrats. This methodical examination will clarify the distinct topics that are significant within the online communities of each political party, possibly revealing differences in their focal points and issues of concern.

4 Findings

4.1 Emotion classification using RoBERTa-base-GoEmotions

4.1.1 General politics subreddits

Before moving to analyzing negative emotions specifically, the distribution of the top 10 emotions, encompassing both positive, negative, and neutral categories, is first considered. As seen in Figure 1, this analysis has revealed a nuanced distribution of negative emotions within political subreddits. While the majority of texts exhibited a neutral sentiment, a notable proportion showcased negative emotional content. Among the top negative emotions, annoyance emerged as the predominant sentiment, suggesting a prevalent tone of frustration or irritation within these communities. Interestingly, it is closely followed by curiosity. However, upon closer examination of curiosity within context, a prevalent trend of users posing questions to other parties, often exemplified by inquiries directed towards ideological opponents, is noted. For instance, users frequently pose questions such as, "I'm starting to think liberals have no real facts to go on and only believe what they are told. Let me ask you this... how is our country better off now than in 2019 pre-COVID? We have massive inflation, housing prices are insane, stock market flat, job market and wages weak, and 2 major regional wars. So I ask again, HOW IS IT BETTER NOW?". These inquiries do not reflect a pure sense of curiosity but rather serve as rhetorical devices for challenging opposing viewpoints and eliciting explanations for perceived failures or shortcomings in governance.

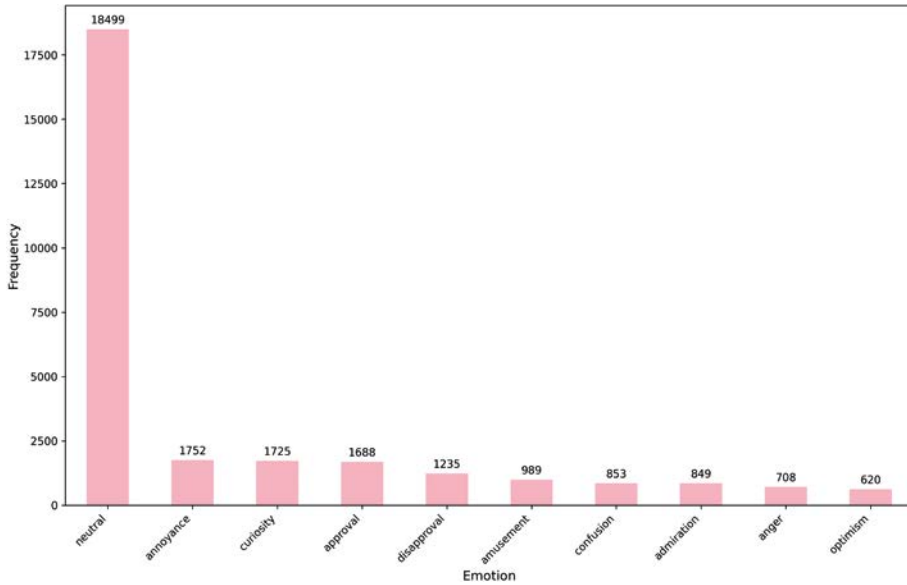


Figure 1. Top 10 emotions present in General Political Subreddits, /r/politics and /r/uspolitics

Another prevalent negative emotion identified was disappointment, reflecting a sense of disillusionment or unmet expectations. Notably, contrary to common assumptions, anger did not emerge as one of the primary negative emotions. Even though anger was not found to be the most common negative emotion, as claimed by studies into polarization, instances of anger were strong in nature, often using strong vocabulary and even vulgarities to convey frustration and dissatisfaction with the political landscape; comments expressing anger were notable, characterized by strong language such as, “Why are these two old fucks our only option?”. This sentiment reflects a frustration and disillusionment with the available political choices, emphasizing the dissatisfaction and disillusionment present within political subreddits.

The prevalence of annoyance and disappointment as top negative categories is an interesting consideration, particularly in the context of ongoing research into the early stages of the 2024 election in the USA. As previously described, studies such as those conducted by Pew Research Center and Ipsos have highlighted the discontent of the public with all potential “runners”, with no candidate garnering widespread support. This discontent may contribute to the prevalence of frustration and disillusionment expressed within political subreddits, as users grapple with perceived shortcomings in the political landscape.

As seen in Figure 2, expressions of annoyance are pervasive across discussions, with users lamenting the perceived lack of viable choices and expressing discontent with the options presented to them. This sentiment is not confined to any particular ideological spectrum but is rather a shared frustration among individuals from both sides of the

political divide and aimed at both candidates. For instance, in a post related to Biden winning the Michigan Democratic presidential primary, we find a critique of the incumbent President: “There has been pressure for 5 months tho, and Biden hasn’t done shit. Biden can do much more, why are we kowtow to a foreign power?”. Importantly, in each post regarding one or the other party, we can observe both candidates being criticized; for instance, both Biden and Trump are under public scrutiny as far as polarizing issues like the Israel-Hamas war is concerned: “He (Biden) didn’t call to stop the war in Gaza. Meanwhile Trump said Israel and Palestine need to fight it out. Biden is negotiating for a ceasefire, Trump would cheer the IDF on [...]”. This phenomenon indicates a broader dissatisfaction with the political establishment.

Disapproval, having or expressing an opinion of unfavorable nature, emerges as the second most commonly occurring negative emotion within the two general political subreddits. This sentiment can be found in the following comment: “This is what leads to politically homeless voters. ‘Trump is worse’ isn’t going to get people to vote for Biden if there is a single issue that means a lot to them. It doesn’t mean they will vote for Trump. Biden will lose a lot of voters over this and it will be deserved”. The excerpt begins with a statement that alludes to a consequential outcome: politically homeless voters. This phrase immediately sets the tone for the subsequent expression of disapproval. From this perspective, disapproving statements imply a sense of detachment or disenfranchisement from the mainstream political landscape – similarly to the case of annoyance, comments classified as “disapproval” further point to the disillusionment surrounding the upcoming elections.

As the third most common negative emotion observed in our analysis, anger manifests in diverse expressions that reflect the frustrations, indignations, and impassioned convictions of individuals engaged in political dialogue, as illustrated by the following example: “[...] Hell if Biden “loses” the presidency...Palestinians will get wiped off the map since Trump has literally said what he would do with supporting Israel. This is our democracy at stake. If people who are single issue voting on a foreign issue when so much more is at stake...That is a child temper tantrum mentality. Single issue voters are the dumbest fucking people on the planet I swear”. In this instance, anger is directed towards specific groups or individuals, namely, voters who prioritize single issues over broader concerns and the perceived consequences of their voting behavior.

While anger may dominate as a force of indignation, sadness showcases a different facet of negative emotions; namely, a profound sense of loss and sorrow. One such example of sadness within political discourse pertains to the resignation of a prominent political figure, Robert DeSantis, however, the user reflects a deep-seated conviction that all candidates are inherently flawed and detrimental to humanity: “They’re all so endlessly pathetic. Unrelenting net negatives on humanity”. The occurrence of sadness leaves us wondering about the implications of apathy, disengagement, and alienation from the political process present among voters.

This is followed by instances of fear, disgust, and remorse. Expressions of fear carry significant implications for political discourse, signaling a heightened sense of vulnerability, uncertainty, and existential threat within online communities: “I am super suspi-

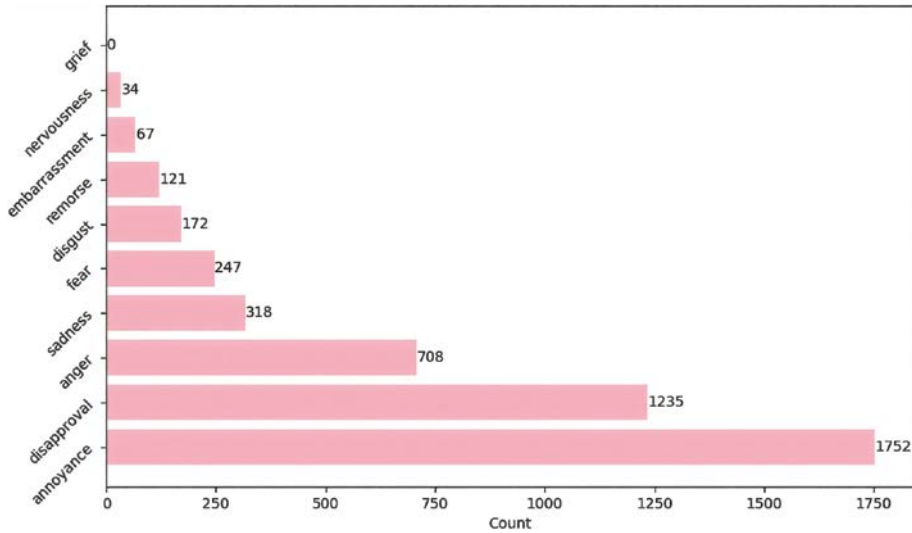


Figure 2. Distribution of negative emotions in General Political Subreddits, /r/politics and /r/uspolitics

cious of the way the NYTimes for example has been portraying Trump as the inevitable front runner. Scary as hell”. Disgust, on the other hand, expresses disdain towards produced narratives that are purported to strengthen particular candidates, reflecting skepticism and cynicism towards political messaging: “They can no longer deny old diseases are coming back to states like Florida so now the right wingers are blaming immigrants for ‘spreading disease’. I see it all over conservative subreddits now. It’s as disgusting as it is insane”. Lastly, remorse typically features sarcastic expressions of remorse critiquing societal or political phenomena deemed to be self-inflicted or avoidable: “Sorry USA but you did it to yourself by letting the wolf in the door. Gonna lose a lot of us allies when you re-elect this monster. I’d say don’t re-elect him but to be honest I have no faith left in your country any more”. In such cases, users mockingly express regret towards perceived lapses in judgment or foresight.

Across a spectrum of negative emotions surrounding 2024 USA elections discourse, participants express a range of grievances, critiques, and frustrations within political subreddits. Overall, negative emotions seem to have one underlying theme: disillusionment. Indeed, negative emotions can serve as vital indicators of discontent, frustration, and disillusionment within political discourse.

4.1.2 Party-based subreddits

Similarly to general political subreddits, the majority of comments from Democrats is categorized as neutral. Interestingly, the parallel distribution of approval and annoyance among Democratic participants carries significant implications for political discourse, signaling an interplay of affirmation and critique within the party’s ideological spec-

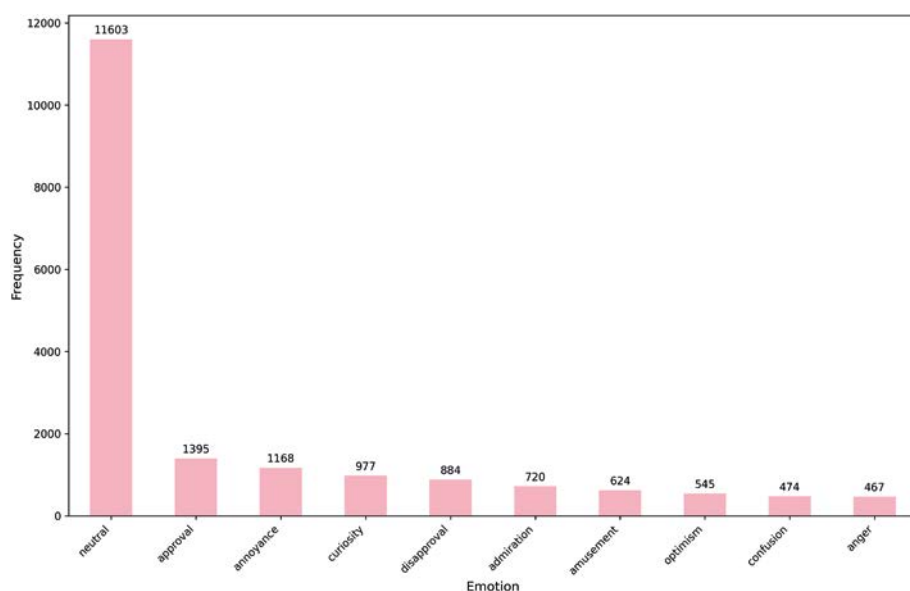


Figure 3. Top 10 emotions for Democrats from /r/democrats

trum. In instances where users express approval, these expressions typically concern the upholding of promises or the implementation of initiatives of the current Biden/Harris administration deemed beneficial by supporters: “Everyone in my generation should celebrate this – it’s emblematic of Democrats caring about *ordinary people* instead of the tired GOP policies of caring only about billionaires and millionaires”. Additionally, unlike in the general subreddits, we can see instances of amusement mixed with optimism and confusion. Overall, these diverse emotional responses reflect the multifaceted nature of political discourse, encompassing elements of humor, complexity, and hope. In the following section, the intricacies of negative emotions will be considered in detail.

Unlike Democrats, Republicans exhibit a distinct pattern in the distribution of emotions within political discourse. While Democrats tend to show a prevalence of approval and annoyance, with curiosity being less pronounced, Republicans demonstrate a more balanced distribution between curiosity and approval, followed closely by annoyance and disapproval. Despite the fact that studies into political discourse tend to talk about the “conservative” nature of negative emotions, including expressions of anger, instances of anger found are closely followed by comments underscoring disappointment.

Similar to general subreddits, instances of negative emotions within political discourse, particularly among Democrats, are predominantly characterized by annoyance. This emotion is often linked to a sense of disillusionment or dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party and its representatives. Comments such as “Phillips also sucks. There really wasn’t a viable second option” exemplify this sentiment, expressing frustration with perceived inadequacies or limitations within the party’s leadership or candidate choices.

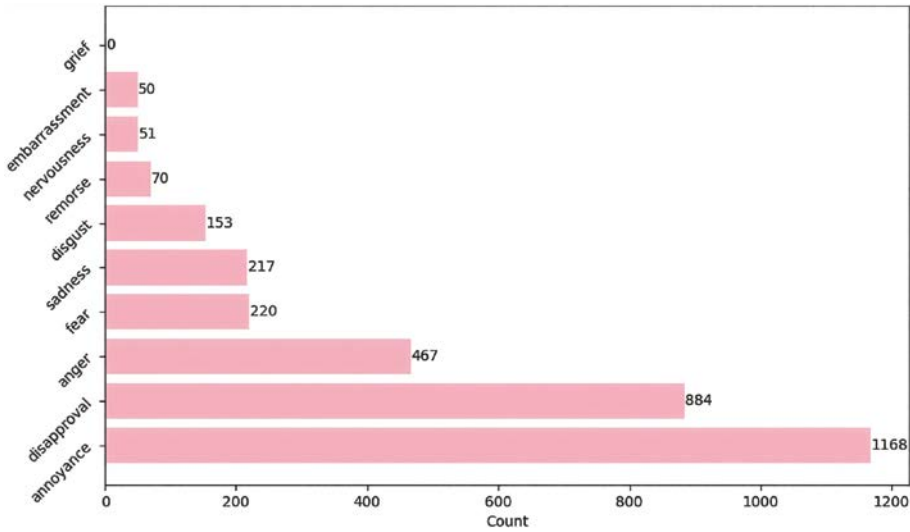


Figure 4. Top 10 emotions for Republicans from /r/republican and /r/republicans

The second most common negative emotion observed within Democratic party political discourse is disapproval. This sentiment is often expressed through critiques or skepticism towards political figures, policies, or narratives. An example highlighting this sentiment is: “All the polls cited in the article have Biden leading by a razor-thin margin and 2–3 % error margins anyhow, so, no, Biden isn’t statistically even leading. Not really”. From this perspective, this comment reflects a sense of disapproval regarding the available data, suggesting skepticism or disagreement with the interpretation of polling results and their implications for the perceived leadership or electoral prospects of a particular candidate. Disapproval in this context signifies a willingness to challenge narratives or assumptions concerning one’s own candidate’s standing compared to their opponent.

The next prevalent negative emotion observed within Democratic political discourse is anger. This emotion often manifests in expressions of frustration, indignation, or hostility towards perceived threats or injustices. An example illustrating this sentiment is: “Fuck these Muslim leaders hard, fuck any voter group that threatens MY American democracy by electing Trump again”. Indeed, comments charged with anger reflect a potent combination of anger and fear, expressing hostility towards those deemed responsible for jeopardizing users’ perception of American democracy.

The subsequent negative emotion, closely followed by sadness, is fear. This emotion clearly arises from anxieties and uncertainties about the potential of the upcoming elections: “I really hope you’re right. The recent polls have me scared! Polls are often wrong, I get that ... but we can’t get cocky. I’m scared, man!”. Comments with fearful undertones seem to reflect a sense of apprehension and looming threat regarding the upcoming elections, particularly in relation to polling data and the possibility of Donald Trump’s re-election.

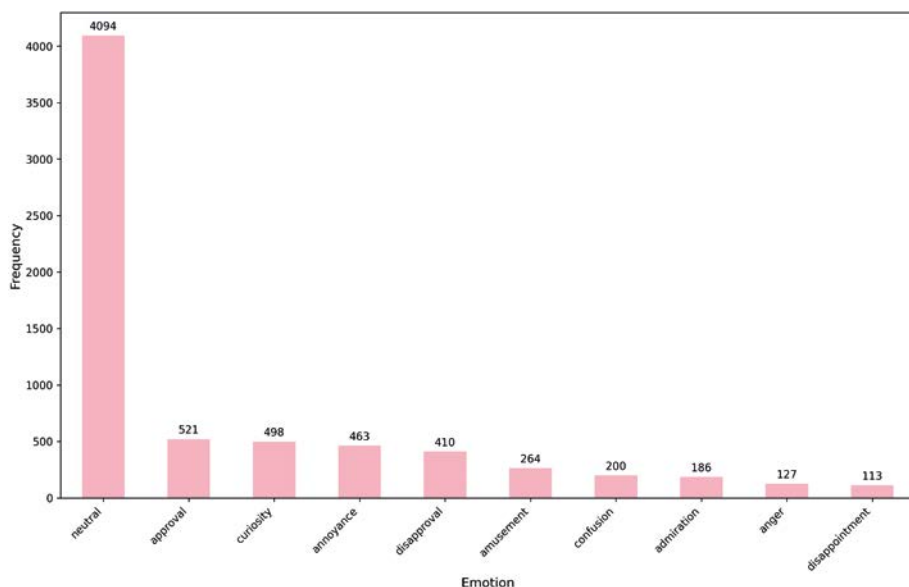


Figure 5. Distribution of negative emotions for Democrats from /r/democrats

Sadness, as the subsequent negative emotion, is illustrated by an example used in a discussion regarding presidential candidates and emergence of fascism: “Those are sadly positives to the Republican base. I agree he probably won’t win the general, but his cult is all-in on this loser”. This reflects a sense of sadness regarding the political divide between parties, acknowledging the fervent support for a particular candidate within the Republican base. The use of the word “sadly” conveys, perhaps, a sense of regret towards the state of political affairs, highlighting the emotional toll of polarization and perceived ideological extremism.

The distribution of negative emotions in Republican subreddits reflects the one found amongst Democrats, the only difference being the fact that sadness is more common than fear. Analyzing republican subreddits reveals a predominant expression of annoyance as the most common negative emotion. This sentiment surfaces in comments such as “Leftists won’t learn until they eat some of their own bullshit”. The use of derogatory language towards individuals labeled as “leftists” and dismissive rhetoric underscores the intensity of annoyance felt by users towards perceived ideological opponents. Additionally, within republican subreddits, we observe sentiments related to the necessity of being “not soft on Democrats”: “None have been acceptable, it’s weaponized stupidity but it’s started with the Democrats. SCOTUS needs put down the hammer, but thinking we can just be soft and nice with Democrats is foolish”. This underscores a perceived ideological stance where toughness and assertiveness in opposition to Democratic policies seem to be valued.

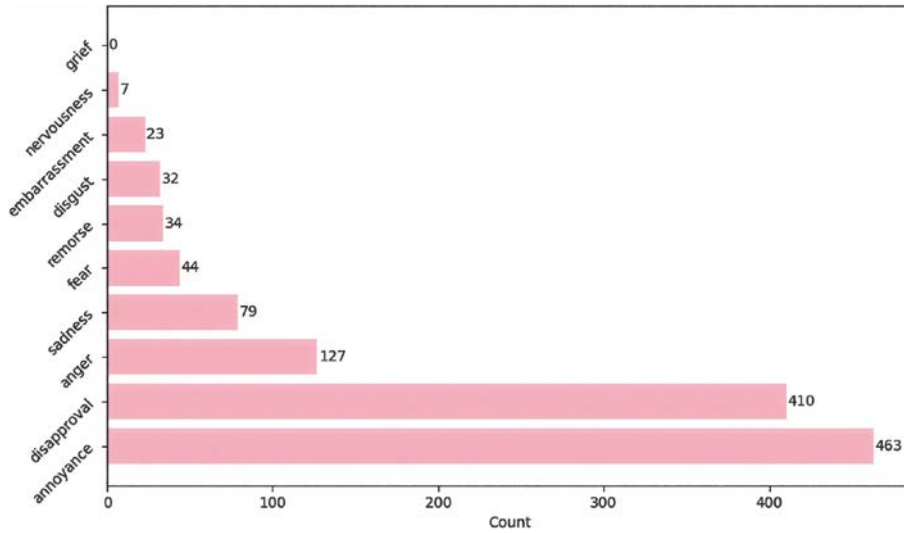


Figure 6. Distribution of negative emotions for Republicans from /r/republican and /r/republicans

Another prevailing negative emotion is disapproval, echoing observations within Democratic contexts. This sentiment indicates disillusionment with both candidate choices, as comments often convey the belief that neither Biden nor Trump is a favorable option: “Yeah man. I actually like Trumps policies but he is really not a good person. No character at all to the man. I personally can’t vote for either of them”. This dual disillusionment underscores a broader dissatisfaction with the available political options and a perceived lack of viable alternatives. Characteristic remarks about Biden include labeling him as a “senile idiot”: “He lost to a senile idiot. That’s not achieving over expectations. He’ll manage to do it again too because he’s his own worst enemy”. Interestingly, criticisms are not limited to Democratic candidates, as Republicans express frustrations and acknowledge flaws within their own ranks, particularly towards Trump being “his own worst enemy”. Despite partisan loyalty, there is frustration and acknowledgment of Trump’s shortcomings, with comments suggesting that his actions may be self-sabotaging his own campaign.

Certainly, within expressions of anger in Republican subreddits, there are instances of strong expletives directed towards the Biden/Harris administration: “No shit. Lock the bitch up!”. These types of comments can be found in threads such as “Kamala Harris as president would be even worse than Joe Biden”. The use of strong language and expletives underscores the intensity of emotion and the depth of dissatisfaction and a vehement rejection of its perceived ideological agenda. Additionally, Republican subreddits feature notably aggressive and morally judgmental comments, particularly concerning contentious issues such as abortion: “In what FUCKING UNIVERSE is killing unborn babies morally RIGHT?!”. These comments seem to hold strong convictions and moral beliefs, fueling impassioned debates.

Following anger, another prevalent negative emotion observed within Republican subreddits is sadness. Comments such as “It don’t really matter in the end Hailey still can’t win. What bothers me is why are we not having presidential debates. This election really is getting sad” exemplify this sentiment. This expression of sadness reflects a sense of resignation and disappointment towards the perceived state of the political process. Sadness can serve as a poignant expression of the erosion of trust in democratic institutions and lack of faith in electoral processes.

Overall, in both Democratic and Republican subreddits, a common theme is the feeling of disappointment with the state of elections and the available choices. This disillusionment is not limited to any particular party and reflects a broader dissatisfaction with the political landscape and the perceived limitations of the electoral process. In order to delve deeper into topics related to political discourse within the context of negative emotions, the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) model will be employed in the following section.

4.2 Emotion analysis using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA)

The focus lies not only in uncovering latent themes and topics prevalent within these communities but also in presenting an interactive analysis through PyLDAvis, a Python library that provides an interactive visualization tool for exploring topics generated by Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) models. Each analysis is further enhanced by the inclusion of screenshots of an interactive visualization tool to provide a better understanding. Using LDA, ten distinct topics within the political subreddits are found, each defined by thirty important terms.

4.2.1 General politics subreddits

As seen in Figure 7, the thirty salient terms identified through PyLDAvis encompass a broad spectrum of relevant topics within political discourse. These terms span discussions related to elections, pressing issues in politics, and key societal concerns. Among the notable terms are references to the most important geopolitical conflict in today’s political discourse, Hamas-Israel war, with words such as “Gaza”, “Israel”, and “genocide” included in the most noticeable terms. Furthermore, “pro” and “life” can be found as an indicator of ongoing discussions surrounding sensitive topics like abortion, with the Supreme Court’s ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade* consequently ending the federal constitutional right to abortion in the USA. Additionally, terms like “court” and “trans” suggest discussions on judicial matters and debated social issues. Interestingly, we observe the lack of “democrats” as one of the terms – indeed, the only term present is “republican”, underscoring the focal point of discussions being put on the Republican Party. Furthermore, mentions of two key political figures like “Biden” and “Trump” indicate ongoing conversations surrounding potential presidential candidates on both sides of the political divide. Additionally, the presence of terms reflecting unfavorable stances, such as various forms of expletives including “fuck” and “hate”, underscores the emotional intensity and contentious nature of political discussions within the analyzed subreddits. The occurrence of “state” might point to discussions concerning state-specif-

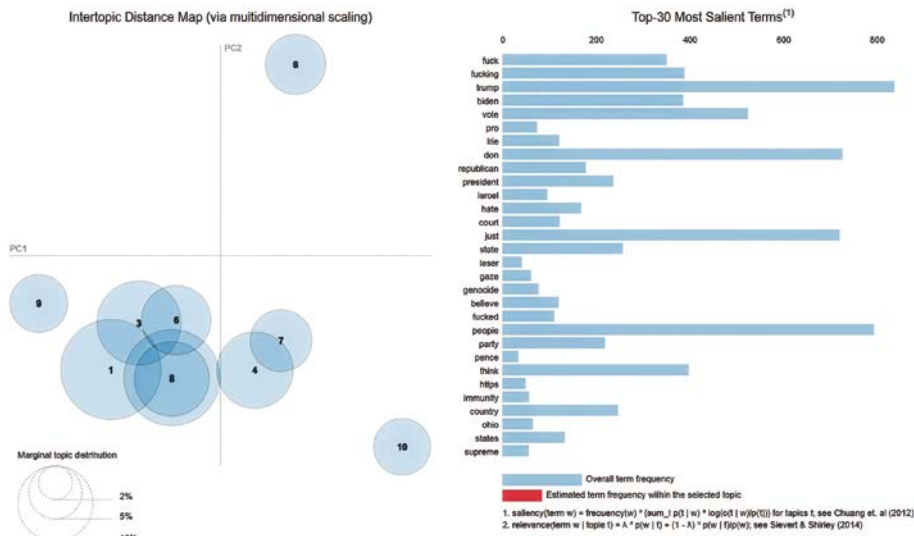


Figure 7. PyLDavis topics visualization for General Politics Subreddits

ic issues, while the mention of “states” also points to their pivotal role as battlegrounds during the 2024 elections.

Within the PyLDavis visualization, we observe the emergence of ten distinct topics, each delineated by a unique set of salient terms. Notably, among these topics, two primary themes stand out as the most prominent, denoted as “Topic 1” and “Topic 2”. These primary topics, represented with the largest circles in the visualization, likely encapsulate overarching narratives or focal points within the political discourse on Reddit.

Topic 1 mostly centers on the broader theme of “general” elections, encompassing discussions related to electoral processes, key political figures, and pertinent issues. Within this topic, prominent terms such as “Trump”, “Biden”, “election”, “vote”, and “voters” indicate a keen focus on electoral dynamics and the activities surrounding electoral campaigns. Additionally, the inclusion of terms like “Israel” and “Gaza”, as previously mentioned, suggests discussions extending beyond domestic electoral politics to international issues of the highest importance.

Topic 2, on the other hand, seems to revolve around discussions related to voter sentiments, frustrations, and perceptions around the electoral process and current political landscape. The inclusion of terms such as “vote”, “voting”, “election”, “president”, and “party” suggests a central focus on electoral activities and political leadership. Furthermore, terms like “don”, “like”, and “say” might indicate a discourse on individual opinions, expressions, and communication. The presence of terms like “shit”, “stupid”, and “fucking” suggests an emotive and critical tone, reflecting frustrations or dissatisfaction with political affairs. Additionally, terms such as “court”, “power”, and “country” imply discussions on institutional authority and governance structures

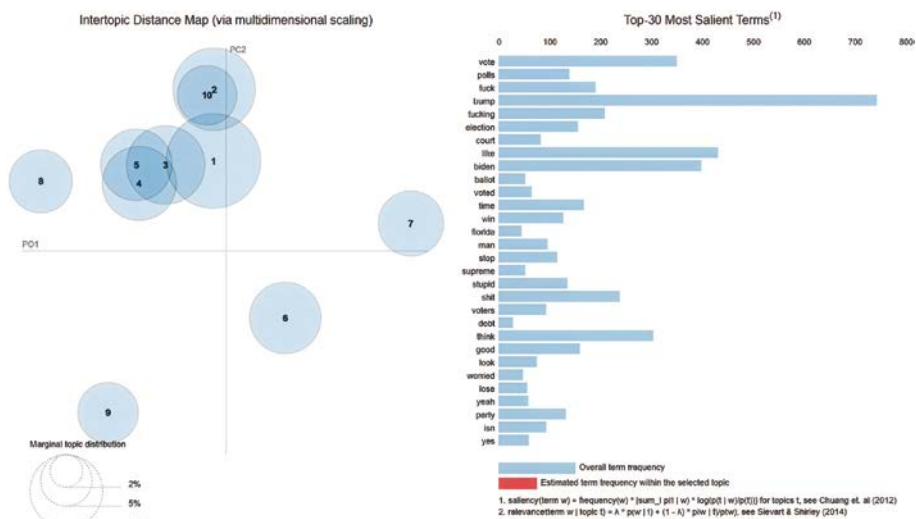


Figure 8. PyLDAvis topics visualization for Democrats

4.2.2 Party-based subreddits

Figure 8 shows the terms “win”, “lose”, and “worried” appear to be intertwined, reflecting the uncertain political landscape as of May. Indeed, in the recent New York Times’ article, Cohn (2024) states that new polls are shown, with Trump leading in 5 key states (Michigan, Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, and Pennsylvania) due to the growing discontent amongst young and nonwhite voters. The inclusion of “win” might suggest hopes for electoral success, while “lose” indicates fears of potential setbacks or defeats. Indeed, the presence of “worried” underscores a sense of apprehension or concern regarding the unfolding political dynamics. There is a notable emphasis on electoral processes, as reflected in terms such as “vote”, “election”, “ballot”, and “voted”, indicating a focus on voter participation and engagement.

Topic 1 discussions reveal a focus on various aspects of political discourse and sentiments. There is a notable emphasis on evaluations and considerations surrounding President Biden, as indicated by the frequent mentions of “Biden”, “president”, and expressions such as “bullshit” and “shit”, reflecting a critical stance towards the current state of elections. The inclusion of the term “matter” in Topic 1 suggests an emphasis on issues and concerns perceived as significant within the community, perhaps reflecting a desire to engage with pressing matters affecting society and governance. Furthermore, expressions like “worse”, “fucking”, and “stop” indicate a heightened sense of discontent, frustration, and worry among Democratic users. These emotive expressions suggest dissatisfaction with current developments.

Topic 2, on the other hand, emphasizes partisan dynamics and electoral processes related to the 2024 presidential election. The frequent mentions of terms like “Trump”, “vote”, “election”, “win”, and “Biden” suggest an ongoing assessment of potential out-

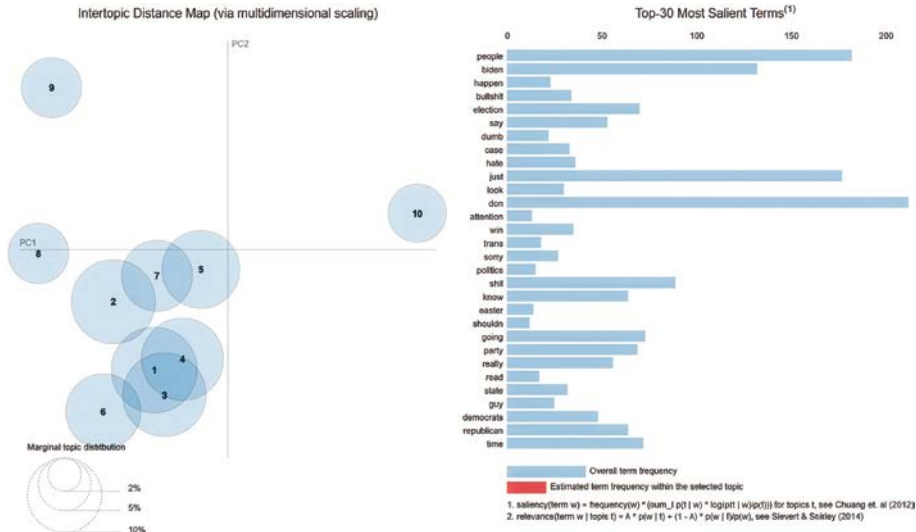


Figure 9. PyLDAvis topics visualization for Republicans

comes and the performance of key political figures within the Democratic Party as well as the Republican Party's candidate. Additionally, there is an emphasis on the partisan divide and discussions, as indicated by terms such as "republicans", "Republican", and "Democrats", reflecting the broader ideological contest between the two major political parties. Moreover, terms like "scary" and "shit" point to underlying anxieties and concerns surrounding the electoral process and the potential implications of different outcomes. The mention of "states" likely signifies discussions surrounding the electoral landscapes across different states within the United States.

As seen in Figure 9, within Republican subreddits, discussions are characterized by a critical examination of Democratic politicians and their policies, as evidenced by frequent mentions of "Biden", "Democrats". Alongside the mentions of the "opposing" party candidate, there is a palpable sense of discontent, with terms like "dumb" and "shit" indicating a prevailing sentiment of dissatisfaction. Moreover, there is a notable focus on electoral processes and political strategies, with terms like "election", "politics", and "win" suggesting an orientation towards electoral dynamics and political outcomes. Additionally, discussions extend to social issues, as indicated by terms like "trans" and "state", reflecting debates about transgender rights and state-level issues. Emotive language such as "sorry", "hate", and "bullshit" further underscores the passionate expressions and sentiments, emphasizing the emotive nature of political discourse within Republican subreddits.

Topic 1 encompasses mentions of prominent figures within the Republican party, particularly former President Trump, and highlights an ongoing assessment of party leadership and the Republican Party's (GOP's) future. There seems to exist an avenue for individuals to voice their viewpoints and grievances, as indicated by terms such

as “like”, “say”, and “critique”. Internal deliberations and apprehensions regarding the party’s course as related to the upcoming 2024 elections are articulated through terms like “issue”, “disagree”, and “confronting”. Moreover, the contrast between terms like “Biden” and “left” highlights the ongoing dialogue on ideological disparities and divergent visions for governance.

Topic 4 includes discussions encompassing diverse topics, with notable attention given to GOP and key Republican political figures. Terms like “Trump”, “Republican”, “Haley” (Nikki Haley), “GOP”, and “president” indicate a continued focus on former President Trump, previous candidates like Nikki Haley who dropped out of the race on March 6, and the condition of the Republican Party as a whole. Indeed, terms like “country”, “work”, “years”, and “need” indicate discussions on governance and the direction of the country, reflecting concerns for its future. Furthermore, discussions about “money” demonstrate a strong understanding of financial considerations in political discourse.

5 Conclusions

One of the main objectives of this study was to represent the discourse used by “non-active” political actors (commenters on Reddit and future voters), a demographic often overlooked in political discourse research. Discussions on both general and party-based political subreddits are characterized by negative expressions that reflect dissatisfaction, frustration, and anxiety about the political landscape. This emotional language categorized with the employment of the GoEmotions dataset, further exemplified by comments, underscores a sense of disillusionment with the current state of affairs and the direction of political processes. Participants raise concerns about various aspects of the electoral process, to a great extent focusing on available candidate choices or lack thereof. The prevalence of emotive and negative language, particularly associated with emotions like annoyance, disapproval, and anger, suggests a deep-seated emotional investment in political outcomes related to 2024 US elections and a desire for change. These findings underscore the significance of emotional framing in shaping perceptions and attitudes toward crucial political events like elections, highlighting the need for further research into the impact of negative emotions, not limited to merely the categories of anger or fear, on political behavior and engagement on platforms like Reddit.

The emotional framing patterns found through Latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) within general and party-based political subreddits were compared to understand the dynamics of US election discourse on Reddit. Both types of subreddits express disillusionment and uncertainty, but they differ in emotional tone and focus. General political subreddits reflect diverse perspectives related to the issues seen as relevant to the campaign like Hamas-Israel war, trans rights, or pro-life attitudes, while party-based subreddits show more partisan emotional framing and concern about candidates’ performance in November. Despite these differences, both types of subreddits share the feeling of apprehension about the future of US elections and democratic governance. These findings highlight the complex relationship between emotions, partisanship, and political discourse in shaping perceptions and attitudes of users from either side of the political spectrum. Overall, one theme is certain in the US election political discourse –

irrespective of party affiliation, there is a pervasive disillusionment among the American people about governance.

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Empathy as a currency of the pre-electoral political discourse in Albania

Defined as an attempt to understand the experiences, feelings, emotions, and perspectives of others, and emphasizing the benefits of genuine human connection, the importance of empathy has been extolled by Albanian political leaders, especially in the pre-electoral political discourse. Empathy is generally understood as an interactive and connective process that seeks to engage and understand the perspectives of the audience/electorate to persuade them by appealing to their emotions, beliefs, and values.

Since pre-electoral political discourse's main focus is to manipulate and affect the audience, this study aims to define and conceptualize what empathy looked like in the Albanian 2021 pre-

electoral political discourse, by exploring the utility of empathy while recognizing and giving voice to its variable and complex dynamics and by certainly prioritizing its emotive function. Following a pragma-rhetorical qualitative discourse analysis approach, this chapter aims to show how Albanian politicians use empathy as a Speech manipulation target by using some persuasive strategies. Some of these strategies emphasize the use of Emotional language, Anecdotes, Imagery, Irony, Vivid descriptions, and Personal pronouns and Personal narratives, all of which can be effective in influencing people's opinions and decisions by appealing to their emotions and values.

Keywords: *empathy, emotions, Pathos, persuasion, manipulation*

1 Introduction

Currently, there is a significant focus in the field of linguistics on examining manipulative textual forms that operate within the realm of political communication. This chapter scrutinizes the pre-election Speeches of Albanian political leaders as linguistic evidence through intentional and stylistic analyses, shedding light on the utilization of vocabulary and stylistic devices by the politicians, as the main interlocutors. Through these methodologies, insights are gained into how the creators of manipulative messages, consisting of manipulative Speech acts, appeal to the emotions of their audience. The findings of the analysis reveal that the primary linguistic mechanisms employed to implement this manipulative tactic include nominating lexemes, associative lexemes, and various stylistic devices such as anaphora, litotes, understatement etc. Furthermore, these findings support the notion that integrating ethological insights into linguistic

studies facilitates a deeper comprehension of the mechanisms behind linguistic manipulation in the context of Albanian 2021 pre-electoral political discourse.

Another important element of empathy analysis is the politician's way of addressing and promising to offer solutions about different socio-economic issues such as inequality, poverty, lack of opportunities, education, unemployment, discrimination, healthcare etc., by creating several contrastive pairs and associative links which are made as the following opposition: we and our party – comfort (positive emotions, empathy, and satisfaction guarantee) versus opponents and their party – discomfort (negative emotions, inability to satisfy the recipients' needs). Voting for the speech producer and his/her party is the pre-planned perlocutionary effect of pre-election propaganda speeches, thus creating the effect that a manipulative message has on the audience and provoking various emotions in them. Overall, this chapter aims to show that empathy and pathos-appealing strategies play a crucial role in pre-electoral political discourse by helping main party leaders in Albania build rapport with their audience, inspire action, and shape public opinion through emotional appeal. Also, taking into consideration the fact that the 2021 Albanian parliamentary elections were held on April 25th, 2021, during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the campaign period was impacted by the pandemic, with restrictions on gatherings and limitations on physical campaigning. At the same time, the political discourse of the time was heavily influenced by the pandemic, with parties focusing on issues such as healthcare, economic recovery, and social distancing measures, provoking different types of reactions and emotions in the audience.

Consequently, despite all the other key issues generally debated in political campaigns such as Economy and Unemployment, EU Integration, Corruption and Governance, Infrastructure and Environment, Education and Youth, the COVID-19 pandemic brought issues of healthcare, social welfare, and support for vulnerable groups to the forefront of the political debate. The campaigns saw parties and candidates engage in robust discussions and debates around these key issues, reflecting the varied priorities and concerns of the Albanian electorate. Some of the main politicians, whose pre-election speeches are analysed in this chapter, are Edi Rama, leader of the Socialist Party and Prime Minister of Albania; Lulzim Basha, leader of the Democratic Party; Petrit Vasili, deputy chair of Socialist Movement for Integration, Jozefina Topalli, and leader of the Movement for Change etc.

2 A pragma-rhetorical pre-election political discourse analysis and speech manipulation

"It appears that Rhetoric is as it were an offshoot of Dialectic and of the science of Ethics, which may be reasonably called Politics." (Aristotle, 2024, p. 1356a)

In a political discourse analysis, two kinds of intentions have to be considered: first, the communicative intention, and, second, the persuasive intention. The fulfilment of those intentions is achieved by a successful persuasive-communicative action. The psychological, philosophical, and logical aspects derived from the pragma-rhetorical perspective are crucial given its applications in several practical domains.

Pragmatics and rhetoric are two crucial fields of study in political discourse analysis. The rhetoric aspect is essentially devoted to a study of order, i.e. to the planning of discourse, which means the production of the structure of discourse in a dynamic perspective, given the fact that real discourse is what is finally performed as discourse with all the moves made in the process (Dascal & Gross, 1999, pp. 108-110). Pragma-rhetoric is not isolated from logic, on the contrary, it takes logic at the very ground in discourse construction, but the crucial notion of the intention to persuade links rhetoric with pragmatics in a global intentional architecture of individuals, distinguishing and combining at the same time communicative intention and persuasive intention. Argumentative analyses aim at describing and explaining all those means and methods, with the help of which the discourse of a writer or speaker endeavours to impact an audience, which consists of three important inevitable components: Logos, Ethos, and Pathos.

The political climate during electoral campaigns in Albania has always been challenging to be studied. Political campaigns are closely related to many factors that not only define the conflicting nature of the political discourse but even depict the populist nature that the political discourse tends to adopt. Populism, on the one hand, and social media on the other, has a complex and multifaceted relationship. As populism has become more prevalent in political discourse, social media platforms offer populists a direct channel to communicate with their supporters, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. This allows them to frame issues on their own terms and control the narrative. Social media has currently been used by populists not only to spread their message and mobilize supporters, but it can also be used to counter their narratives and hold them accountable. Another element that characterizes political discourse nowadays is the fact that political life and the popularity of the reactions of the digital audience are imperative as *“social-media technology employs popularity-based algorithms that tailor content to maximize user engagement that can increase polarization within homogeneous networks”* (Pierce et al., 2022, p. 20), thus empathic stance and orientation of the discourse have a big impact.

The examination of pre-election propaganda speeches in Albania indicates that the deliberately cohesive texts of these speeches are comprised of specific pragmatic subunits referred to as microtexts. The term “microtext” is defined as an intentional component of manipulative communication designed to elicit a particular persuasive impact (Austin, 1975, p. 56), to establish a specific manipulative connection. Currently, the analysis of speech manipulation in pre-election discourse remains insufficient. Despite this, the prevalence of this phenomenon is extensive and it has emerged as a potent tool for persuasion. The origins of speech manipulation are deeply rooted in our genetic makeup and instincts, a fact supported by numerous instances of language usage. Thus, throughout this chapter, we will aim to illustrate how politicians target empathy and compassion as focal points for speech manipulation.

Pre-election discourse is characterized by a predominance of text types with manipulative intentions. Within the realm of manipulative political texts, examples include political interviews, slogans, announcements, chapters in party publications, and specific content in electronic media. However, the most notable form of manipulative communication within pre-election discourse is found in the text genre of pre-election

propaganda speeches. Despite the current emphasis on the study of political communication (Trent & Friedenberg, 2008; Norris, 2000; Price, 2007), the linguistic strategies employed by politicians to express empathy in manipulative discourse remain a field to be further explored and investigated.

As manipulation constitutes a form of communicative activity with specific intentions and objectives, the most appropriate approach to analysing manipulative messages is intentional analysis (within the framework of Speech act theory) in conjunction with a stylistic analysis of the texts. Examination of pre-election discourse in Albania reveals that a manipulative strategy centred on empathy and compassion is prevalent in pre-election speeches. Several important topics which provoke feelings of empathy will be categorised in the following part of the analysis.

3 Empathy in pre-electoral political discourse in Albania

As already stated before, the objective of this chapter is to examine how Albanian politicians utilize empathy as a target for speech manipulation in their pre-election propaganda speeches, operating within the pre-election discourse of the nation. It also focuses on the importance and mission of using empathy in such kinds of political discourse. The character of politicians is often evaluated based on their adherence to regulations rooted in the principles of mutual assistance and empathy. It is widely acknowledged that a highly effective strategy for manipulating public opinion through pre-election messages involves portraying the message sender and their political party as individuals capable of empathy and benevolence, thereby fostering these qualities within society. Conversely, political adversaries are depicted as lacking in compassion and disregarding the moral guidelines of the community. The intended outcome of such calculated messaging is to garner respect and trust from the electorate towards the sender of the pre-election communication while instigating disrespect and disapproval towards the sender's rivals.

- (1) *I am here together with Socialist Party to change this country, to show by what we do that the work is what matters and that those who bring the work are those who remain. In itself, neither I nor anyone here is the best imaginable choice, but in the reality of everyday life, you may find me humble, but better than us, there is simply none. Everyone should be content with what they have seen in the past, what they have experienced in the past, and what they have lived in the past.* (Rama, Opening campaign, 2021)

In passage (1), Edi Rama, the Albanian Prime Minister and leader of the Socialist Party, uses the collective noun (Socialist Party) to gain empathy by showing that the political force he represents and its MP candidates are those who are projected to achieve the promised objectives, by concerning the humility based on the alleged sacrifices of the past. Also, by making use of several litotes, as an expressive rhetorical device, the speaker claims his and his collaborator's humbleness on the presupposed accomplishments of the past two mandates and thus projecting the future possible mandate anticipations. At the same time, Rama shows his superiority over his political rivals, the Democratic Party and its representatives.

- (2) *Who will make this possible? A man who for eight years has not taken a step towards Europe, one who did not keep any promises to the Albanians. A man who every time he is caught in failure or a flash of guilt, a man who has spent eight years and will spend these three and a half weeks, blaming me for his failures, blaming the opposition for his failures, blaming your mothers and fathers, blaming your youth, blaming the press, the media, even now, blaming Europe, and America for its failures.* (Basha & Korce, 2021)

Lulzim Basha, at the time leader of the opposition and Democratic Party, by making use of a persuasive act, aims to create negative empathetic reactions in the audience. His objective is to confront the counterpart claims of their failure in Albania's EU integration process and endangering the relations with the United States while blaming them for Rama's setbacks. In fact, Albania's path towards European Union (EU) integration has been a central topic of the Albanian political discourse, with parties continuously outlining their vision and strategies for advancing the accession process.

Basha makes use of hypophora, by posing the question if a man who was not able to take responsibility for his actions, would be the right actor to be elected as the leader of the governing political force. By the expression of certain associative links, he intends to evoke in the audience the idea that it was not them to be blamed for the continuous negative responses the country has had from the international arena. Instead, by making use of the anaphora and reiteration, as important pragma-rhetorical devices, he shows his pointing finger at his political rival, Edi Rama, who according to him is to be blamed for the uncomfortable situation and struggles Albania and Albanians have been suffering.

Following up the preceding analysis, pre-electoral speeches typically exhibit certain structural and intentional features that classify them as distinct text types. They commonly include customary phrases like greetings and expressions of gratitude, with a predictive nature emphasizing the commitment to fulfilling promises. Notably, pre-election propaganda speeches possess an intriguing characteristic: the audience is often aware, either wholly or partially, of the manipulative nature of the message. This implies that listeners anticipate or comprehend the intended perlocutionary impact planned by the creators of such speeches before the election. The realm of politics shares similarities with advertising in terms of employing manipulative strategies to influence recipients and store information in their memory.

- (3) *I give you my word, we will make the dream a reality within the first two years and Selenica will no longer be an isolated island but a powerful centre that connects the proudest regions of the south, Mallakastër, Vlorë, all these beautiful villages with extraordinary productions.* (Basha, Selenice, 2021)

In passage (3), Lulzim Basha, head of the Democratic Party, through a series of commissive acts, exploits the need for infrastructure of the electorate in the municipality of Selenica, by taking an oath that they (inhabitants in Selenica and the electorate) will no longer be isolated, nor will they be treated as second-class marginalized citizens. By so doing, the interlocutor gives them hope that in this way, they and their children will

no longer need to turn to immigration. This promise was of imperative importance for the opposition in the 2021 elections, in the conditions that mass immigration and the necessity to stop it had become the leitmotif of the campaign.

The ultimate goal of pre-election propaganda speeches is to secure votes for the speaker and their party, constituting a distantly perceived perlocutionary effect of manipulative communication. This effect, whether achieved or not, materializes over time in the absence of the speaker. To sway the audience to support their party, the speech-maker must trigger a series of targeted persuasive effects by activating the most effective manipulative techniques. These techniques typically leverage the collective recipients' instincts, sensory perceptions, and fundamental emotions. These manipulation tactics prove highly effective due to their universal appeal, leading to similar reactions among the audience, and their collective significance for all recipients. Central to the speech-maker's objective is establishing appropriate associations, contrasting "us and our party" with a sense of comfort (positive emotions, empathy, compassion, and fulfilment of instincts), in opposition to the discomfort (negative emotions and failure to meet needs) associated with opponents and their party.

- (4) *We are fighting against a group of people who are ready to do anything just to keep their seats, but in reality, they do not govern us but serve themselves and their partners who are seizing everything this country has through looting acts, your wealth, and the wealth of the nation* (Basha, Campaign opening, 2021).
- (5) *Who will achieve these, the groom¹ Who let the people at the wedding wait? Who? Imagine the opposite part where Nard Ndoka seems the only philosopher without counting Monika, Lilo and Saliu.²* (Rama, Opening campaign, 2021)

In passages (4) and (5), each interlocutor aims to diminish the competencies or abilities of the counterpart. They both make use of antithesis to achieve their manipulative political objectives. Antithesis, a rhetorical device that juxtaposes contrasting ideas, can be employed in political discourse to foster empathy by highlighting the perspectives of those with opposing viewpoints. By acknowledging and addressing these contrasting viewpoints, politicians can demonstrate understanding and potentially bridge divides. (Llunji & Paçarizi, 2023)

The opposition's target is to delegitimise the government and their structures which are turning step by step the entire administration into a subordinate organisation of the Socialist Party. By doing this, the administration has been shifted to an organisation whose function is looting and accommodating requests and so their only objective is to preserve their seats in the Parliament and any administrative duty. Basha's quote (4) makes serious allegations against the government, claiming they prioritize their interests

¹ The Speaker is referring to Lulzim Basha at the time head of the Democratic Party.

² The speaker is referring to Nard Ndoka, head of the Demo-Christian Party, Monika Kryemadhi at the time head of LSI, Ilir Meta former leader of LSI and at the time President of the Republic, and Sali Berisha former leader of the Democratic Party (A. D.).

and those of their associates over the needs of the people. This suggests a potential abuse of power and misuse of public resources for personal gain.

On the other hand, the Primer, Edi Rama (passage 5) tends to put the audience in a position to gain sympathy. On the other hand, the Prime Minister tries to win the audience's sympathy by transmitting notes of empathy. It does not aim to orient the debate towards a genuine political agenda, but incites an empathic response from the audience, thereby undermining the ethos of the opposing side. The empathic connection between the audience and the speaker would be realized when the audience was confronted with the subtext. Understanding subtext requires careful attention to detail, empathy, and cultural awareness. It involves reading between the lines, considering the context, and interpreting nonverbal cues. A probable analysis and interpretation of this passage would be based on the function and position of the personages mentioned by the speaker:

- Basha – the groom (somebody not able to achieve anything, but who dared to be late even on his wedding day)
- Nard Ndoka – whose continuous gaffs are at least anecdotic, serving as an antithesis to a philosopher's contributions and wisdom.
- The couple Meta – Kryemadhi – whose currency and honesty have always been questioned by the Albanian electorate.
- Sali Berisha – whose political integrity has always been the main target of the leftist representatives.

Following this interpretation, the whole passage could be a hypothetical scenario or a metaphorical statement where Nard Ndoka, despite all the terrible gaffs and political errors, is the only philosopher present.

Some other important variations related with empathy gaining strategies Albanian politicians have consistently made use of are closely linked with the main topics and concerns they intended to talk about during the pre-electoral campaign. Below, there will be listed several sensitive issues that predominated most of their speeches as well as a series of strategies employed by the politicians to arise emotions in the audience.

a) Problems vs. solutions

- (6) *My campaign and my team have a program that comes as a result of this longing for change. What does this mean more specifically? For more than 4-5 years, we have been touching on the problems where they occur, from inside the homes of Albanians, to small businesses. From the garment business to the manufacturing business. From oil workers to miners, to farmers, to students, to educators, to the intellectual elite, to arts and culture. And based on the real touch of the problems, we have formulated real solutions to these problems. This is a fact. Therefore, our dialogue with them today is much more natural.* (Basha, Report Tv., 2021)

Through this passage, Basha, urges to demonstrate that the Democratic Party leader's campaign program is based on a desire for change and has been developed over several

years through direct engagement with various segments of Albanian society. The program claims to offer real solutions to the problems faced by Albanians, based on the speaker's understanding gained through first-hand experience. The speaker emphasizes that their program has been developed through direct interaction with the people, leading to a more natural and relatable dialogue with them. Apparently, Basha makes use of meta-representation of the state of an object which causes empathy. According to Antonova, it is usually used to see the unity with the recipient through the demonstration of knowing tribal morals. (Antonova, 2011, p. 102).

At the same time, by utilising enumeration, Basha intends to create an all-inclusive political image. He strives to demonstrate the inclusiveness of the political program of the party and political alliance he represents. In this way, he impacts the audience by trying to evoke in them a series of positive emotions and requiring their active participation in the process of finding the necessary solutions to the Albanians' problems.

b) Imagery

- (7) *In the parents' bosom, in the tears of the mothers, by a man who came, promised, and now comes again without further ado, your body demands for the third time the vote and the promise. Eight years did not finish the promised road, eight years dragged on; eight years of deception for the farmers, eight years must come to an end in three days and two hours.* (Basha, Selenice, 2021)

The speaker, Basha uses emotional language and imagery to connect with the audience and persuade them to vote for him. He emphasizes the importance of the upcoming election and the need to hold the current government accountable for its failures. He also highlights the unfulfilled promises of the past eight years and emphasizes the need for change, by promising this change to start in just three days and two hours.

c) Personal narratives

- (8) *Today I am particularly excited because together with some candidates for MP on the LSI list in Vlorë, I was here today to honour the memory of my grandfather, a martyr of the homeland, a martyr of Vlorë, Rasim Hamzaraj. I had the pleasure of bringing a bunch of flowers, but at the same time, I would like this plain, where those people who have sacrificed everything, without asking for anything, to be different, to be well maintained without saving anything, because it is the honour and certainly the glory of this city, of this area that has always been at the forefront of history to make great changes. Even today we are in such a moment* (Vasili & Vlore, 2021).

Petrit Vasili, at the time deputy chair of Socialist Movement for Integration, (LSI) another Party of opposition, aims to forge empathic connections with the audience by stressing the patriotic values of the region and his descent and affiliations with such values, which he claims to be part of the philosophy and beliefs of his political party. Such a personal narrative would certainly raise trust and positive emotions and reactions in the audience.

- (9) *I want to wear breeches, I will wear breeches, I want to wear sneakers, I will wear sneakers. This is me! I don't offer myself to anyone as a son-in-law. I am blessed to be Linda Rama's husband. I don't offer myself to anyone as a puppet. At this point, I have the impression that I have exaggerated in communication, creating the idea that I am arrogant and that I like myself. This is not true!* (Rama, 2021)

Edi Rama, leader of the Socialist Party, seeks empathy from the audience by stressing his individualistic approach to living as a free Spirit. Rama is known for his direct and sometimes controversial communication style. He is famous for his unconventional style, both in his political approach and personal presentation. Rama challenges traditional political attire with his colourful and daring fashion choices. He views conventional political attire as boring and seeks to convey a message of individuality and creativity. In this passage (9), Rama alludes that he is different from the other political leaders, and especially his main rival at the time, Lulzim Basha of whom the general perception was being manipulated by Sali Berisha, the historical leader of the Democratic Party. Masterfully using Irony, Rama keeps stressing the fact that Mr. Basha was not able to achieve anything, but to represent the interests of Mr. Berisha in the same Party that he got as “a dowry”. As such, he was to be considered a “kollovár”³.

- (10) *If I were to be Edi Rama's opposition, I would defeat Edi Rama! If you listen to what I do to Edi Rama out loud, I would appear to you as Edi Rama's opponent. Edi Rama as an opponent is the most dissatisfied Albanian you will find on the face of the earth. Edi Rama as an opponent expects much more from Prime Minister Edi Rama every day.* (Rama, 2021).

In this passage, Edi Rama implies that the only man who could beat him in the political race is himself, and, by assuming this, he stresses the fact that the opposition does not have any strong and fit enough candidate to win over him. Rama also claims that all his deeds were put on critical evaluation by himself, by postulating his hypothesis that only he was able to understand what had gone wrong during his governance. Rama is known for his direct communication style, often using humour, sarcasm, and artistic metaphors to engage the public. This helps him connect with citizens, particularly the younger generation, and present a more approachable, personable image of leadership. At the same time, this helps him build his Ethos and credibility, so as to transform any circumstance in his favour.

d) COVID-19 context

Being held during COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the pre-electoral communication's most debated issues were related to this peculiar phenomenon. Empathy in the political discourse usually tends to reveal (according to Simas et al.) two forms of reaction: *Empathic concern should predict more positive effects for copartisans, relative to outpartisans (H1)*.

3 A groom who chooses to live in his wife's or father-in-law's house, which in the Albanian tradition was considered as an offensive epithet, because it stresses his incapability to earn his living.

Empathic concern should increase the negative effect for outpartisans (H2). (Simas, Clifford, & Kirkland, 2020, p. 260). In this context, Albanian politicians tend mostly towards the second outcome.

- (11) *These troubles have become a burden. Even without the pandemic, even without the earthquake, the pandemic has been a burden. For 8 years, not a single day has been focused on the people.* (Basha & Kamez, 2021)).

Taking into consideration the above passage, the interlocutor, Lulzim Basha intended to stimulate a negative reaction toward his opposing counterpart and stimulate a reflection of distress and biased sentiment (for the audience identified as a follower of the opponent counterpart's political beliefs), by empathizing with the burdens of challenges the audience faced. The incitement of positive reactions to empathic stances was more likely the path the government tends to follow.

- (12) *Who found the vaccines? How did the vaccines arrive? We will bring the production of many vaccines and high-quality products here for the domestic market and export. Who will achieve these; will it be the groom leaving people waiting at the wedding? Who?* (Rama, Campaign Opening, 2021)

In passage 12, Rama makes a series of rhetorical questions to the audience, arising feelings of confidence and trust in the electorate. In the conditions of COVID-19 emergency, Rama stresses the fact that he was “the savior” because he was the one who procured the vaccines. Rama makes use of antithesis by comparing and contrasting himself with the Democratic Party leader, who did not only do anything to solve the situation, but instead he blamed him to be “the cause” or “the guilty person” of the widespread of the infections during the massive electoral campaign meetings he held at the time.

- (13) *Certainly, the electoral campaign is a challenge and confrontation is a challenge, but the challenge of challenges is the victory over the unseen enemy, the final eradication of the virus from our lives, everything else comes after it and we must not be creators of infection hubs, we must not call people to put them at risk and above all to put at risk those we call to convey the wrong message to those who see us.* (Rama, Opening campaign, 2021)

The electoral campaign during COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges such as confronting opponents and ensuring victory over unseen enemies (virus) and prioritizing public health over other concerns. Rama, the Albanian Prime Minister, could not “escape” the debating of the crisis, as well as finding possible solutions and salvations from this situation. He chooses to make use of nominating lexemes and metaphorical constructions to address the gravity of the pandemic and project “the war” and “much needed victory” over it.

Opposing viewpoints and argumentation come from another leader of the opposition force, Mrs. Jozefina Topalli in one of her pre-electoral interviews. She considers the pandemic and vaccines as fruitful strategies employed by both Rama and Basha, representatives of the main political parties in Albania, to reach their political power. As such,

she tries to manipulate the audience based on empathy and compassion, by making use of meta-representation of the opponent's attitude to the situations which are possible to cause empathy (usually opponent's egoism is shown to create his negative image)

- (14) *He uses the numbers of those who have lost their lives in the Rama vaccination, both are right. It's very good that the vaccines have arrived, it's doing its duty, but also to use the number of those who have passed away doesn't seem humane and ethical to me, they are merciless in the campaign. It shows that until they reach their political power, they become fearful, they have no boundaries.* (Topalli, Report tv., 2021)

Mrs Topalli, at the time leader of the Movement for Change, claimed that Rama and Basha were using COVID-19 as a propaganda motif. She empathized with both those who had sought to be vaccinated as fast as possible and those who had lost their loved ones because of the pandemic. She criticized the government by stressing that the health of the Albanian citizens was the government's job to accomplish. Meanwhile, according to her, the opposition was turning the electoral campaign into a macabre image of reality.

4 Conclusion

Pre-electoral discourse in Albania and elsewhere plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter decision-making before official election campaigning begins. It sets the tone for the upcoming elections and can impact the overall political climate. As such, the use of empathy is to be considered a currency of pre-electoral discourse. It undisputedly helps bridge the gap between politicians and the public by fostering understanding, promoting unity, and addressing societal issues with compassion and sensitivity. It can also contribute to more inclusive and empathetic policymaking processes. Empathy is not just an individual emotion; it's also a political construct that requires a supportive social safety net. When empathy fails, the consequences can be disastrous. Therefore, political discourse should acknowledge the importance of empathy and work to create a society where everyone feels supported and understood.

Since empathy's value comes through its expression in political discourse, this chapter aimed to examine the roles empathy plays in how Albanian political leaders communicate and connect with their electorate. At the same time, this chapter's analysis focused on the ways that different Albanian political leaders build rationale and logical discourses; how they present their personalities; and what methods, strategies, stylistic and linguistic devices they appeal to impact the electorate emotionally. In this context, empathy served as the cutting edge in the political discourse. Empathy was demonstrated in all forms, by distinguishing one political stance, promising miracle solutions, offering an emotional point of view and personal experiences, and other ways and methods that tackle the emotional reactions of the audience.

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Assessing pre-election preferences through emotions expressed in tweets

The aim of the following research, drawing from the fields of text mining, natural language processing and machine learning, is the analysis of the tweet database which were collected from Platform XZ, dating back to the campaign period of the 2023 parliamentary elections in Poland. Utilizing hashtag-guided classification, each tweet was assigned to the corresponding political party and then cleaned as well as subjected to further analysis. The results gained from the sentiment analysis (by the means of TextBlob, VADER Sentiment and naive Bayes classifier) were compared to the ones forecasted in the chosen pre-election polls (United Surveys / RMF FM, DGB, IBRiS / Onet, IPSOS / OKO.press, TOK FM), which allowed the conclusion that data from the social networking site bear in on the actual political climate in Poland (with few exceptions).

Keywords: *Platform X, sentiment analysis, TextBlob, Vader Sentiment, Bayes*

1 Introduction

The digital age, with its emphasis on the Internet and social media platforms, has significantly transformed communication and content dissemination. These changes have a profound impact on culture, economy, society, and notably, the political scene and parliamentary elections. The aim of this research is to conduct a sentiment analysis on tweets from the 2023 election campaign using text mining, natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning techniques and compare these results with a selection of pre-election polls. Additionally, this study analyses the social networks to depict the sentiment and relationships between political groups based on the tweet database.

1.1 Polish parliamentary election

On October 15, 2023, general (parliamentary) election was held in Poland, including elections to the Sejm (the lower house of the Polish Parliament) and Senate (the upper house of the Polish Parliament) of the Republic of Poland. According to the National Electoral Commission¹, voter turnout in the elections to the lower house (Sejm) was

¹ <https://sejmsenat2023.pkw.gov.pl/sejmsenat2023>

74.38 %, which is considered ‘a grateful subject of analysis, also as a political phenomenon.’ (Zych, 2023, p. 1)

The official results of the 2023 parliamentary elections from 31,497 districts are publicly available on the website of the National Electoral Commission (<https://sejmisenat2023.pkw.gov.pl/sejmsenat2023/pl/sejm/wynik/pl>, accessed on May 28, 2024), which also reports that twelve electoral committees participated in last year’s elections: ‘Democratic Opposition’ (including Civic Coalition – *Koalicja Obywatelska*, *KO*; the Third Way 2050 – *Trzecia Droga*; New Left – *Nowa Lewica*), Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, *PiS*), Confederation for Liberty and Independence (*Konfederacja Wolność i Niepodległość*, *KONFEDERACJA*), Nonpartisan Local Government Activists (*Bezpartyjni Samorządowcy*), Poland is One (*Polska jest Jedna*), German Minority, Welfare and Peace Movement (*Ruch Dobrobytu i Pokoju*), Normal Country (*Normalny Kraj*), Anti-Party (*Antypartia*), Repair Poland Movement (*Ruch Naprawy Polski*).

A total of 21,596,674 votes were cast, which translates to the following results for each electoral committee: Law and Justice – 35.38 % of the votes and 42.17 % of the seats; Civic Coalition – 30.70 % of the votes and 34.13 % of the seats; Third Way 2050 – 14.40 % of the votes and 14.13 % of the seats; New Left – 9.61 % of the votes and 5.56 % of the seats; Confederation – 7.16 % of the votes and 3.91 % of the seats.

The remaining electoral committees received a total of 2.75 % of the votes and, due to not surpassing the electoral threshold applicable in Poland, were not included in the following analysis.

1.2 Text mining

Text mining, also known as Knowledge Discovery from Text (KDT), is a sophisticated process aimed at extracting valuable, previously unknown information from extensive volumes of unstructured textual data. Hearst (1999) characterizes text mining as the endeavor to uncover implicit, non-trivial information that is not immediately apparent from the text. Despite its early promise, as noted by Witten & Brainbridge (2003), text mining did not initially achieve the same level of prominence as data mining.

Moreover, text mining encompasses all aspects of automated natural language processing² and, according to Witten & Brainbridge (2003, p. 2), extends even further. For instance, it includes the analysis of connective structures such as hyperlinks in web texts and citations in literature, which are valuable sources of information but fall outside the traditional scope of natural language processing. Yet, NLP provides the essential methodologies and tools that enable the nuanced analysis and comprehension of natural language data, which is crucial for effective text mining. These processes are utilized in programs and devices designed for people with disabilities, language learning, voice-controlled devices, automatic text translation, and robotics. Thus, such synergy

2 Krohn et al. (2022, p. 23) define NLP as a research field at the intersection of computer science, linguistics, and artificial intelligence, which involves taking natural language in written or spoken form and processing it computationally to achieve specific automation, whether to execute a particular task or enhance human performance.

not only facilitates the conversion of unstructured text into structured data but also enhances the overall process of knowledge discovery and informed decision-making, proving that these disciplines are intertwined.

2 Literature review

2.1 Definition and typology of sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis, also known as opinion mining, is the computational process of identifying and categorizing opinions expressed in text. This allows one to determine the writer's attitude towards specific topics, products, or services. Evolving significantly since the late 20th century, sentiment analysis is now indispensable for marketers, managers, and researchers, given its capability to process large data volumes efficiently (Tomanek, 2014; Baj-Rogowska, 2019; Rashka, 2018). Integrating fields such as natural language processing (NLP), data mining, and text analysis, sentiment analysis also falls within affective computing, which aims to recognize human emotions through computational means. The primary objective is to capture and interpret opinions expressed in written form, such as reviews on platforms like Yelp or TripAdvisor (Farhadloo & Rolland, 2016).

Words are central to sentiment analysis because they act as a bridge between the human mind and the environment, reflecting internal experiences through language (Liu, 2012; Luo et al., 2013). Lindquist et al. (2015) note that emotions can be interpreted from facial expressions, voice modulation, and words themselves, which carry emotional significance.

Researchers use various methods for sentiment analysis, ranging from simple text information extraction to complex knowledge discovery in databases (KDD). The two primary approaches include content-based analysis and statistical methods. Content-based analysis involves examining the text's linguistic features, such as significant words and phrases, semantic rules, and syntactic structures. Statistical methods treat texts as data sets and apply techniques such as decision trees, neural networks, and regression methods to analyze the content. Dictionary-based methods are also prevalent, classifying text based on the presence of emotionally charged words. For instance, Pang and Lee (2008) highlight those certain words directly express emotions, while others may induce emotional reactions.

Sentiment analysis methods can be categorized into several types, each with unique approaches and focus areas (Tomanek, 2014, p. 120). Dictionary methods include classification based on the presence of specific words or key phrases: KWIC analysis (Key Word In Context), KPIC analysis (Key Phrase In Context), thematic analysis using sets of words ("bag of words"); classification based on logic: use of single logical conditions (e.g., negation), use of multiple logical conditions (e.g., conjunction, disjunction), use of contextual conditions (e.g., spatial relationships) as well as use of semantic rules: principles based on similarity and difference in word meaning (e.g., synonyms, antonyms), rich vocabulary of a given language, grammatical structure and its impact on sentence understanding (e.g., word order). Statistical Methods, on the other hand, are divided into two main categories, and they include supervised and unsupervised learning classification. The former encompasses techniques based on decision models (e.g., decision trees), classification using the nearest neighbour method, application of bayesian proba-

bility techniques and application of regression methods in data analysis. The latter consists of techniques of hierarchical classification, clustering algorithms based on similarity indices (e.g., Jaccard index), methods of text classification based on complexity analysis (e.g., Flesch readability index).

However, sentiment analysis faces several challenges, including ambiguity and contextual understanding. Determining the sentiment of a text can be complex, as the same statement may be interpreted differently by various individuals. For example, the sentence “James stated: The pop star died from a heroin overdose” conveys a negative event but does not explicitly express James’s emotions. Accurate sentiment analysis requires understanding the context in which the words are used, distinguishing whether a sentiment is directed at the author, the subject, or the audience.

Aspect-based sentiment analysis evaluates sentiments related to specific product or service features, with recent studies focusing on identifying sentiments associated with product features in reviews. Advanced systems analyze sentiment at the sentence level, enhancing the relevance of sentiment elements related to specific aspects (Pontiki et al., 2014). Semantic role detection is also crucial, recognizing not only the emotions and state of the experiencer but also the source, context, intensity, empathy target, manner, and reason behind the emotional reaction. This comprehensive approach is exemplified by analyzing tweets during the 2012 US presidential elections, which required understanding the multifaceted roles emotions play in the text.

2.2 *Sentiment analysis in political discourse*

Analysts focusing on social media research emphasize its undeniable impact on shaping and conveying emotions (Liu et al., 2018, p. 1). Meler (2022, p. 116) notes that the internet, including all social media, is deeply integrated into daily life, highlighting how emotions conveyed through platforms like X (formerly known as Twitter) can influence the outside world. Interestingly, despite various virtual ways to express emotions, such as videos or emojis, text remains the dominant form of communication on this social media platform.

The expressivity of tweets, the number of which are on the perpetual rise on X, makes this social medium extremely popular among social science researchers exploring topics like stock market behaviours, economic trends, public health, and election outcome predictions. Although the former Twitter is not the most used social site, Meler (2022, p. 116) points out that in Poland, X has over 8.6 million users, or about 30 % of internet users, considering at least one visit per month. The active presence of journalists, integrating X into their routines and the agenda-building process utilized by politicians to disseminate their messages, underscores the platform’s invaluable role in shaping political discourse in Poland (Meler, 2022, pp. 116–117). However, Meler (2022, p. 117) notes that visiting X does not necessarily equate to active use, such as tweeting, as in the USA, 80 % of tweets come from just 10 % of its users. Nevertheless, this fact does not diminish findings showing that some of the most active Polish parliamentarians use the former Twitter as a tool for political communication. Chlasta (2015, p. 3) underscores the prevalence of X among Polish politicians, who utilize the platform for public

communication and political discourse, often engaging with international peers and sometimes sparking controversies. Moreover, the author indicates the widespread use of the platform formerly known as Twitter during Polish presidential election in 2015, since all but one candidate actively participated on the social site during the campaign period. Thus, Sobkowicz (2016, p. 1) argues that a post-communist country such as Poland proves to be “an important testing ground for the theories of the voting behaviour and media influences (...)” Baran et al. (2023) also acknowledge the popularity of use of social media for political advertisement, especially in pre-election periods, although they refer to ethically questionable forms of manipulative actions, including hate speech, trolling, harassment and dissemination of fake news.

3 Data and methods

3.1 Pre-election polls

Horonziak (2016, p. 255) defines public opinion polls as “a study of social moods and attitudes conducted on a random sample representing the entire population (usually adults), created by George Gallup. It involves asking various questions to obtain answers from a representative sample of citizens.” The author attributes significant importance to this research technique in promoting democracy, describing it as a form of communication between groups in society and between voters and the government. She also emphasizes that well-constructed election polls can visualize the opinion of a representative part of society better than actual elections because they capture the opinions of the group, not just those who participate in voting.

Public opinion polls have been used in Poland since 1958, but they were only considered reliable sources of information, free from censorship and manipulation, in the 1990s. Currently, surveys are widely used in advertising, news, and election campaigns, and their market demand increases automatically every year. They influence social attitudes and, as Matuszewski (2016, p. 253) argues, voting decisions, which can be influenced by published information about support for specific candidates and political options – a voter may place their vote differently, for example, on a party that is more popular in a read survey. They also serve as a basis for preparing forecasts about election results.

Considering the above aspects, the results of this study will be compared to those obtained in the following election surveys:

- **Estymator/dorzeczy.pl** (dates: September 15–16, sample: 1069 people; September 29–30, sample: 1051 adults; October 5–6, 2023, sample: 1060 people; all three surveys were conducted using the CATI method, and only those who declared that they would vote in the elections and indicated the party they would vote for were included in the results).
- **United Surveys / RMF FM, DGB** (dates: September 18–19, October 2, 2023 – both conducted using CATI and CAWI methods on a group of 100 people).
- **IBRiS / Onet** (dates: September 20, 27, and October 3–4, 2023 – all 3 studies were conducted using the CATI method on a sample of 1000 people).

- **IPSOS / OKO.press, TOK FM** (dates: September 22–25 and October 6–10, 2023 – both studies were conducted using the CATI method on a sample of 1000 people). These were collected on the website: <https://ewybory.eu/sondaze/> (accessed: January 24, 2024).

3.2 Data

The data used in this study comes from X, and the publication dates of the collected tweets correspond to the above-mentioned dates of the selected pre-election surveys. They contain the following information: tweetDate (the date the tweet was posted), content (the content of the tweet in Polish), twitterProfile (the name of the user who posted the tweet), tweetURL (the link to the tweet), timestamp (the exact time of tweet publication – full date along with time), and query (the searched hashtag/phrase).

Due to the limited web scraping capabilities on X, they were downloaded using Octoparse, which Almaqbal and others (2021, p. 3) describe as “a powerful tool with a very user-friendly interface.” Octoparse has built-in templates for data scraping, including for browsing social media data – in this study, the Twitter Scraper template (by Keywords) was used, where it is possible to set the start and end dates of the searched tweets and the phrase (in this case, the hashtag #wybory2023), which is used to find relevant content. Thanks to this method, over 3,000 tweets were collected, which were then exported to Microsoft Excel, and manually reviewed and “cleaned” – tweets containing only the hashtag and tweets with incomprehensible or irrelevant content to the study were removed, for example:

“Today I collected a certificate of the possibility of voting outside the place of residence And I have to say that ☞ the office extended working hours until 6 pm ☞ four windows dedicated only to issuing certificates ☞ There is power in the nation PL👉 #wybory2023 #WarsawMyCity”;

“public media’ #wybory2023”.

Because of the lack of many tools for conducting sentiment analysis in Polish, which is still in the early stages of development, all tweets were automatically translated into English using the Google Translate API.

3.3 Sentiment analysis tools

VADER is a natural language processing model that Ajdari and Hoti (2023, p. 20) define as a lexicon-based approach, also relying on rules to assign a positive, negative, or neutral sentiment to text. Hutto and Gilbert (2014, p. 1) provide a more detailed explanation of the VADER model’s construction, describing it as a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods, which are then integrated with five grammatical principles that mirror the grammatical and syntactic rules used in sentiment-laden speech. They emphasize the exceptional accuracy of VADER in sentiment analysis of social media content, demonstrating that VADER’s correlation coefficient ($r=0.881$) achieves a similar effectiveness to that obtained by individual humans rating the same tweet ($r=0.888$).

or even higher when classifying content as positive, negative, or neutral ($F1^3=0.96$ for VADER compared to $F1=0.84$ when sentiment is determined by humans).

The text classification above considers a collective assessment: a compound score is obtained by summing the valence values of each word in the lexicon, considering prior adjustments and normalizing the resulting score to a range between -1 (very negative content) and +1 (extremely positive content). Ajdari and Hoti (2023, p. 23) use the following division in the analysis process to determine the sentiment of each examined text fragment: positive sentiment: compound score ≥ 0.05 ; neutral sentiment: compound score > -0.05 and < 0.05 ; negative sentiment: compound score ≤ -0.05 .

VADER also surpasses traditional lexicons used in sentiment analysis (such as LIWC) – it is more extensive, yet easier in terms of prediction, understanding, and faster in application, as it does not require a long learning or training process. Hutto and Gilbert (2014, pp. 8-9), comparing the VADER method to more advanced machine learning techniques, appreciate its simplicity. It is not only computationally efficient but also does not lose accuracy. The authors also highlight the fact that the lexicon and rules used by VADER are directly accessible – hence, it can be extended or modified very easily. Thus, it goes beyond the IT community, as it is also used by psychologists, sociologists, marketing specialists, and linguists. Furthermore, by using a general (human-verified) sentiment lexicon and general grammar and syntax rules, VADER is both self-sufficient and domain-neutral – it does not need an extensive training data set yet proves to be effective in various research areas.

TextBlob, on the other hand, a Python programming language library utilizing natural language processing, like VADER, can process three types of classification: positive, negative, and neutral. However, Susrama et al. (2021, p. 4) emphasize that this can only be done in English. Results in this method are obtained as polarity values: polarity > 0 – sentiment is positive; polarity $= 0$ – sentiment is neutral; polarity < 0 – sentiment is negative. Yaqub et al. (2018, p. 4) also mention subjectivity, which can also be examined using the built-in TextBlob model: a value close to zero suggests that the text can be considered objective, while a value close to 1 means that the content is subjective. Tymków (2008, p. 23) categorizes the Naive Bayes classifier as a machine learning method based on Bayes' conditional probability, explaining that the term "naive" stems from the assumption of full independence of random variables in the used probability model (which is rarely true in reality). The Naive Bayes classifier includes the MAP (maximum a posteriori) decision rule, which is usually the selection of the most probable hypothesis. Tymków (2008, p. 24) states that in supervised learning, the model parameters are estimated. Probabilities (class prior conditional feature model) need to be estimated assuming feature independence, using Bayesian inference, maximum likelihood methods, etc. Rashka (2018, p. 247) defines the Naive Bayes classifier as a popular classification algorithm often used in spam filters. He specifies that such classifications are "extremely easy to implement, computationally efficient, and perform well with relatively small data sets compared to other algorithms." Due to its quick and easily scalable evaluation

3 $F1$ is a metric which combines precision and recall, representing the overall accuracy.

model and classification problem-solving capabilities, the Naive Bayes classifier finds application in many areas, such as face recognition algorithms and sentiment analysis.

3.4 Data analysis and visualisation

Both libraries – VADER Sentiment and TextBlob – using the functions ‘get_blob_analysis’ and ‘get_vader_analysis’ respectively, return the subjectivity of the text (text_subjectivity for TextBlob and Vader compound for VADER), which can be grouped into negative, neutral, and positive. The sentiment analysis using the naive Bayes classifier, on the other hand, proceeds in several steps: first, tweets are cleaned (e.g., hashtags and URLs are removed) and tokenized using TweetTokenizer, then stopwords are removed using the NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit) library and punctuation is stripped, and words are reduced to their root form (PorterStemmer). Once the tweet database is appropriately processed, a frequency dictionary of word-label pairs is created for the training data. For each word, the number of occurrences in both negative and positive tweets is calculated. In the next step, during model training with the Naive Bayes classifier, the log-prior (based on the number of negative and positive tweets) and the log-likelihood (based on the frequency of word occurrence in negative and positive tweets) are calculated using the NUMPY library functions. When testing the model on the test set, the label of each tweet is predicted based on the numerical values of the log-prior and log-likelihood, and finally, the accuracy of the classifier (i.e., the average of predictions) is determined. Unlike the TextBlob and VADER Sentiment libraries, only two types of labels are obtained: positive and negative. Based on the previously created keyword database – hashtags that appeared most frequently in the collected tweets (e.g., for KO: “Platforma_org,” “Tusk,” “marszmiliona”; for PiS: “Kaczyński,” “Prezes,” “Duck,” “4xNIE”; for Trzecia Droga: “TrzeciaDroga,” “Hołownia”; for Lewica: “Lewica2023,” “Polska2050,” “SerceMamPoLewej”; for Konfederacja: “Mentzen,” “Braun,” “Bosak”) – each tweet was also assigned to a particular (or several) political groups. Python libraries used for the analysis include PANDAS, RE, NUMPY, NLTK, string, googletrans, PorterStemmer, TweetTokenizer, textblob, vaderSentiment, stopwords, twitter_samples. The obtained results were then exported to Excel and RStudio, where visualization was done using the R Shiny application (libraries: shiny, ggplot2, DT, plotly, waffle, dplyr). As expected, each method classified the sentiment of the tweets with different outcomes:

- TextBlob classified 728 tweets as positive (42.23 %), 689 as neutral, and 307 (17.81 %) as negative;
- VADER Sentiment classified 843 tweets as positive (48.90 %), 377 as neutral, and 503 (29.18 %) as negative;
- The naive Bayes classifier assigned a positive sentiment to 1071 tweets (62.12 %) and a negative sentiment to 653 (37.88 %), which is illustrated in the Figure below:

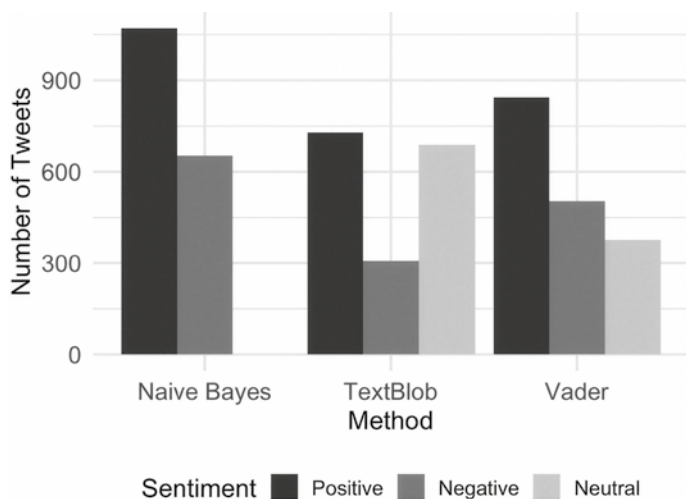


Figure 1. Comparison of sentiment analysis Methods: TextBlob, Vader, and Naive Bayes (RStudio – R Shiny)

Next, the sentiment analysis results for each political group were visualized individually.

3.4.1 Sentiment analysis – TextBlob

TextBlob assigned 445 tweets to the Civic Coalition with a positive sentiment, 201 with a negative sentiment, and 374 with a neutral sentiment, as shown in the following bar and waffle Figures:

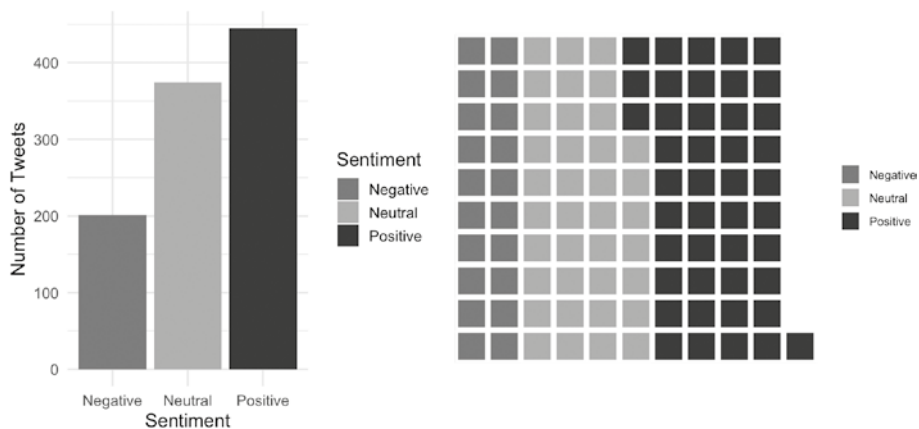


Figure 2. Sentiment analysis results using TextBlob for Civic Coalition (RStudio)

The second place in terms of the number of positively assigned tweets belongs to Law and Justice: 307 tweets. The TextBlob method also classified 193 tweets of this political party as negative and 333 as neutral:

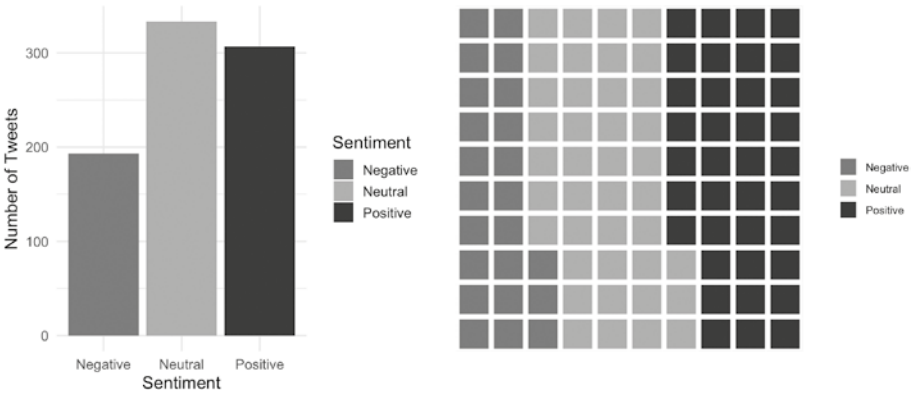


Figure 3. Sentiment analysis results using TextBlob for Law and Justice (RStudio)

TextBlob grouped tweets regarding the Third Way as follows: 152 positive, 46 negative, and 106 neutral, as shown in the Figures below:

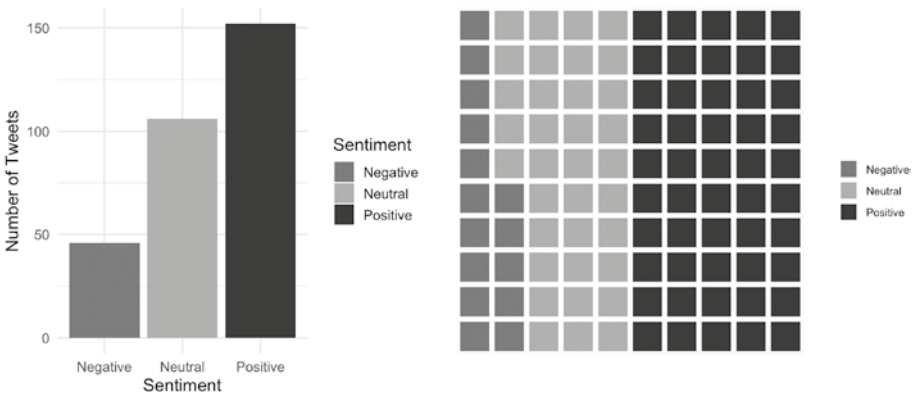


Figure 4. Sentiment analysis results using TextBlob for the Third Way (RStudio)

TextBlob assigned the New Left 55 positive tweets, 19 negative tweets, and 35 neutral tweets:

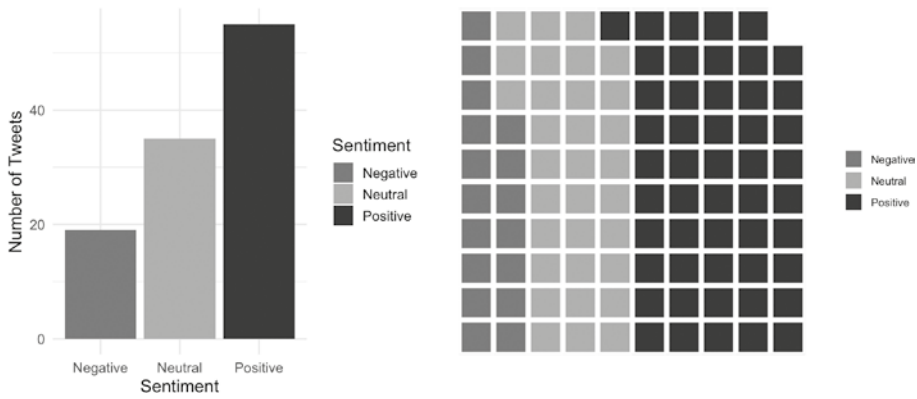


Figure 5. Sentiment analysis results using TextBlob for the Left (RStudio)

The Confederation received 74 positive tweets, 37 negative tweets, and 52 neutral tweets:

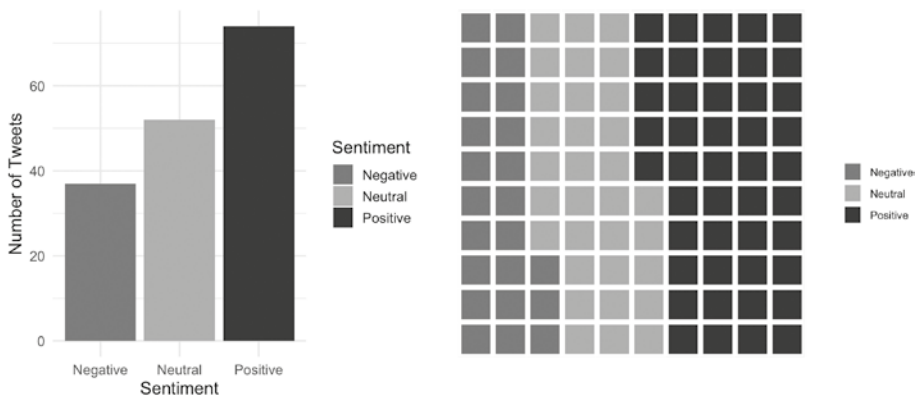


Figure 6. Sentiment analysis results using TextBlob for the Confederation (own work in RStudio)

The following Figure summarizes the sentiment analysis of tweets for each political group using the TextBlob method, showing the Civic Coalition’s advantage over other parties due to the highest number of positively classified tweets. However, the Left has the highest share (50.46 %) of positive tweets among all entries about this party:

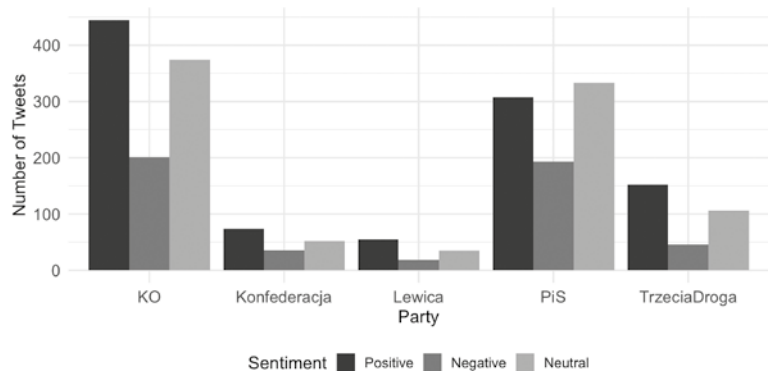


Figure 7. Sentiment analysis using TextBlob – summary (Rstudio)

3.4.2 Sentiment analysis – VADER Sentiment

Tweets about the Civic Coalition were grouped as follows using the VADER Sentiment method: 475 positive, 323 negative, and 221 neutral:

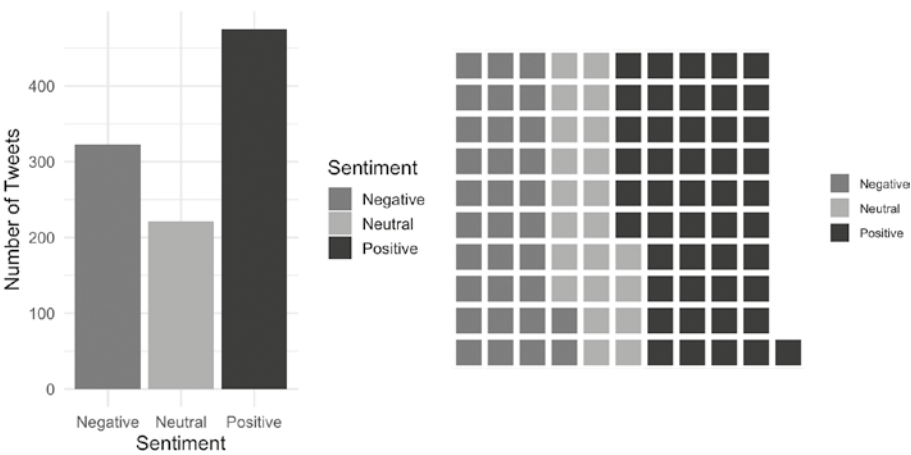


Figure 8. Sentiment analysis results using VADER sentiment for Civic Coalition (RStudio)

VADER Sentiment assigned 353 positive tweets, 308 negative tweets, and 171 neutral tweets to Law and Justice, as illustrated in the following Figures:

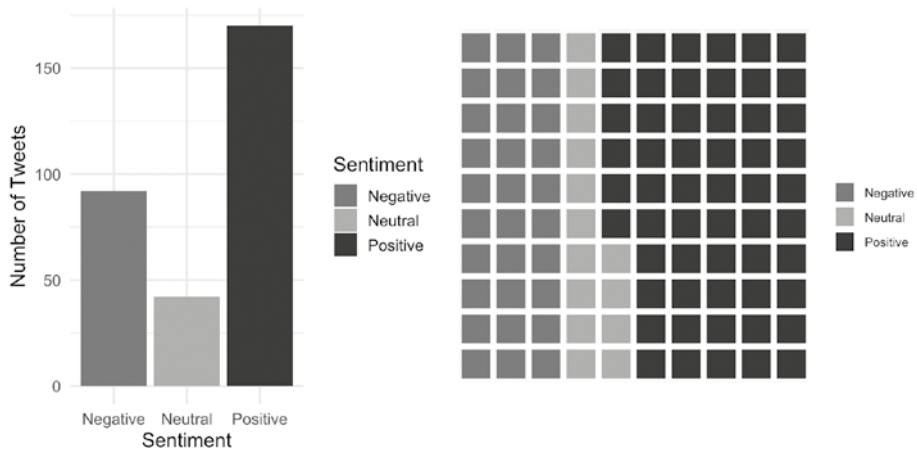


Figure 9. Sentiment analysis results using VADER sentiment for Law and Justice (RStudio)

Using this sentiment analysis method, 170 tweets about the Third Way were classified as positive, 92 as negative, and 42 as neutral:

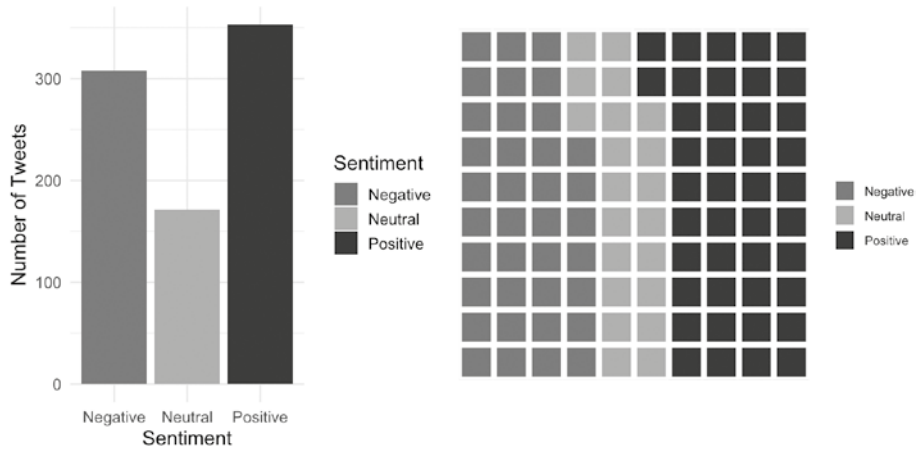


Figure 10. Sentiment analysis results using VADER sentiment for the Third Way (RStudio)

VADER Sentiment assigned 60 positive tweets, 30 negative tweets, and 19 neutral tweets to the Left:

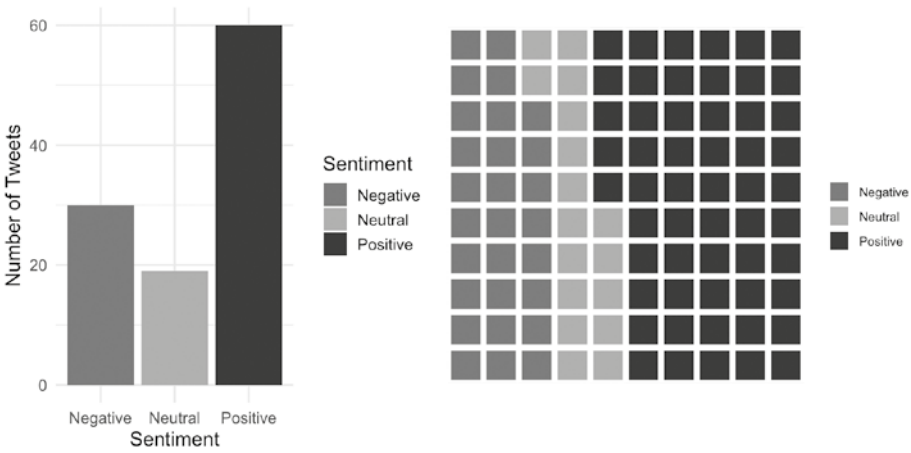


Figure 11. Sentiment analysis results using VADER sentiment for the Left (RStudio)

The Confederation received 62 positive tweets, 74 negative tweets, and 26 neutral tweets:

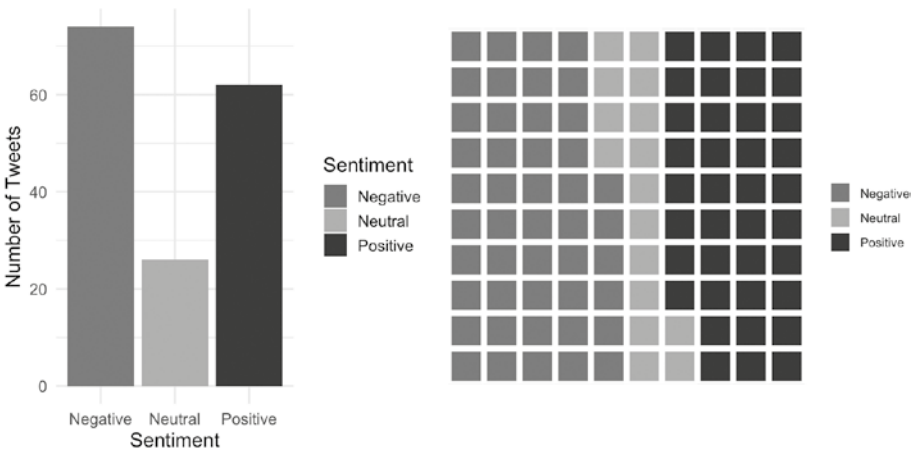


Figure 12. SSentiment analysis results using VADER sentiment for the Confederation (RStudio)

Similar to the TextBlob method, VADER Sentiment assigned the highest number of positive tweets to the Civic Coalition, but the Third Way (55.92 %) and the Left (55.05 %) have the highest percentage of positive entries about each party, respectively:

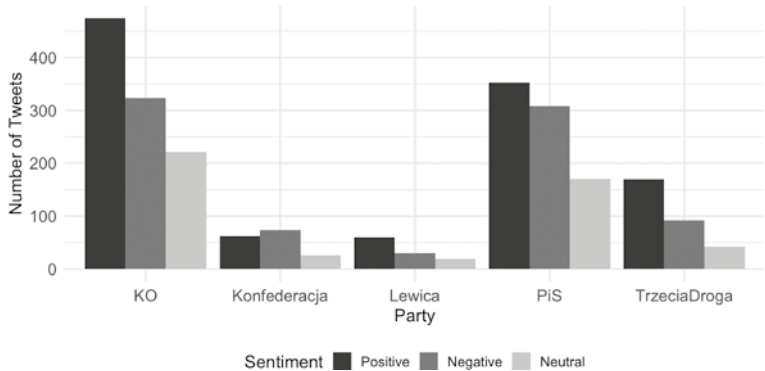


Figure 13. Sentiment analysis results using VADER sentiment – summary (RStudio)

3.4.3 Sentiment analysis – Naive Bayes Classifier

Based on the naive Bayes classifier method, the Civic Coalition has 665 positive and (more than half less) 355 negative tweets:

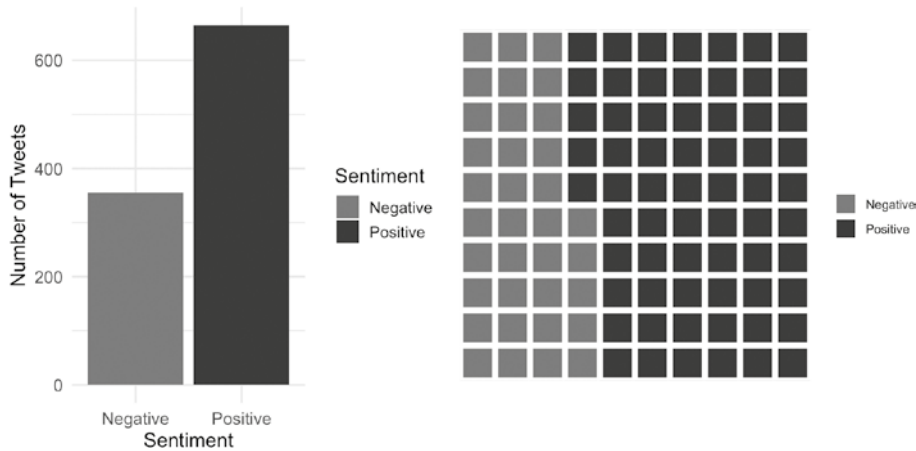


Figure 14. Sentiment analysis results using Naive Bayes Classifier for Civic Coalition (RStudio)

Positive and negative tweets for the Law and Justice party are more evenly distributed: 474 and 359, respectively:

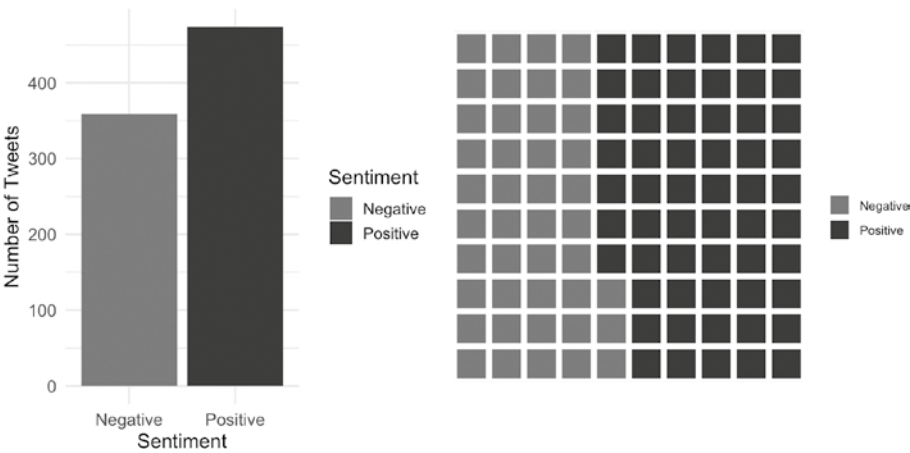


Figure 15. Sentiment analysis results using Naive Bayes Classifier for Law and Justice (RStudio)

The Third Way received 193 positive and 111 negative tweets directly related to this party:

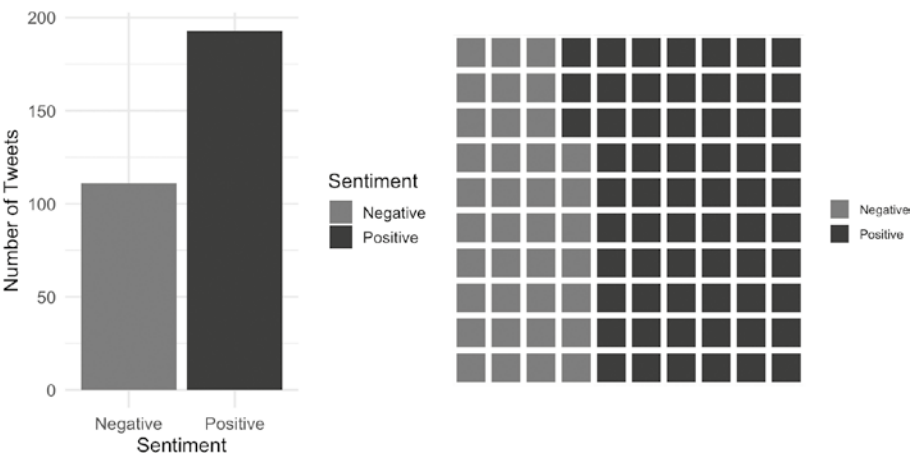


Figure 16. Sentiment analysis results using Naive Bayes Classifier for the Third Way (RStudio)

The Left was classified by the naive Bayes classifier with 63 positive and 46 negative tweets:

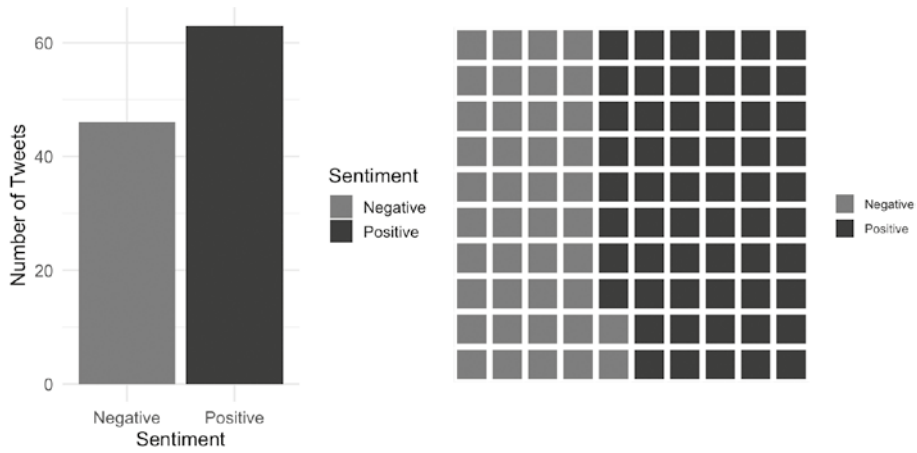


Figure 17. Sentiment analysis results using Naive Bayes Classifier for the Left (RStudio)

The division of tweets about the Confederation in this method is extremely balanced: 85 positive tweets and 77 negative tweets:

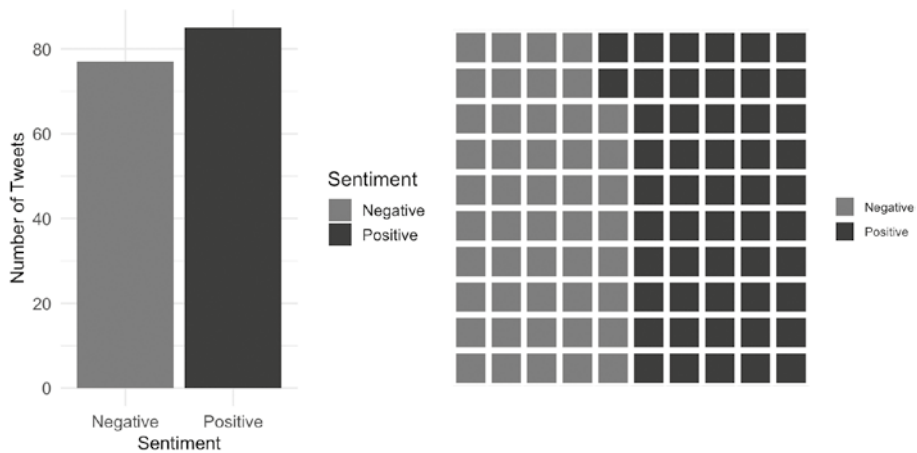


Figure 18. Sentiment analysis results using Naive Bayes Classifier for the Confederation (RStudio)

Unlike the previous two methods, the naive Bayes classifier not only assigned the Civic Coalition the highest number of positive comments but also the highest percentage of positive comments, as illustrated in Figure 19:

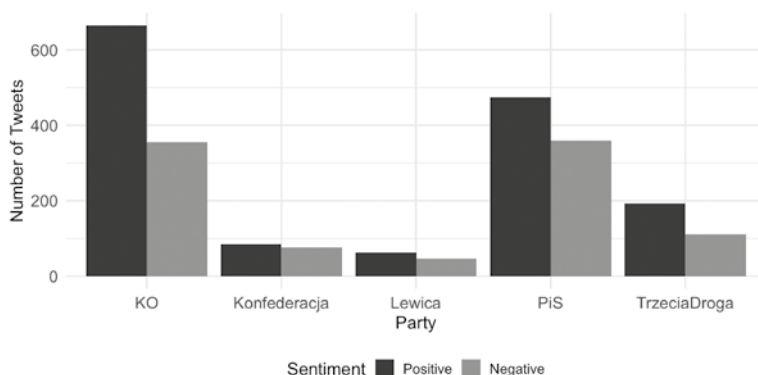


Figure 19. Sentiment analysis results using Naive Bayes Classifier – summary (RStudio)

To compare the study results with election poll results, a poll that closely matched the official election results was included, i. e., Estymator / dorzeczy.pl on October 5 and 6, 2023:

- Civic Coalition: 30.5 % (official result: 30.7 %);
- Law and Justice: 36.9 % (official result: 35.38 %);
- Third Way: 9.4 % (official result: 14.4 %);
- Left: 9.3 % (official result: 8.61 %);
- Confederation: 9.3 % (official result: 7.16 %).

These results were compared with the percentage share of tweets classified as positive, as illustrated in the Figure below. The results of the VADER Sentiment method stand out as most similar to the pre-election poll results, in contrast to the naive Bayes classifier. Meanwhile, the result for the Civic Coalition was not accurately reflected by any method – in each case, it is significantly overestimated. The closest results were obtained for the Confederation and the Left, as seen in Figure20.

4 Conclusions

Compared to VADER Sentiment, TextBlob shows a greater tendency to classify content as neutral (377 and 689 neutral tweets respectively), which may indicate this library's difficulty in recognizing irony and sarcasm. This is evidenced by the following tweets, which VADER Sentiment assigned as positive or negative, while TextBlob considered them neutral:

- “I’ve been a vegetarian for years, but on October 15th, I feel like eating duck! Will you join me? #elections2023 #WomenToElections”;

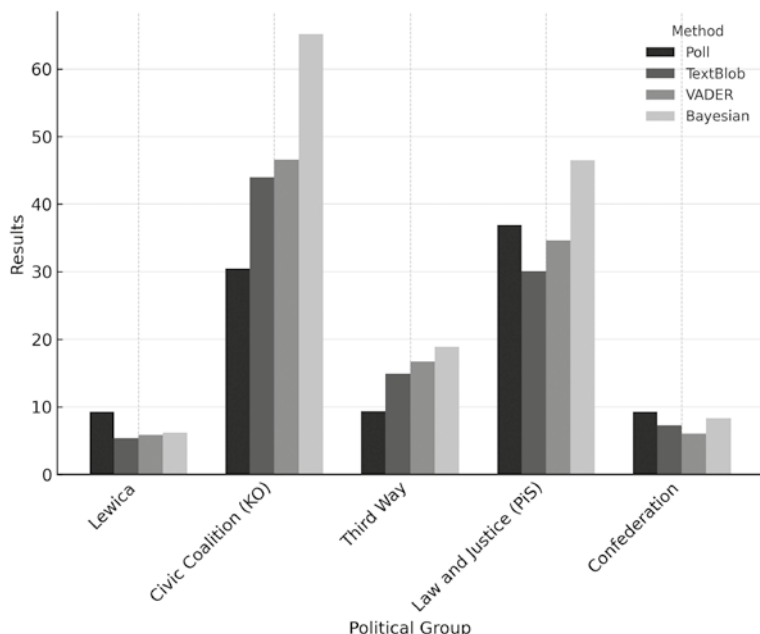


Figure 20. Comparison of sentiment analysis results with Pre-Election Poll Results (RStudio)

- “What do you call something like this? Maybe just rudeness and robbery in broad daylight? And these are the so-called Defenders of Democracy! #Szczecin #elections2023 #Referendum2023 #TuskMeansPoverty #PiS #4xNO”.

Similarly, the Naive Bayes classifier often assigns sentiment differently than the others methods. The following examples were classified by TextBlob as neutral, by VADER Sentiment as positive, and by the Naive Bayes classifier as negative:

- “Szymon Hołownia will be at the TVP debate on behalf of the Third Way. Kosiniak-Kamysz is going to Przysucha, where Jarosław Kaczyński will be that day. ‘So he feels our breath on his neck’ – wrote the leader of the peasants @szczesniak__a #OKOpress #elections2023”;
- “Will you help?! #MarchOfMillionHearts #goodmorningGreaterPoland #mydistrict37 #elections2023”;
- “#elections2023 #4xNO We wish the ‘opposition’ horse-like stamina!”

VADER Sentiment seems to be the most effective at classifying tweets in terms of sentiment analysis, while TextBlob and the Naive Bayes classifier often misinterpret analyzed content as “neutral” and “negative” respectively. This may be due to difficulties in processing metaphors (such as “I feel like eating duck”) or inaccurate translations of tweets into English (e.g., “horse-like opposition” automatically translated as “horse fitness” instead of “good condition/shape”).

However, some tweets (exactly 492) were assigned the same sentiment category by all methods, such as:

- “!! A thug with a ‘heart’ in the background 😏 this is how election campaigning looks like in #Szczecin, from the opponents of @Platforma_org. Covering, smearing, destroying materials of @pisorgpl, you can see their frustration 😏. We are fighting for a #Safe-Poland PL without vandalism and such behavior 😏💪 #Elections2023 <https://t.co/eM4FfAcS8>”;

This was deemed negative by all methods, and the following tweet was deemed positive by all methods:

- “Last Sunday before the elections. Every moment used for conversation. I heard many positive voices at the market in Konin and one phrase repeated many times: HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE! 🍌 Konin #mydistrict37 #goodmorningGreaterPoland #wewillwin #elections2023”.

This indicates a correct classification of highly emotionally charged content (expressions like “many positive voices”, “destroying”, “frustration”) by all applied methods.

Therefore, when comparing the results obtained in the study with the results of election polls, it was decided to consider the sentiment analysis results obtained using the VADER Sentiment method.

The greatest consistency with the pre-election survey (United Surveys/RMF FM, DGB) for the Civic Coalition group was obtained by analyzing the sentiment of tweets published on October 2nd – 29.55 % positive tweets compared to the 30.5 % predicted in the survey. For this coalition, the sentiment analysis deviates the most from the survey results for tweets from September 27th – 16 % positive tweets compared to 27 % in the survey.

The sentiment analysis results for the Law and Justice party significantly deviated from the survey data in almost all cases – only the results from October 5th and 6th (33.33 % positive tweets) “approach” the number given by the survey – 36.90 %. Sentiment analysis of tweets from October 3rd and 4th showed that only about 8 % of the tweets for this group were positive, while the survey predicted 34 %.

The percentage of positive tweets in the VADER Sentiment analysis for the Third Way almost always exceeded the predicted survey result, except for tweets from October 3rd–4th. The most closely aligned results can be observed on September 27th and October 6th–10th, where the difference between the percentage of positive tweets about the group and the survey result is about 2 percentage points.

Interestingly, the sentiment analysis conducted for the Left and Confederation groups did not match the pre-election survey results – the percentage of positive tweets for each party was much lower than the survey predictions.

It should also be noted that there is a possible situation where undecided individuals – representing neutral tweets – would still vote for the party they tweeted neutrally about on Platform X, or individuals who posted a negative tweet about a party would vote for the opposing party, resulting in sentiment analysis results more closely aligning with those obtained in pre-election surveys.

On the other hand, considering the official election result, it can be stated that VADER Sentiment accurately reflected the data collected by the questionnaires, and consequently, that sentiment analysis of tweets with the appropriate hashtag is an effective method for predicting the election results to the Sejm of the Republic of Poland. An exception here is the Civic Coalition, which received over 15 percentage points less support in the survey and official elections than predicted by sentiment analysis. This may indicate a disparity between the number of supporters of the group online and the actual number of active voters.

In contrast, the Naive Bayes classifier, which considers only positive and negative sentiment, is not a good prediction tool in this case, significantly overestimating the results of the Civic Coalition, the Third Way, and Law and Justice – the only closely aligned results obtained by this method belong to the Confederation and the Left.

The results show that sentiment analysis quite accurately reflects voters' attitude and suggests that if the study were conducted on a larger group of tweets, it would certainly complement pre-election poll results – as it is a much cheaper tool than conducting surveys. Additionally, with each passing year, the group of people not using any social media noticeably decreases, so it could be argued that the current trend may result in sentiment analysis largely replacing pre-election polls in the future. Undoubtedly, an essential aspect of this process will be the development of dictionaries that would enable sentiment analysis directly in Polish, without the need to translate content into English.

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Reliable knowledge evokes credible emotions

A vlog that changed election results

A video posted by a young adult vlogger otherwise preoccupied with entertainment and pop-culture considerably affected the results of the German contribution to the European parliamentary election of 2019, and primed a wide reception of its makers' recommendations for the German elections of 2021. Paired with the speaker's young age, academic background, his earlier career as entertainer, and lack of earlier political activities, this self-positioning amounted to claiming both authority and authenticity. The paper examines the video's interpersonal work based on the display of, and appeal to emotions, and its interplay with rational and academic modes of discourse. It proposes how this interplay contributed to the video's phenomenal appeal and impact. A display of, and an appeal to the audience's emotions was applied by the speaker to complement and outbalance what otherwise would have been a „nerdy” academic-style argument. The article analyses the likely reasons for its broad uptake – a mix of scientific objectivism and moral indignation, streamed into a display of an adversarial stance against the governing parties and politicians supported on the claim that it represented the interests of the young generation.

Keywords: *political persuasion, social media, European elections, homophily, credibility, authenticity, Rezo*

1 Introduction

With the development of Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, social media make possible the dissemination of any personal view to the extent that was not seen before. Their growing popularity has created a debate about their contribution to the society and links to civic and political engagement. Importantly, “although research shows that ... social networks and YouTube rank low in perceived credibility compared to other online sources such as online newspapers and political websites (Johnson & Kaye, 2014), the social rather than informational utility of social media connects users to convincing individuals and groups who aim to mobilise support. As a result of this, the politically disinterested can ‘get caught up in the excitement’ of politics” (Yamamoto et al., 2017, p. 149).

In this article we discuss one such case, a YouTube video with political content published in a vlog otherwise concerned with entertainment for the youth. It merits an analysis after it caused serious political panicking among German politicians, and has been claimed to have considerably influenced major European elections. We analyse likely reasons for the wide reception and influence of the video due the interpersonal work it performs: the display of emotions in an interplay with academic modes of discourse. We argue that this mix of scientific objectivism and emphasis on moral indignation, streamed into an emotional display of adversarial stance against the governing parties and politicians, helped create speaker credibility that made his audience take the message in.

2 The video and its historical context

On May 18th 2019, a week before the European election, a 26-year-old German music producer Rezo posted a video attacking the German government and saying it's time to destroy the mainstream parties. He named the 55-minute mix of analysis and polemics a 'destruction video'. Rezo accused the conservative Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and their coalition partner, the Social Democrats, of pursuing politics that was "destroying our lives and our future".

According to what Rezo says in the video, initially he had no intention to frontally challenge the ruling coalition. His 'personal rant' against the parties in power, that is, mainly the CDU and its sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU), resulted from several weeks spent analyzing their claims and programs, a task he had undertaken in search of a topical theme for the next video. In effect, Rezo claimed he was in a position to show that they lied, lacked basic competence in their areas of responsibility, and pursued politics that undermined the future prospects of young people. He delivered a passionate lecture supported with statistics and video inserts focused mainly on the government's insufficient reaction to climate change, social injustice (lack of equal opportunities and increasing income gap), finally, helping the US army conduct operations and send drones killing unarmed civilians in Pakistan, Syria and Iraq while party leaders in Germany denied having knowledge about it. Rezo urged his viewers not to give their votes to any of the parties currently in power, nor the right populists. The option left was the pro-ecological, left-liberal Green, or one of the small parties which had little chances to pass the minimum threshold.

The classical media were astonished about the way that the video on politics has gone viral, typical for pop-cultural and entertainment contents. The number of views went up from 2,5 million on May 21 2019 to 10 million on May 26 and 19 million in January 2022 (Rezo, 2019, May 18). The number of comments under the video approximated 277,000 in January 2022 (Rezo, 2019, May 18). For Germany which has 81 million inhabitants, such numbers are spectacular. Both channels operated by Rezo rose from 1,5 to 2,9 million followers between May and October 2019, the channel on which the video was published rose from 0,6 to 1,14 million. According to Rezo quoting from his Youtube analytics, about 89 % of them were older than 17 and had voting rights. 50 % were aged 18-24 (von Eisenhart Rothe, 22.05.2019), which means that as of October

2019, the followers of this channel constituted 13,5 % of the population of 6,3 million in this age group (cf. statista.de, 2022a, January 24).

The response in the conventional media was unprecedented. Starting from an article in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on May 20th and the online issue of the leading German opinion-making magazine *Der Spiegel* on May 21st, it was commented by several major German news media and all serious political talk-shows. Soon, it was noticed by CDU politicians, and commented adversely as sham (cf. e.g. ARD, 22.05.2019).

The video was commented by foreign media too, among others, the Guardian on May 22nd, Reuters on May 23rd, Le Figaro on May 24th, NYT on May 25th 2019. The articles emphasized the unprecedented character of the attack, the impact, and the inadequate reaction of the government.

In the elections that followed 8 days after, the Green received about 10 % more votes than 5 years before (*Spiegel online*, 27th May 2019). CDU/CSU lost about 6 %. In the age group 18–24, CDU lost 16 % of votes while the Green rose by 16 %. The results were similar in the age group 18–29 (*Spiegel online*, 27th May 2019). The participation of younger voters compared to 2014 also rose by ca. 20 % (Der Bundeswahlleiter, 2019), approximating the participation in other age groups for the first time. The elections took place at the time of the European and in particular German youth's strong involvement in the Fridays for Future movement, a series of organised pro-ecological protests, which alone would suffice to explain the success of the Green. However, a study conducted by the research institute Statista showed that in a sample of voters aged 18–29, 14 % confirmed that the 'destruction' video influenced their vote (*Horizont*, 2019, September 4). In a sample of 1000 people representing the whole population of Internet users two thirds claimed to know it, and 9 % admitted that it had influenced their voting decision. Internet users amounted to 89 % of the population older than 13 (statista.de, 2022b, January 24).

Shortly before the elections to the German parliament in 2021 in which the Green grew in strength and the Union of CDU and CSU was voted down, a series of another three 'destruction videos' by Rezo directed against the Union were published on YouTube. Not being novel like the first one, they did not match it in popularity but the numbers of views were high with 6.1, 4.5 and 3.6 million, respectively, as of January 2022. In view of these numbers and the nation-wide debate about the 2019 video, it is legitimate to claim that Rezo exerted a serious influence upon German political discourse while the impact was not lasting: in the 2024 European Parliament election, the Green lost 8,5 % of the votes, while the Union improved by 7,5 % (zdf, 10.06.2024).

3 Research questions and argument structure

In this chapter, the discursive achievement of the "destruction" video is analysed with a view to the following questions:

- RQ1. Which means of expressing and arousing emotions have been applied in order to reach a persuasive effect?
- RQ2. What aspects of the context supported the authenticity claim of the emotions displayed?

- RQ3. What discursive means of audience profiling have been applied in the video to maximise its appeal?
- RQ4. How has the relationship between rational and emotional appeal been discursively construed?
- RQ5. How do emotional and rational appeal interact in establishing the speaker's credibility?

The analysis is preceded by a brief general discussion of the position of social media in political persuasion. Next, it is indicated which discursive orders influenced the composition of the video as a hybrid genre, creating requirements that needed to be met in order for it to perform its intended function. Finally, we discuss the notion of source credibility before proceeding to the analysis and discussing the means by which credibility was attained in the case under study. This discussion centres on the display of, and appeal to emotions on the one hand, proving aptness in finding, selecting and presenting informative content on the other, as well as on how the relation between these two aspects of communicative performance is cast by discursive means. Another key aspect of the data, discussed because of its relevance for the audience's reception of emotional and rational arguments, is the co-creation of the discursive context by audience profiling, crucially involving an appeal to homophily drawing on age and education background.

4 Social media and political engagement:

Promoting involvement through direct appeal

Owen (2017) argues that the novel ways the new media develop have consequences for democratic governance and politics. While the established mass media that predate the Internet maintain relatively stable formats, the new media “are continually expanding in innovative ways. Mass media designed to deliver general interest news to broad audiences have been joined by niche sources that narrowcast to discrete users (Stroud, 2011)” (Owen, 2017). Another crucial difference is that “the new media can relay information directly to individuals without the intervention of editorial or institutional gatekeepers” (ibid.). Bene et al. (2003, p. 2) argue the effectiveness in political communication of social media messages that are based on building the author's own narrative, without an attempt of “fitting it into the narrative structures of news media communication”. Studies show that through their decentralised and interactive communication platforms, social media appeal to young audiences as they provide “a space free from the constraints of the adult world” (Raby et al., 2018).

Owen (2017) indicates that in the ideal case the new media serve to inform the public, providing citizens with the information needed to make thoughtful decisions, act as watchdogs checking government actions, set the agenda for public discussion, provide a forum for political expression, facilitate finding common causes, and help people work toward solutions. She states that “New media have the potential to satisfy these textbook functions” as they can reach even disinterested audience members through personalised, peer-to-peer channels. Significantly, while mainstream journalists do not believe that encouraging participation is their responsibility (Hayes and Lawless, 2016), new media explicitly

seek to directly engage the public in political activities, such as voting and taking part in protest movements, increasing its involvement in political activity in general (Owen, 2017).

5 Credibility as an influential factor in online communication

5.1 *"The destruction of CDU" as a hybrid genre*

According to Reisigl and Wodak (2009), discourse strategy is an intentional plan of discursive practices and tactics employed in discourses to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal. The uptake of personal online communication by large and anonymous audiences depends on the use of discursive strategies that engage viewers and build a relationship between the producer and the audience. As this relationship with the audience is based on the audience's uptake of the offer (the decision to watch), crucial to achieving agentivity is identity-negotiation – presenting the social persona that the producer assumes for her- or himself, and testing its credibility (Leppänen et al., 2015). Leppänen et al. (2015, p. 2) observe: "When establishing themselves as legitimate and qualified participants in social media activities the ability to maneuver linguistic and other semiotic resources available is crucial [...] participants should establish legitimacy discursively in order to authenticate their roles [...] One element of this is whether the use of features are consistent with how the recipients view and categorise the producer of the discursive material is a necessary precondition for an uptake..." These 'conditions for uptake' depend on "what kinds of language use, semiotic practices and forms of participation count as legitimate for given purpose" (Leppänen et al. 2015, p. 2). The practices and forms may be specific for particular social media 'niches' but are accompanied by other forms and practices that are familiar to the participants from other discourses and social orders (ibid.). This co-constitutes the hybridity of social media communications: they draw from multiple orders of normativity. The audience assesses the fit of the 'semiotic achievement' (Androutsopoulos, 2015, p. 75) to the persona, accepting the latter as being 'X enough' to draw upon a particular resources, e.g. knowledgeable enough to lecture on a scientific topic or hip enough to use a youth slang.

In the case of vlogs, the poverty of the context of this one-way online communication channel allows for eclecticism and co-occurrence of orders that usually do not meet in other circumstances. For example, high emotionality and swearwords co-occurring with academic manners of discourse may meet with the audience's uptake, on the condition that the persona, i.e. the sender's public face, is perceived by the audience as compatible with both.

While these considerations reflect the role of the audience in the negotiation of authenticity in social media, vloggers also profile their audiences: by explicitly addressing groups that are prepared to accept their legitimacy claims or appealing to qualities they believe to find in a particular audience, and by changing the audience's concept of what is appropriate, for whom, in which communicative genre. In Rezo's case this consists on the one hand by reaching out to a political topic instead of the entertaining content typical of his earlier performance, on the other hand by mixing discursive strategies known to his audience from diverse contexts: political, satirical, journalistic (investigative journalism that is adversarial by nature, cf. Bull, 2019), academic, and influencer communication with a personal public in the social media.

This creates a mix in which in order to be trusted and exert influence the sender needs to demonstrate that his use of particular discursive means related to various component genres is legitimate in view of his personal qualities. Androutsopoulos (2015, p. 75) observes that “expert public, e.g. in academia, orient to expertise as a core value [...] A core value in the production of discourse for a personal public is authenticity”. Both competence and authenticity as aspects of performance were found to be foundational to source credibility in studies of social communication (Wathen and Burkell, 2002), also appearing under the alternative terms expertise and trustworthiness (Min Xiao et al., 2018).

In the empirical part of the chapter we focus on how these two elements of credibility: displays of competence required of academic communication and authenticity required of personal communication are combined in the video as vehicles of persuasion, and discuss the role of emotions in the construal of the source as authentic.

5.2 *The exponents of authenticity*

As argued above, a necessary prerequisite for reaching a persuasive goal is that the speaker be trusted by the audience. A basic component of personal credibility in communication with a personal public, such as a group of followers in social media channel, is authenticity, a concept that has been broadly discussed in philosophy, psychology, sociolinguistic as well as marketing/consumer psychology and political communication studies. Philosophical approaches to authenticity tend to consider it as residing in an individual rather than a communicative construct, relating it to self-creation and self-determined behaviour. Authenticity also means possessing intrinsic motivation, i.e. an ‘inner drive’ to communicate a particular content in particular ways (Frosh, 2001). Bene et al. (2003) who deal with party communication in the social media talk of “authenticity-focused communication style” as self-centred and “specifically addressing voters while being less attentive to the reception by the elite and media levels”.

Authenticity has also been discussed in sociolinguistics. Goffman (1981) defined an authentic speaker as a person functioning at the same time as the principal (intention), author (wording) and animator (delivery) of his or her own talk. Compared to conventional mass media, contents on social media are “associated with symbolic authenticity, as user-generated content is framed as more authentic than mainstream media content simply by being produced and posted by individuals rather than media companies” (Enli, 2016).

In communication, authenticity generally signifies being sincere about one’s views, commitments, motivation, and objectives. Authenticity in communication means that an individual’s words, actions, and expressions are aligned with their true thoughts, feelings, and values. Attempts to define authenticity in ways akin to this understanding have been made in psychology. Here, authenticity has been described as a measure of the “congruence between one’s internal states, awareness, and expression” (Sutton, 2020, p. 2). In constructionist approaches, authenticity is an outcome of a ‘tactic’ consisting in ‘the linguistic practices of social actors’ (Buchholtz 2003, p. 399). Coupland (2002, p. 428) emphasizes that authenticity is construed through performance – intentional choices including e.g. rhetorical style, prosody and visual symbols.

In what follows, we capitalise on these varied perspectives and use the term to mean the communicative achievement of convincing the audience that the speaker is the ultimate source of the message, is open about the goal of communication, has no hidden agendas (cf. section 4.4), cares about the effect of his performance on the primary audience rather than powerful groups outside this audience, and that there is a congruence between his internal states, awareness, and expression.

Credibility and emotionality

Emotions is an aspect of effective persuasion known from antiquity. According to Gerstlé and Nai (2019), they are typical and effective means used to influence elections. Marcus and MacKuen (1993, p. 673) claim that emotions aroused in the receiver contribute to judgements about message credibility as well as its importance. According to Pantti (2010), “studies have shown that emotion guides attention in such a way that more information is processed for emotional messages than for calm messages and that, furthermore, emotion may improve viewers’ memory recall and comprehension”. Pantti (2010) claims that negative emotional responses, in particular to threat, are crucial to the stimulation of attention, and indicates a crucial role of emotions in judgements, political action and bonding.

The quotations above refer to the emotions that messages arouse in the audience rather than emotions displayed by the speaker. Yet, there is a direct connection between experiencing, display, and arousal of emotions. Expressive behaviour reflects an underlying emotional state (Ekman & Friesen, 1967). According to Conger and Kanungo (1998), quoted by Lewis (2000, p. 222), transformational leaders “may use strong emotions to arouse similar feelings in their audience” while modelling for followers “what is appropriate to feel in a given situation”. On the other hand, emotions seen in others can be used as cues to evaluate aspects of their social selves, such as empathy; showing emotions is a strong indicator of empathy and predictor of prosocial behaviour already in children (Roberts 1996). Moreover, Lewis (2000, p. 222) proposes that “expression of emotion can provide data to followers who may then infer certain traits such as self-confidence, integrity, or loss of control”. Assuming that expressive behaviour accurately reflects underlying emotions, the audience can assess whether performers respond to situations with appropriate emotions, thereby determining their suitability for leadership. This judgement can only occur if the emotions displayed are taken to be authentic, that is, if the expression is believed to correspond to the speaker’s inner state. As authenticity is achieved in and by performance, display of emotions viewed as corresponding to genuine emotional arousal is a key to authenticity judgements, essential to evaluation of speaker credibility.

Credibility and ‘hidden agendas’

Another set of criteria used in judging credibility was proposed by sociologists Renn and Levine (1991). They observed that ‘Stating explicitly the persuasive intent is usually more convincing than hiding such an intent and leaving it to the audience to make their own inferences. People like to know what the communicator wants them to believe. If it is not openly stated, they will suspect a hidden agenda’ (1991, p. 57).

Analytical procedure

For the purpose of this study, the video was transcribed (transcript wordcount: 11388) and the transcript inspected while pursuing the microanalytical approach, recommended by Bull (2019) for the analysis of multimodal political communication. The transcript was analysed with a view to the lexical content and textual aspects of discursive strategies applied, with a focus on emotional and rational appeal, speaker's self-positioning and audience design, i. e. appointing the intended audience both by direct references and appeal to characteristics likely to be found in its members. The visual material was scanned and analyzed in view of the appearance of the settings and the speakers, including body language, and its linkage to verbal elements of the text.

6 Emotionality in "The Destruction of CDU"

In this section we focus on creating credibility based on authenticity as a precondition for trust needed to reach a persuasive goal. The research question we are attempting to answer are: RQ1: Which means of expressing and arousing emotions have been applied in the video in order to reach a persuasive effect? RQ2: What aspects of the context supported the authenticity claim of the emotions displayed?

Display of emotional involvement

The adversarial character of the video was declared already in its title. Naming the leading party as the goal of attack, Rezo declared challenging a powerful enemy and created a self-empowering David-against-Goliath dramaturgic frame. Anticipation of emotion-laden and controversial content generated attention and promised an emotional reward. By focusing strongly on negative events and developments such as climate change, social injustice and killing innocent civilians, he captured the audience's attention and stimulated them cognitively to process his argumentation.

The message of emotional involvement and seeking to pass these emotions to the audience is conveyed by numerous means. On the verbal level, they include word choice, narration and a direct appeal including a reference to emotions that the presentation aspires to evoke.

The text includes a large number words chosen due to their expressive meaning, conveying ethical judgement or emotion: *Lügen* (lies), *Unwahrheiten* („untruths"), *Kriegsverbrechen* ("war crimes"), *zerstören: unsere Leben und Zukunft, Ruf und Wahlergebnis, Umwelt, Leute, Hiroschima, Deutschland, Planet* ("destroy": "our lives and future", "good name and election results", "environment", "people", "Hiroschima", "Germany", "planet"), *Respektlosigkeiten* ("rudeness"), *Verschwörungstheorien* ("conspiracy theories"), *Propaganda* ("propaganda"), *lebensverachtend* ("life-despising"), *Katastrophen* ("catastrophies"), *versagen* ("flop"), *ever* (anglicism), *hoffen* ("hope"), *Gewinner und Verlierer* ("winners and losers"), *Brudi* (diminutive of "brother" conveying intimacy and fondness or sarcasm), *heftig* ("violent", here meaning "shocking"), *krass* ("shocking"), *really* (anglicism expressing surprise – enacted disbelief, "are you kidding me?"), *whack* (anglicism), *wow* (anglicism), *nice* (anglicism), *Downer* (anglicism, meaning: "bad news"), *genius* (anglicism), *sorry* (anglicism), *snap* (anglicism), *cool* (anglicism), *krass*, *mega* (intensifiers). Another group of highly expressive

lexemes is swearwords: *im Arsch* (*in the arse*, meaning: out of order), *sauviele* (“as many as pigs”, meaning: plenty), *Scheisse* (*shit*), *Shit* (*anglicism*), *Kacke* (“*shit*”), *Bullshit* (*anglicism*), *Verkacker* (“*loser*”), *verkacken* (“*spoil*”), *fuck* (*anglicism*), *fucking* (*anglicism*) complementing words such as *langweilig* (“*fucking langweilig*”), *viele*, *heftig*, *Bundestag*, *Bundesregierung*, *Außenminister*, *glücklichster Tag*, *keine einzige*, *unsere Zukunft* (“*boring*”, “*many*”, “*impressive*”, “*federal government*”, “*happiest day*”, “*not even a single one*”, “*our future*”).

A powerful device for the display of emotionality is the prosody with which a message is performed, consisting of suprasegmental features accompanying vocal delivery of speech such as rate, volume, pitch, articulation, stress, pronunciation, voice quality (formant dispersion) and fluency. Rezo speaks with a constant high volume and regular, middle pace without breaks, using standard German pronunciation with clear articulation. This is emblematic of clarity of argumentation and intentions. He dynamizes his speech by using emphasis (temporary increase of pitch and volume while adding regular rhythm) and varied intonation patterns including frequent dramatic rise and fall, as well as changes of pitch and voice quality to signalize acting as somebody else or sarcasm. As for gesture, movement and its spatial extent are known to be important indicators of emotion (Lhommet & Marsella, 2015). In the destruction video, the speaker conveys excitement moving his hands in front of himself, and does not let them rest for longer than 3 seconds. The quality of the majority of the gestures performed, i. e. lateral hand and arm movement and the arms raised and stretched out to the front, are among characteristics of anger (Lhommet & Marsella, 2015, p. 280). Expressivity is heightened by adding theatrical elements such as role-playing (unnaturally changed voice and facial expression) when quoting political opponents, and acting out surprise and disappointment when discussing the government’s policies. In the latter case, the speaker quotes declarations by the ruling party pretending to take them at the face value and commenting on them positively, just in order to disclose later that the declarations have not been adhered to, and react emotionally to the “new” information. In this reaction, facial expression is used in an ironic mode – it expresses sadness rather than indignation that would be more adequate. This repeatedly employed strategy of irony, wherein an adequate emotion (such as indignation) is expressed by mimicking an inadequate one (such as sadness), is exemplified in the following instance. Here, the speaker discusses the government’s insufficient allocation of resources to education and science development.

Aber okay. Merkel hat jetzt angekündigt dass sie zehn Prozent des Brutto-Inlandproduktes für Bildung und Forschung ausgeben will. (*“But okay. Merkel has declared now that she wants to spend 10 per cent of the gross national income on research and education.”*)

(facial expression: merry-looking)

(He looks to someone/something out of the picture.)

Bitte? Ach. Das wollte sie bis zweitausendfünfzehn machen? Hat sie sich nicht – hat sie sich gar nicht daran gehalten? Nicht mal die Hälfte? (*“What? Oh. She wanted to do this already in 2015? She has not – she has not kept with that? Not even a half?”*)

(facial expression: sadness)

(blend-in: a diagram with percentages)

Crucially, the speaker openly and emphatically admits that it is his intention to arouse emotions in the audience. The utterance in (2) is preceded by a detailed description of a random civilian being annihilated by a drone-carried missile, and asking the addressees to imagine this happening to their grandmothers while plucking weeds in the garden. In this preceding call to form a mental picture, the hearer is being openly invited to form a personalized vantage point, and share in the speaker's moral indignation.

Findet ihr es geschmacklos? Ich auch. Behaltet diese Emotion. Die ist wertvoll.
 ("Do you find it tasteless? Me too. Keep this emotion. It is valuable.")

The point is to emphasize lack of hidden agendas. As argued before, this is conducive to credibility (cf. Section 4.4).

6.2 Contextual support for authenticity of emotional involvement

The credibility of the speaker's involvement in the topic is closely related to his age. It is the youth that had called the loudest for a pro-ecological change. It made his emotional engagement credible as far as it is today's youth that will be affected most by the progressing destruction of natural environment.

Another such contextual feature was the dramatic change of the speaker's domain of interest and attitude. Before making the 'destruction' video, Rezo was known as a presenter of pop-cultural entertaining content with no political relevance. Two months earlier, he published a comment on the EU copyright reform aimed at protecting copyrighted material from being uploaded without a benefit for the holder of the copyright. The video on copyright stands out by an extensive use of quotes and footnotes. Earlier videos do not reveal any interest in matters political. They represent a profile of a young man preoccupied with his career as a juvenile pop-star, music editor, and master of social games and 'challenges'. The visual elements of the 'destruction' video similarly underscore the speaker's interests lying outside politics. Rezo is shown blue-haired as usual, wearing an orange hoodie, in a room containing guitars, a whiteboard with notes and clips, a keyboard and a loudspeaker next to his desk. This construes the speaker as a young person whose interests are centered on music rather than politics, and gives credibility to the claim that his involvement was not a matter of long-term interest in politics and having particular political convictions. Rather, he presents his attitude as resulting only and entirely from having been overwhelmed by facts of which he had been unaware before.

6.3 Emotional appeal: a summary

To sum up, the emotional appeal of the video is discursively construed by the choice of topic involving highly esteemed values such as safe environment, empathy and justice, and a combination of verbal and paraverbal means of expression: expressive vocabulary including numerous swearwords, diversified and dramatic prosody, irony, theatrical mimic, role-play and dynamic gesturing, and admitting the intention to spark moral

indignation in the audience while calling them to form a personalized compassionate vantage point. The claim to authenticity, i. e. the match between the emotions displayed and the speaker's inner state, is further supported by properties of the discursive context such as the speaker's membership in the age group particularly affected by one of the topics discussed, and the newness of a political motive in the speaker's output as influencer, who claims that it was his emotional arousal alone that decided about the choice of the video's topic and goal.

7 Audience design: homophily and its contribution to speaker's credibility

In this section, we discuss how fact-based, rational argumentation functions in the video with a view to reaching its persuasive goal, and how the speaker's trust of the audience's approval of this mode of communication is justified by audience design. This is conducive to answering RQ3: What discursive means of audience profiling have been applied in the video to maximise its appeal?

Homophily is the tendency to form stronger social connections with people who share one's defining characteristics, such as e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, interests, educational background. Persuasion works best if it comes from a source similar in some important aspect to the decision maker (McLaughlin 2012); also, it has been argued that "video- and channel-level emotions ... influence audience emotions, providing evidence for ... homophily effects" (Rosenbusch et al. 2019). A specific feature of the video under study is the audience design based on an interplay of appeals to bonds of age, media competence and academic competence.

Rezo's initial followers chose to follow him on the grounds of shared involvement in online entertainment adequate to age. Rezo draws upon age similarity when calling his social network to vote "because otherwise old pensioners will decide about your future" and in the following fragment in which inclusive 'we' is used several times when referring to younger voters:

Wir können sowieso kaum was verändern / die größte Wahlmacht haben die Alten / nicht wir / und dann die über 70 jährige also nur ein bestimmter Teil der Rentner haben anderthalb so viele Stimmen wie alle unter 30 jährigen / die Rentner entscheiden also mehr über unsere Zukunft obwohl sie diese Zukunft gar nicht mehr miterleben werden [...] zum anderen bedeutet das dass wir Eltern haben und Großeltern haben die wir davon überzeugen können. („*We cannot change much anyway. The old ones have the greatest voting power. Not we. By way of comparison. Only those who are older than 70, that is only some portion of pensioners, have one and a half as many votes as everybody under 30 taken together. That is, pensioners decide more about our future although they will not live it with us anymore. [...] On the other hand it means that we have parents and we have grandparents whom we can persuade.*")

The word choice also characterizes the speaker as a member of the young generation. Expressive anglicisms and swearwords listed in the previous section are cues signaling the social persona's young age and informality of the encounter. The text also includes

anglicisms, mainly colloquial ones, that are mostly not high on expressivity but mark the speaker and the addressee as members of the same group in terms of age and education background (some knowledge of English): *by the way, literally, smooth, basic, funny, checkt, fresh, dude, whistleblower, crew*.

A further device of triggering homophily effects is the inclusive 'we', used systematically as a way of creating, sustaining and expressing bonds, affiliations and collective identities. Age-bound use of inclusive 'we' occurs 9 times. Besides, it is used in the 55 minutes of the video 108 times, including 28 references to Rezo and the viewers, 41 to the Germans, and 39 to mankind.

Another fundamental ground for homophily exploited in the video is the audience's and the performer's shared interest and trust in science as well as similarity of education background and academic competence. Quoting credible sources and a list of references fulfilling academic requirements gives the video an affinity with the genre of student presentation. While not forsaking his role as entertainer, Rezo also positions himself as a skilled student who has done his homework in accordance with academic standards, preparing a presentation for educated audience. For his fans, this is additionally contextualized by a photo showing Rezo with a diploma of Master of Science with the highest grade (1.0) uploaded into imgur.com several months before 'The Destruction' (Rezo 2018, September 21). Rezo shows that he can be trusted as someone who knows how to systematically search for information. He also takes for granted, and appeals to, academic competence as an additional background platform shared with his audience beyond pop-cultural interests and social media use.

Rezo can count on the pre-existing general interest in science in his young audience. A representative survey conducted in 2015 showed that 69 % of respondents aged 14-29 claimed to use YouTube or other online video platforms to get information about science and research (Wissenschaft im Dialog, 2019, February 19). In a survey conducted in 2017, interest in science was declared by 63 % of respondents aged 14-29. Also, high trust in science was declared by 67 % while only 12 % did not trust it. Finally, 61 % agreed that science did not have enough presence in the parliamentary election campaign (Wissenschaft im Dialog, 2019).

In the 'destruction' video, Rezo refers to his previous academic-style video on the copyright reform:

Es ist wieder Zeit für so ein Video. (*"It is time again for such a video."*)

Alles werde ich natürlich wie immer ausführlich mit Quellen belegen und beweisen. Ihr wisst wenn ich so ein Video mache / mache ich es ordentlich. (*"I will document and prove everything at length with sources of course, as I always do. You know that if I do something like that, I do it ordently."*)

The expectation of pop-cultural content is being replaced by an expectation of a video whose positive qualities are quoting sources, 'proving', and being made 'ordently', features not usually valued in an entertainment video. By formulating his announcement as

a promise rather than e.g. a warning or asking for excuse, Rezo is profiling his audience as appreciative of such efforts.

What meets the eye is a spectacular use of scientific and statistical sources referenced to their original sources. 14 diagrams with statistics, a list of institutions and organisations supporting the author's views, and numerous written quotations are presented as blends-in or separate slides. In the section concerning climate change he refers to scientific publications in leading scientific journals and quotes, among others, a counselling body of the German government Expert Council for Environmental Issues, the association Scientists for Future that collected 26000 signatures of German scientists (shown as a scrolling list) under an appeal to drastically improve climate protection, and the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Besides, the film includes 7 sequences showing scientists speaking on inadequate environment protection, and 15 sequences showing politicians making public statements. All sources including diagrams and statistics are coded and referred to the list of references. The list including these and other sources (252 press articles, scientific reports, statistics, etc.) is accessible via a link below the video. Another academic-like feature is a division into chapters by informative headlines.

In creating the text in such a way, the author appeals to the academic competence of a large part of the young audience – appreciation of detailed and rational argumentation, and familiarity with academic writing. His academic competence being recognizable as such to the audience which can be taken for granted, in view of high percentage of students and college level schoolers in his target group. In 2019, as many as 56,7 % of nineteen-year-olds in Germany started college studies (Rudnicka, 2019); schoolers in the final grades prepare for academic education already, which includes writing essays in a semi-academic style. When using a large number of sources and listing them meticulously, Rezo is reaching out in particular to those who are able to appreciate the scrutiny. This assumed property of the audience enables him to display his intellectual and academic competence, enabling him to assess diverse aspects of social life or physical reality. This, in turn, legitimizes the dissemination of his judgements.

Capitalizing on excerpt (2) quoted in section 6, it should also be noted that informal language, exemplified here by naming politicians by their second or first names ("Merkel" for the German chancellor Angela Merkel, later also e.g. "Christian" for FDP leader Christian Lindner) gives a further support to the speaker's authenticity claim, enhancing constancy across performances (various videos) and highlighting the fact that he is specifically addressing a personal public in a peer-to-peer communication.

In summary, the discursive strategies of audience design encompassed, next to informal language indexing talking to a personal audience, the frequent use of inclusive "we," references to youth and shared vulnerability to political wrongs, taking for granted the audiences' trust in science, elements of academic presentation style including references to scholarly sources, and expression of trust in the audience's appreciation of the latter. The latter strategies have been collectively labelled "homophily" as they emphasise similarities between the speaker and the audience.

8 Establishing a relationship between emotionality and rational argumentation

In this section we look for answers to RQ4 How has the relationship between rational and emotional appeal been discursively construed? and RQ5: How do emotional and rational appeal interact in establishing the speaker's credibility?

As indicated before, Rezo frames political agitation in a personal narrative about a journey from ignorance to illumination. The latter starts with an intention to “just see what's up for the next video” and ends at a declaration of acting for a common cause while adhering to “Christian and humanist values” at the end. Personal narratives and testimonies are cues effective in enhancing trust (Hagmann et al., 2021). The revelation rhetoric includes emphasizing the speaker's own surprise and presenting a before/after picture. This is crucial to creating a link between the emotional and rational argumentation: emotional arousal is presented as rational because it is based entirely on information intake. The viewer is being urged to follow the speaker on the eye-opening and emotionally arousing journey.

Significantly, Rezo carefully avoids the pretense to possessing expertise in environmental science and being able to comment on climate change in an expert manner. Instead, scientific terms occur in film sequences showing public statements by expert scientists, and Rezo limits his role to providing an emotional comment on scientifically established facts. This strategy is exemplified in the following text excerpt where he distances himself from an expert position by an explicit reference to “scientific slang”, following an emotional personalized comment on the effects of global warming:

Für eure Kinder Enkelkinder selbst für die Urururururenkelkinder ist die Welt im Arsch. Die werden nie wieder die Erde sehen so wie wir sie jetzt noch kennengelernt haben. Oder auch um es in so'nem wissenschaftlichen Slang zu sagen (*For your children grandchildren and even the greatgreatgreatgreatgrandchildren the world is fucked up. They will never see the Earth as we have learnt to know it. Or saying this again in this scientific slang or theirs*)

Film: scientist Prof. Dr. Göppel talking to a public, name plate before her on a conference desk

Die Irreversibilität der Veränderung ökologischer Systeme in ihrer Regeneration ist glaube ich einfach noch nicht begriffen worden (*“It seems that the irreversibility of the changes in ecological systems in their regeneration has simply not yet been apprehended”*)

A few minutes later a tiny bit of the film is repeated where professor Göppel only pronounces the word “Irreversibilität”. This allows the author to avoid using the term himself and stay colloquial, thus “performing authenticity” of a non-expert while supporting the argument on the authority of science, and demonstrating faith in the audience's trust in science. By quoting facts and commenting on them in an informal and emotional manner, he positions himself as a mediator whose competence lies not in possessing expert scientific knowledge in the domains discussed, such as the climate change, but being able

to find, select and present knowledge provided by experts, react to facts with emotional arousal that is justified by their pregnancy, and pass this arousal to his audience.

Concluding, a link between the rational and emotional components has been introduced in the discursive frame of a personal testimony. The narrative frame highlights a journey from ignorance to becoming aware of evidence of flawed policies, legitimising moral indignation sparked by this newfound knowledge, and the decision to act on it. The testimony, combined with the use of video inserts showing scientists making informed statements, highlights the status of the speaker as a non-expert, positioned similarly to his audience while being one step ahead. It rationalises emotions as an adequate response to knowledge gain, implies an expectation on the speaker's part that the audience will respond in the same way, and contributes to authenticity and homophily as vehicles of appeal.

9 Conclusion

In the search for aspects of relational work that underlay popularity and persuasiveness of 'The Destruction', the display of, and appeal to emotionality figure large as a crucial contribution to the speaker profiling himself as authentic. They work hand in hand with other rhetorical strategies, such as informal language indexing personal communication among peers, quoting scientific evidence and appeal to homophily based on similarity in matters of age, academic competence, and trust in science. Choosing three complementary topics allows the speaker to use various persuasive resources demonstrating complementary qualities required of an opinion leader. The topic of climate change enables the speaker to demonstrate affinity with scientific proofs and rational reasoning while the topics of social injustice and homicide provide resources for demonstrating moral virtues and attitudes such as empathy, compassion, and egalitarianism. The speaker builds an authoritative voice as an opinion leader on the basis of a claim to represent authenticity and competence, summing up to the credibility of the persona and the message.

The means by which speaker's credibility is being created involve mixing various genres of discourse, displaying properties of personal and academic communication. Academic competence is demonstrated by researching and selecting authoritative scientific sources, meticulous referencing, and presenting information within a structure known from academic contexts. At the same time, authenticity is construed by drawing upon other verbal, paralinguistic, thematic, textual, dramatic, narrative, visual and multimodal resources, applied in several functions: firstly, to demonstrate the speaker's authenticity in Goffman's sense, by overtly claiming to be the principal and the author behind the text delivered, motivated by a personal experience; secondly, demonstrating constancy of the persona across various performances by referring to the speaker's earlier output showing similar qualities, constancy of his physical appearance, and of the setting; thirdly, demonstrating a match between the goal of communication on the one hand, the speaker's empathy-based creeds and emotions on the other. Verbal and paralinguistic resources applied to express and arouse emotions include expressive vocabulary including swearwords accompanied by diversified and dramatic prosody, mimic and gesture. Other discursive devices applied are irony and dramatic role-play, such

as conversations with an imperceptible off-stage interlocutor, and a personal revelation narrative explaining the motivation for the rant. The narrative serves as a link between rational and emotional aspects of argumentation as it presents the speaker's emotional arousal as an effect of an intense gain of factual knowledge from reliable sources. At the same time, the contextual embedding of the discourse validates his genuine emotional involvement as it draws upon ongoing protests against governments failing to fight climate change that mainly engaged the youth.

The speaker not only demonstrates competence and righteousness but also trust in the corresponding properties of the audience: emphatic, supportive of justice, inquisitive and rational enough to accept an exceptionally long video for the reason of its social relevance, as well as academically competent enough to note and appreciate his own academic competence and value a presentation following academic standards in quoting and referencing. Other means of audience's profiling carrying homophily effect are highlighting age similarity by inclusive 'we', direct references to age group and its shared vulnerability, and colloquial anglicisms known to the young generation. Besides, common ground is being consolidated by the speaker's self-positioning as a non-expert intermediary between a personal public on the one hand, scientists and politicians on the other. This is done by distancing himself from the scientific language – calling it a 'jargon' and letting experts speak themselves in video inserts, as well as overtly claiming lack of political knowledge and insight prior to the work on the 'destruction' video.

The resulting 'product' marks a belief in the potential of individual agency based on moral, social, intellectual and rhetoric competences and working hand in hand with positive qualities of the prospective audience, such as enable this audience to uptake both emotional and rational argumentation. The construal of the audience as emotionally and intellectually competent, and of the speaker as academically skilled while guided by strong, genuine emotions appear as inherent qualities building a foundation for the uptake. Thus, the "Rezo case" demonstrates the potential of vlogging to enhance civic engagement, particularly among previously politically disengaged youth, when an intricate blend of emotional and rational appeal is combined with audience profiling and self-positioning triggering homophily effects in discussing contextually adequate topics.

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Part III

Multimodal encoding of emotions

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Emotions in digital cartoons against Pope Francis

Since the creation of visual art, cartoons on religious authorities have served as a medium for political and social commentary. Today, digital cartoons of Pope Francis function in a slightly different way – expressing a radically traditional, antagonistic Catholic counter-public and their emotions regarding the changes within the papacy. This study focuses on radical traditional Catholic communities who argue that traditions predating the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) are a more authentic form of Catholicism than traditions put in place after the Second Vatican Council and presently encouraged by the current Pope Francis. These communities are using cartoons to voice their emotive responses to the pope and the current papacy as an institution. Drawing on discourse theoretical analysis and hermeneutics, we identify diverse strategies of emotional articulations supporting four themes of criticism and discontent surrounding the pope: exposing his “bad agency,” ridiculing papal values, unveiling Francis’ “polarized and unbalanced” behavior, and expressing his predatory attitude toward representatives of Catholic traditionalism. In doing so, we dissect how cartoons function as mechanisms of emotional critique internal to religious institutions themselves and how it is strikingly different from verbal and visual negative portrayals of Pope Francis in the physical world today.

Keywords: *emotions; digital cartoons; Catholic traditionalism; Pope Francis*

1 Introduction

Cartoons have been a key form of non-verbal communication, political critique, and emotional expression since the beginning of visual imagery. From Egyptian artists mocking Cleopatra to Indian caricaturists criticizing people in power alongside Hindu gods themselves, cartoons long predate Benjamin Franklin’s 1754 “Join or Die” severed snake editorial cartoon (Danjoux, 2007). Cartoons flourished after the invention and wide adoption of the printing press, with James Gillray in London, James Akin in Massachusetts, and Charles Williams in Pennsylvania in the 19th century. Alongside political and social critiques, cartoons also criticized religious institutions, leaders, and their members, as seen during this same century with Thomas Nast’s anti-Irish and anti-Catholic cartoons (Halloran 2013; Woolthuis, 2015).

These cartoons were and are used by people inside of churches to criticize institutional leadership (Guzek, Słomka & Cieslik, 2023). One of the best examples was Martin Luther's use of the printing press to create cartoons that visualized his critiques against the Church when the vast majority of Church membership could not read (Betten, 1925). More recently, cartoons were used to criticize the Catholic Church in the wake of its continued sex abuse scandals (Benoit & Stein 2009), with Graham English of the Australian Catholic University arguing that cartoons play a valuable role in Catholic discourse (English, 2005). Other churches, such as the Mormon Church, have even changed their media response and strategy in response to cartoons, specifically Calvin Grondahl and Pat Bagley's Mormon cartoons books (Copper et al., 2014).

Thus, cartoons have the potential to impact and drive church change. Guzek et al. (2023) previously explored cartoons criticizing the present leader of the Catholic Church-Pope Francis but this manuscript builds on this work, focusing instead on how cartoons create and utilize their own visual language to communicate strong emotions (Ma et al., 2021). The authors returned to cartoons criticizing Pope Francis that were created by traditionalist Catholics pushing to return to the traditions and lifeways from before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

Traditionalist Catholics are a subset of Roman Catholics today who seek out and prefer the Tridentine Latin Mass, a tradition that involves incense, chanting, praying in Latin, and the priest facing away from the altar that predates the Second Vatican Council (Cieslik & Phillips, 2022). In the United States, younger priests are markedly more traditional than their older counterparts (Vaidyanathan et al. 2023).

Some take this one step further, arguing that the Latin Mass is the only authentic celebration of the sacrament. Thus, these traditionalist Catholics believe that any priest, bishop, or pope endorsing post-Vatican II changes – from priests facing the congregation (in the *novus ordo* fashion), to more instrumentals and saying the Mass in vernacular languages – are harming the Church and its members and by extension, inadequate leaders. They are particularly angered by Pope Francis, who cracked down on communities celebrating the Latin Mass with a decree in February 2023, stating that the Latin Mass can only be celebrated when the Holy See signs off on a bishop's decision (Winfield, 2023).

Some traditionalist Catholics go even further, joining the Sedevacantist movement. This radical traditionalist Catholic movement argues that every pope appointed after the death of Pius XII was not and has not been valid due to the changes implemented by the Second Vatican Council. The term "sedevacantism" refers to the pope's chair being vacant, traditionally used when a pope has died and the Church stands without an elected leader prior to conclave and voting. Sedevacantists are some of the most intense critics of Pope Francis, the best example being the five-page open letter Sister Isabel of the Trinity wrote to justify the Spanish Poor Clares's split from the Vatican:

"From the Throne of Peter we have been receiving contradiction, confusion, doublespeak, ambiguity, lack of clear doctrine, which is all the more necessary in stormy times, to hold the rudder more firmly. During this time the sisters, each in her own style, way and rhythm, have been contemplating a question, a

doubt about the one who steers the Baroque of Peter, and his closest collaborators” (D’Avillez, 2024).

For other traditionalist Catholics, cartoons offer a way to voice their intense emotions – more often than not negative emotions of anger, disgust, and mistrust – surrounding Catholic leadership, and present a useful case study for how the cognitive frameworks and cultural contexts of the artists creating the cartoons is a critical part of how they are interpreted (Abdel-Raheem, 2023). Cartoons created by traditionalist Catholics need to communicate anger, frustration, sadness, mistrust, and disgust surrounding Pope Francis while also using the visual vocabularies of Catholicism to clue an informed audience into what the cartoon is saying about Catholic leadership and the future of the Church, so dissecting how emotion is visualized and interpreted is vital to understand their impact.

At the same time, this case study sheds light on the little-studied area of emotional theory and cartoons. Observing and understanding another person’s emotions is a key evolutionary ability that allows humans to function in groups. In fact, the human brain is hardwired with the mirror neuron system, which allows humans to understand another person’s emotions and develop empathy and sympathy by internalizing another person’s experience (Penagos-Corzo et al., 2022) a systematic review of fMRI studies of people with psychopathic traits during an emotional facial expression processing task was performed. The regions of interest were structures associated with the mirror neuron system: ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC). Observing and understanding another person’s emotions actually allows humans to pass different levels of consciousness (Izard, 2009). In particular, facial mimicry is a central way through which humans can understand the perspectives of another person (Ferrari & Coudé, 2018). But few studies delve into this area, the most recent focused on cartoons as an English-learning tool (Huang, 2023) and how cartoons communicate humor when animals act like humans (Whitehead, 2008).

This study attempts to explore this further, delving into emotional discourse of cartoons criticizing Pope Francis. Using discourse theoretical analysis and hermeneutics, the authors identify how emotional articulation is a key factor in how criticism of Pope Francis is communicated through the cartoon and understood by the receiving audience. Not only will this research tap into the emotional theory behind cartoons but will also contribute to the diverse field of cartoons and political (in this case religious-political) dissent (Corstange, 2007; Howard, 2014). Understanding how emotional articulation is used to convey criticism will shed light on how traditionalist Catholics and other groups create their own visual vocabularies to convey their arguments without words.

1.1 Methods and materials

We developed our methodology from a combination of discourse theoretical analysis (DTA) (Carpentier, 2017; Torfing, 1999) and hermeneutics (Gerbaudo, 2016; Ricoeur, 2004; Wernet, 2014), with a specific epistemological assumption embedded within. In the results, we position the production of cartoons under investigation as an articulation of peculiar discourses spread by a group labeling itself as purely orthodox. However, in

reality, these discourses antagonize audiences through heterodoxy when looking at the papacy and Pope Francis.

The DTA belongs to macro-textual and macro-contextual approaches to discourse analysis, with a substantial lack of a rigid procedure, resulting in highly arbitrary research conducted (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Filimonov & Svensson, 2016). With that in mind, we developed the DTA in a few stages. First, we conducted a qualitative content analysis with iterative in-vivo coding in the MAXQDA software environment. To do so, we broke down the research material into 166 codes regarding the position of Pope Francis and his agency. Next, we applied DTA elements to the obtained material, which referred to conflict around the Church in the investigated context. Next, we manually narrowed down the codes to nodal points expressing how different categories are intertwined in a similar meaning related to the pope. These nodal points were not just a simple summary of topics. On the contrary, they represented dominant articulations stabilizing the discourse apart from the frequency of the codes.

When it comes to conflict, we respect that the DTA implies a habitual clash between the participants in social discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). It means that while the discourse is always partially fixed and contingent, different parties contribute to it by articulating their aspirations and potentially positioning themselves in a collision with other parties. It takes place because the DTA remains applicable within democratic regimes, where the presence of the “other” is situated between *agonistic* and *antagonistic* approaches, yet it is not questioned as such. In a mature environment, social *agonism* prevails (Mouffe, 2013), accommodating different approaches within the dominant discourses of the majority and respecting the marginal discourses of the minority. Conversely, in the *antagonistic* approach, both positions tend to limit the rights of the “other” to operate, although they do not actively negate the existence of the “other” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1996).

We strengthened the DTA with further hermeneutic analysis, approaching the articulatory practices within our materials as textual exegesis (Ricoeur, 2004; Schmidt, 2010; Wang, 2008) oriented on the digital sphere (Romele, 2020; Floridi, 2007). This involved evaluating digital cartoons through a two-fold procedure of (1) collecting a small dataset of 452 items and (2) conducting a close reading to uncover the meaning of each item. The crucial aspect of the hermeneutics undertaken here refers to its own ontology, where we attempt to relate the general process of information flow through connections to sequentiality and the literal interpretation of the text (Wernet, 2014). This approach helped us to engage with the research material on semantic, reflective, and ontological levels (Wang, 2008) and to create memos to complement the previously described DTA.

In this chapter, we analyze the emotions portrayed in digital cartoons about Pope Francis sourced from the English version of the web platform Gloria.tv. Our sample encompasses 452 digital cartoons commissioned and posted online by Gloria.tv between January 22, 2018, and July 28, 2021. The starting date of the cartoons collection coincides with the inauguration of the series, while the final date corresponds to the editors’ reactions following the release of Pope Francis’s document, *Traditionis Custodes*, which

imposed stricter regulations for the celebration of the pre-conciliar Mass and re-framed access to such liturgy (McClean, 2023).

Gloria.tv is a multilingual platform that circulates news posts, YouTube videos, and digital cartoons to address concerns regarding the contemporary papacy, Pope Francis, and various branches of the Roman Catholic Church implementing reforms from the Second Vatican Council (1963–1965). The platform was established in Switzerland in 2005 by two priests, Reto Nay and Markus Doppelbauer, and has changed locations several times due to allegations of anti-Semitic rhetoric. At the conclusion of the research material collection, the digital outlet was situated in Dover, US. The platform predominantly posted news from traditional Catholic accounts. Among these, the top user accounts can be identified as follows: (1) En.news, established on April 27, 2017, and operating from California, US; (2) Canon 112, established on September 4, 2020, and operating from Canada; and (3) Knights4Christ, joined on June 15, 2010, and operating from Colorado, US.

The analysis of digital cartoons of Pope Francis posted by the platform Gloria.tv was driven by a central research question of the study:

RQ: How do digital cartoons on the current papacy express emotions?

To answer the research question (RQ), we build on previous literature from the fields of religion and communication, especially focusing on religious cartoons. Subsequently, we connect this with discourse theory, particularly emphasizing antagonism.

2 Results

We have examined the digital cartoons from Gloria.tv discursively and hermeneutically to discern the articulation of emotions. This abductive reasoning procedure led us to establish five nodal points (NPs) corresponding to the most important, though not the most frequent, issues in the in-vivo codes. These nodal points have scaffolded and stabilized the entire discourse. The nodal points were as follows: 27 codes of the NP1 “the pope rules and uses others;” 12 codes of the NP2 “the pope functions in various contexts of LGBTQIA+ issues;” 20 codes of the NP3 “the pope supports idolatry;” 17 codes of the NP4 “the pope displays immaturity;” 40 codes of the NP5 “the pope is destroying everything.”

2.1 Establishing nodal points

Keeping in mind that discourse articulations remain dependent, they are constantly shifting and stabilizing meaning through five particular NPs, which need to be described more briefly.

The NP1, “the pope rules and uses others,” describes a crucial characteristic of the pope, connecting his agency, a certain hierarchy, and negative emotions. On the one hand, it refers to Pope Francis as a cruel and ruthless watchdog of the Church. On the other hand, it shows that Francis follows and pleases the political establishment from outside the Church. In more depth, this means that Francis serves the secular political establishment, supported by close troops of cardinals. He exercises papal authority

through collective actions and with the support of these cardinals, who are portrayed as lackeys, clowns, and financial embezzlers (cardinals Becciu, Marx, Tagle).

The next NP2, “the pope functions in various contexts of LGBTQIA+ issues,” refers to a twofold concept. First, it exposes Francis’s support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, and others with non-heteronormative sexual orientations, trans and gender expansive individuals, and their rights in society and the Church. Second, it sees the LGBTQIA+ flag as a representation of specific individuals and their values, which traditionalist Catholics creating the cartoons believe are contradictory to traditional Catholic moral teachings, as well as in opposition to the common Catholic vision of the family.

The NP3, “the pope supports idolatry,” is characterized by discourses on the way Francis leads the Church towards religious diversity and multiculturalism. This NP shows how the pope’s sensitivity to diverse experiences of religious faith is being evaluated and criticized by strictly European and White terms of religious faith. When Pope Francis welcomed the Vatican’s Synod of Bishops on the Amazon in October 2019, they brought carved statues of naked pregnant Amazonian women that were displayed in the Church of Santa Maria in Transpontina. Although the pope clarified that they were displayed “without idolatrous intentions,” two traditionalist Catholic men broke into the Church and threw the statues into the river. Pope Francis apologized to the Synod. Inculturation through the establishment of the figure of Mother Earth in the Vatican (Pachamama) and understood here as idolatry, shows how deeply misunderstood the pope’s agency is (Bevans, 2024).

In NP4, “the pope displays immaturity,” the discourse exposes personal attacks on Pope Francis reflecting his character and habits. In this NP, Francis is portrayed as a narcissist, haughty man, and hypocrite with a tendency towards tyranny and flattery. Besides, he is described as mentally ill and a liar (represented by having a Pinocchio’s nose). Pinocchio is a character in Carlo Collodi’s children’s book. Pinocchio is a child made of wood whose nose grows every time that he lies.

NP5, “the pope is destroying everything,” refers to two intertwined elements. First, it suggests that Francis is working towards the destruction of all sanctity in the Church, reflecting past prophecies about the future apostasy of Peter’s See. Second, it implies that Francis is implementing innovations that are driving the Church to collapse.

The described NPs, which are responsible for discourse stability, also serve to express the emotions presented by the Gloria.tv editors. Each NP takes on a specific character that is worth evaluating through hermeneutics.

2.2 *Approaching hermeneutics*

Philosophical hermeneutics, when used in social studies on digital cartoons, faces challenges due to its fluid categories and greater arbitrariness but also brings new options for interpreting research material. On the one hand, it introduces a serious problem between subjective and objective ontology in research approaches, making cross-disciplinary research in media studies and theology contingent. On the other hand, integrating hermeneutical steps allows researchers to tackle new perspectives beyond the established categories and nodal points. This results in a twofold description of the research material that sheds new light on the tendencies of the investigated social and religious phenomena.

The first summary of the hermeneutical approach refers to the digital cartoons of Pope Francis as tools to defend the Catholic Church's traditions and doctrines on the basis of their immutability. In other words, traditionalist Catholics creating these cartoons argue that because these elements are timeless, eternal, and unchangeable, they acquire an absolute character in Catholic morality. Thus, the Ten Commandments, church principles, and the Latin Mass function on a logic compared to mathematical logic and, whenever excessively changed, evidence error. In case of any inconsistency related to the Church's life, old approaches are still valid. A good example of this lies in ecumenism, which in the traditional optics narrows down to a return to the Catholic Church.

The second summary here means that Gloria.tv treats tradition as a living thing that serves to enrich internal Church dialogue. Thus, pre-Vatican II traditions are not only alive but are central to the Church's continuity and future. This is associated with the media outlet's rejection of the pope's approach to tradition as the Church's memory. Ultimately, while Gloria.tv refers to social and religious issues through the lens of Church commands, the platform simultaneously contradicts the pope's perspective that man, treated as an individual, is at the center of everything and moral norms are just auxiliary to him and his eternal dignity. It centers a much older Catholic argument about prioritizing the individual over God, reimaged by traditionalist Catholics, that Pope Francis's advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights put the person over God.

2.3 Explaining basic emotions

The developed DTA and hermeneutics demonstrate how Gloria.tv approaches and evaluates Francis's agency. All basic emotions are expressed within them, involving a lower order of cognitive processes in groups of positive feelings, such as interest and joy, and a group of negative ones, including anger, disgust, fear, and sadness (Izard, 2009).



Figure 1. Example of anger and fear towards Pope Francis

When it comes to the NP1 “the pope rules and uses others,” we can associate it with a depiction of emotion-cognition interactions between Pope Francis and accompanying figures. This type of contextual expression of ruling and using others is well described in Figure 1. Firstly, the pope is depicted as a cruel leader of the papal office. His face express-

es anger with a focus on the people he rules over. Conversely, the accompanying people are depicted as fragile and innocent while praying or running with fearful expressions.

This contrasting expression of anger and fear intertwines and intensifies in two ways. First, both represent specific body representations. The Pope is a standing active agent who displays his anger through offense. Accompanying representatives of the Church are pictured a more anxious or upset, but also submissive, posture. Second, emotional expressions categorize the two types of agents as an active, angry pope and passive, fearful clergymen.

This schema of depicting emotions shows, first and foremost, that cognition between posture and facial expression lays in a fundamental way the NP1 is spread as a coherent discourse articulation. Moreover, such a type of articulation works well on an ideological level, providing evidence that the awareness of the media outlet editors focuses on emotions as a tool for maladaptive cognition.



Figure 2. Example of interest and joy due to LGBTQIA+ issues

When it comes to the NP2, “the pope functions in various contexts of LGBTQIA+ issues,” the discourse articulations are based on the schemas of interest and joy. Depending on the context, Pope Francis is more or less active regarding this body language. His face is always hyper emotive and exaggerated in two different ways. On some occasions, as Figure 2 shows, Pope Francis expresses an impassioned interest in issues associated with LGBTQIA+ causes. Other times, his focus is more on actions, but he still expresses joy in the kind of activities he is involved in. What is written with these emotions refers to the cognition of the potential audience. The Pope, seen as an interested and engaged figure supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, is being perceived as overlooking the “threat” of LGBTQIA+ rights, which is causing the papacy to fail. Ultimately, the presence of interest and joy in Francis’s facial expressions serves the editors of Gloria.tv to express their belief in the pope’s naivety towards the LGBTQIA+ agenda.

The NP3, “the pope supports idolatry,” is associated with the emotional schema of fear and joy. In contrast to previous depictions, here Pope Francis is always depicted as

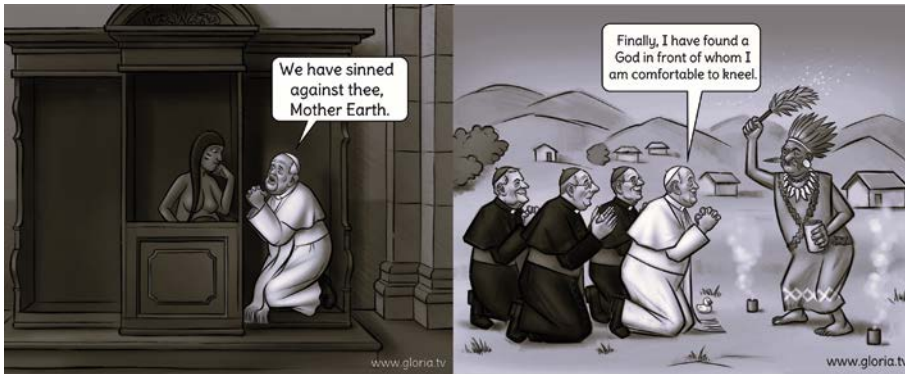


Figure 3. Example of fear and joy due to idolatry

receptive to the actions of others, namely representatives of different cultures and viewpoints. What the NP shows focuses on the individual agency of the pope as pleased to be engaged in non-Christian cults, especially the connections to Mother Earth (Pachamama). Additionally, his facial expression expresses serious concerns and fears over climate change (Figure 3). Here, the emotional schema shows the most important of Francis's motivations for action in the church and externally throughout the world. It also helps to convey to the potential audience that the pope's approach is far from their own.

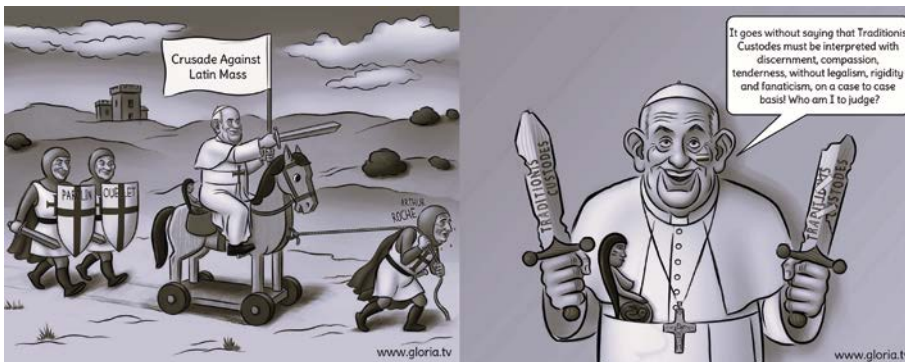


Figure 4. Example of interest within the NP4 on the pope's immaturity

Regarding the NP4 "the pope displays immaturity," expressions of interest in different issues and relatively difficult-to-discern facial emotions play the most important role in nodal point articulation. On the one hand, the pope's strategies are exposed through this, but the ultimate interpretation is not easy to label. On the other hand, such a strategy helps to position individual agencies of Francis against traditional Catholics as connected to his personal features, immaturity, and even mental problems (Figure 4). These depictions argue that the papal authority has depreciated and is held by an illegitimate leader.



Figure 5. Example of the depiction of joy, anger, disgust, fear, and sadness within the NP5

When it comes to the NP5, “the pope is destroying everything,” we can see an interesting amalgam of emotions intertwined in a relatively stable schema of joy on one side and anger, disgust, fear, and sadness on the other. This continuum is very peculiar because of its sharp contrast of emotions. Within it, Pope Francis works well between deviant joyfulness and tremendous fear. The former is used to express the way Gloria.tv editors see the pope’s satisfaction from canceling the tradition and pre-Vatican II culture in the Church. It is related to the Traditional Latin Mass, the late Pope Benedict XVI’s and his *Summorum Pontificum* (2007), a document on free access to the Latin liturgy.

The latter is used to show the limits of Pope Francis’s bad agency, which becomes evident in the metaphorical moment of the Church’s collapse. Moreover, expressions of emotion associate the pope and his collaborators. These are strengthened by the humiliation of their body language and simultaneously a fear or sadness on their faces. This is how the discourse of NP5 articulates the bad agency of Francis’s pontificate.

3 Concluding discussion

In this study, we focused on how cartoons create and utilize their own visual language to communicate strong emotions (Ma et al., 2021) by addressing the research question: *How do digital cartoons depict emotions in the context of the current papacy?* In response to this question, we analyzed the portrayal of emotions through two main aspects: facial expressions and a sharp contrast in the articulation of emotions among depicted individuals.

When we consider that the scrutiny of facial expressions corresponds to the way people internalize others’ concerns and fears (Izard, 2009), the way these digital cartoons spread the concerns of Gloria.tv looks extremely simple and references the clichés of historical cartoons, including those against the papacy of the age of the Reformation (Nash, 2002; Pettegree, 2015).

On the one hand, they represent a diversified spectrum of emotions from positive to negative tones. These variations mostly focus on a negative approach but in a way orients the viewer about who is good, who is bad and for what reasons. This reflects how cartoons coexist in digital culture alongside memes – different genres, yet they use the

same facets (Norstrom & Sarna, 2021). On the other hand, if they are depicted through positive emotions, they are limited to church figures and political figures, connecting the two cohorts in a single universe of emotions reflective of the pope's agency as sardonic and distracted from the Church's way of thinking.

This sharp contrast is used to expose the way editors of Gloria.tv communicated their strong emotions against Pope Francis, and given our research, we identify a twofold framework. First, the distinction between passive good and active evil sounds problematic both from the communicational and religious points of view. From a communicational perspective, the passiveness of positive figures and their receptiveness shows a type of articulation that discursively exposes a non-offensive style of communication. In this manner, it contradicts the standard way religious extremists' portrayals the digital discourse (Guzek, 2019; Evolvi 2019; Baker & Campbell, 2010). From the religious point of view, the way traditional Catholics operate in the digital sphere, setting up and connecting counter publics, shows that they choose portrayals first and foremost following the evil side, namely active participation in the digital sphere. Such a step corresponds to their theological formation and the diversified characteristics of traditional groups, among others, the previously mentioned Sedevacantists. It means that the articulation of active action associated with the evil side stays only within the discursive expression within the investigated cartoons and has nothing in common with the formation as a whole.

Ultimately, traditionalist Catholics use these cartoons to express their intense emotions within the context of digital culture in a way that is accessible to their own communities. Thus, the way digital culture helps them to express and negotiate their emotions toward Pope Francis is very limited in scope. Traditionalist Catholic opposition and negative portrayals of Pope Francis in the physical world, either visual in print or verbal in homilies, speeches, and other speaking engages, is strikingly different.

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Beyond the smile: A longitudinal corpus analysis of the 'smiling face' emoji in French tweets

Communication on social networks has the well-known characteristic of not offering a physical context to its interlocutors, who have always shown ingenuity in compensating for this absence. These strategies include GIFs, emoticons, and since 2010 emojis, some of which, having reached the end of their conventionalization process, have made their way into online dictionaries, such as Emojipedia¹. In computer-mediated discourse (CMD), emoji can be used to fulfill a variety of linguistic functions, from replacing words to signaling irony. This chapter investigates the emotional usage and contextual functions of three variations of smiling face emoji: "Slightly Smiling Face" (SSF), "Smiling Face" (SF), and "Smiling Face with Smiling Eyes" (SFSE), in French tweets over an 11-year period (2013–2023). By analyzing a corpus

of 361,031 tweets, we address three research questions: the main discursive functions of these emoji, their linguistic and emotional contexts, and the evolution of their emotional connotations over time. A combination of lexical collocation analysis and sentiment analysis using Vader and TextBlob reveals that while all three emoji predominantly serve relational functions, SFSE and SF are more frequently associated with positive content compared to SSF. SSF often appears in contexts carrying negative or ambiguous sentiments. The longitudinal analysis indicates a decline in the positivity of tweets containing SSF since 2018. These findings suggest that despite their similar appearances, each smiling face emoji has developed distinct functions and emotional nuances in digital communication.

Keywords: *emoji, computer-mediated communication, discourse analysis, sentiment analysis*

1 Introduction

The advent of social networking and instant messaging platforms has revolutionised the way we communicate. Computer-mediated written communication (henceforth CMC), which refers to any form of written human communication occurring between multiple electronic devices (Herring, 1996), has given rise to numerous strategies put in place by interlocutors in an attempt to compensate for the absence of a physical context, which handicaps both the interpretation and the communication of emotions (Troiano & Nante, 2018). In addition to expressive punctuation, expressive writing and acronyms (Cougnon, 2015), we find emoji, which are defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as 'small digital images or symbols designed to express an idea or emotion'. These were first introduced in the 2000s as a result of the international standardisation of codes.

Over the past fifteen years, emoji have evolved, multiplied and become more nuanced. In addition to the “Slightly Smiling Face” 😊 (henceforth “SSF”) emoji, derived from one of the earliest typographic emoticons, “:),” the “Smiling Face” 😄 (henceforth “SF”) and the “Smiling Face with Smiling Eyes” 😁 (henceforth “SFSE”) were introduced in 2010¹. These new smiling emoji feature the same positive facial expression as the SSF emoji, but with a more pronounced use of eyes, cheekbones and eyebrows. Their appearance has led to a more ambiguous use of the SSF emoji (Violaris, 2020; Shi, 2022), as evidenced by Emojipedia, where the SSF emoji is described as being able to carry different sentiments: “positive”, “happy”, “friendly”, “patronising”, “passive-aggressive” or “ironic”.

This qualitative and quantitative study analyses the use of the three emoticons (SF, SSF and SFSE) in a large corpus in French drawn from Twitter messages. The corpus comprises 361,031 tweets published over a period of 11 years, from 2013 to 2023. Firstly, the extensive number of occurrences and the extensive temporal scope provide the study with genuine statistical relevance and a more detailed level of granularity in the analysis of the results. Secondly, by examining the uses of the three emoji in parallel, it is possible to gain a clearer picture of the evolution in use and the functions performed by the different emoji derived from the same typographic ancestor. To our knowledge, a thorough contrastive examination of smiling emoji has not yet been carried out on a large-scale French CMC corpus.

2 State of the art

2.1 Communication environment

The corpus used in this chapter comes from Twitter. The messages were therefore produced in a CMC environment, which can be described as (1) mass communication or communication involving more than two participants, (2) asynchronous communication, and (3) potentially pseudonymous communication (Lombart & Fairon, 2020). Firstly, when a user posts or comments with a tweet, it represents mass communication as their message will travel. It is shared among Twitter users, and it is impossible for the original user to measure the exact audience of their message. Once several users start conversing via comments, the communication involves more than two participants. In this context, the interlocutors do not share a relationship of intimacy, which involves establishing and building an intimate, privileged bond (Chevalérias, 2003). The individuals with whom one engages in communication on Twitter are typically complete strangers to each other. Secondly, communication on Twitter is asynchronous. The temporal interval between the posting of a message and the reception of a reply can vary considerably. Furthermore, communication on Twitter is potentially pseudonymous. Although the platform now offers certified accounts for a fee, the average user still has the option of creating an account under a pseudonym. However, this does not prevent them from having to comply with the law, since they can always be traced via their IP address and details. These characteristics have an impact on communication and relationship management. The fact that the interlocutors do not know each other

¹ <https://emojipedia.org/unicode-6.0>, last accessed June 7th, 2024.

and are potentially chatting under pseudonymity creates what Blaya (2013) describes as the 'cockpit effect': the speaker, in a manner reminiscent of an aviator, drops a bomb on a target that he only vaguely identifies. In this communication context, some users feel that they are not concerned by Levinson and Brown's (1978) theory of politeness, according to which interlocutors must treat each other with care (positive and negative faces) in order to achieve successful communication. In contrast to CMC on other social media, with more restricted networks and on which the relationships between interlocutors are more intimate, the maxims according to which Face Threatening Acts (henceforth FTA) should be minimised, as opposed to Face Flattering Acts (henceforth FFA) which should be maximised, are less central (Shi, 2024).

This lesser consideration of the interlocutor's face will be evidenced in particular through the use of forms of politeness and impoliteness. For a considerable period of time, politeness and impoliteness were perceived as dichotomous forms, with impoliteness being categorised into direct impoliteness (where the threat to the interlocutor's face is direct) and indirect impoliteness (where the threat to the interlocutor's face is deduced from the implicature) (Bousfield, 2008). In the contemporary era, politeness and impoliteness are perceived as a continuum of forms, with individuals moving gradually from positive politeness (the production of FFA) to negative politeness (the avoidance of FTA), then to positive impoliteness (the production of FTA that are unavoidable in the context of argumentation), and finally to negative impoliteness (where relational management of the faces of interlocutors is at best abandoned, at worst undermined by amplification of FTA and avoidance of FFA) (Fracchiolla & Romain, 2020). Communication can be classified depending on the presence of polite and impolite forms (Quilligan, 2007). Passive communication is defined as positive and negative politeness, as it involves the careful avoidance of expressing opinions or feelings, protecting rights, and identifying and satisfying needs. Assertive communication, on the other hand, is defined as positive impoliteness. In assertive communication, individuals express their opinions and feelings clearly and assert their rights and needs while taking care not to violate the rights and needs of others. This is still considered to be constructive communication. The last two forms of communication, passive-aggressive and aggressive, are linked to negative impoliteness. Passive-aggressive communication is based on the outward display of politeness, which nevertheless allows for the indirect expression of anger. In contrast, aggressive communication presents violent and aggressive content, which is aimed not only at asserting one's rights but also at violating those of others. Communication can degenerate in a number of ways. The build-up of tension can be rapid and marked by conflict triggers. When it is polemical, it is based on implicit and indirect acts of language. Finally, when this escalation is described as devious, it is classified as manipulation and harassment (Fracchiolla & Romain, 2020). In a communication environment such as Twitter, where strangers are in contact, it can be expected that there will be a more rapid transition to forms of impoliteness and more aggressive communication, as face management between strangers is less central.

2.2 Emoji

As is the case with all current social networks, Twitter offers a range of emoji designed to provide a physical context for CMC environments deprived of non-verbal cues, which could complicate the expression and interpretation of emotions and lead to a greater questioning of the sincerity of the emotions expressed (Gauducheu, 2012). Emotions are expressed essentially through non-verbal communication, which is generally associated with the affective, while verbal communication is more closely linked to the cognitive (Cosnier, 1987). Consequently, non-verbal material plays an irreplaceable role in the interpretation of linguistic signs, accompanying their enunciation and, according to some studies, sometimes carrying up to 70 % of the information (Chabanne, 1999). Thus, since the advent of CMC, cyber-interlocutors have constantly been seeking ways to recreate the non-verbal elements they were deprived of in a dialogical context. This is where emoji come in. These pictograms designed to express an idea or an emotion made their appearance in the 2000s thanks to the international standardisation of codes.

Since then, emoji have been the subject of a great deal of research, which has revealed, among other things, their different functions and how they are used by different people. In this chapter, we use the typology used by (Escoufflaire, 2021), which includes seven different linguistic functions of emoji: the expressive, interpretative, referential, relational, politeness, emphatic, and structural functions (with the aesthetic function as an additional, extra-linguistic function of emoji in CMC). The seven functions are briefly presented in this section.

- 1) The expressive function is the most common and most straightforward emoji function. It is used to convey emotion within the message, whether the speaker's own emotional state or someone else's (Marcoccia & Gauducheu, 2007).
- 2) The interpretative function concerns emoji which signal the presence of an implicature in the message and/or are used to guide the interpretation of the message. Emoji are often used to disambiguate irony or sarcasm (Dresner & Herring, 2010).
- 3) The relational function is used to maintain a positive relationship between the sender and the receiver of the message by adding emoji to it. Relational emoji can be used as markers of familiarity, and to fill a phatic role in starting or ending a conversation (Spina, 2018). They tend to accompany or replace typical "small talk" expressions (*hello, you're welcome*).
- 4) The politeness function refers to emoji working as linguistic hedges in a message, i. e. as discursive softeners allowing a user to weaken potentially face-threatening speech acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In this case, they can be compared to mitigating words, such as *please* or *maybe*.
- 5) The emphatic function is assigned to emoji which are used to strengthen the semantic (mostly emotional) value of a message or an emoji (Amaghlobeli, 2012). Repeated emoji are considered as emphatic emoji, often enhancing the expressive function of the first emoji.
- 6) The structural function concerns the use of emoji appearing at the end of a clause, or between two different clauses. They function similarly to punctuation signs and can

often replace them. The structural function is usually used with another linguistic function for the same emoji.

- 7) The referential function of emoji is activated when an emoji refers to a particular concept, concrete or abstract, located inside or outside the message, by replacement, by evocation or by repetition (Schneebeli, 2017). Emoji can be used in place of nouns, verbs, adjectives, or even adverbial phrases. Unlike emoji carrying other functions, which usually appear at the end of a clause, referential emoji often appear inside it.

Conversely, although emoji are employed by all, their usage is not uniform. The use of emoji varies depending on the gender of the interlocutor. Women tend to use emoji more than men (Gauducheu, 2012), and the context of communication also influences the use of emoji. emoji are more commonly used in social sharing than in professional tasks (Derks et al., 2007). The degree of proximity between interlocutors also affects the use of emoji (Park et al., 2013). Finally, some emoji are not used in the same way on different CMC platforms or in different languages (Escoufflaire, 2020).

The emoji of interest in this chapter are SSF, SF and SFSE, all derived from one of the very first typographic emoticons: “:)”. What these emoji have in common is that they represent a face “smiling with its mouth closed”. A smiling face is generally perceived as a positive experience, although this is not always the case. Ekman & Friesen (1982) distinguish three types of smile in real life. Firstly, the ‘genuine smile’ is associated with positive emotions such as pleasure (5 senses), contentment, satisfaction, relief, etc. The ‘miserable smile’ is indicative of distress and is a response to negative emotions. Then, the ‘false smile’ is a matter of social convention and is not sincere. Therefore, there is no ubiquitous correlation between smiling and positivity or sincerity. In order to correctly interpret a smile in real life, it is necessary to consider the context of the utterance (Shi, 2022). It can be hypothesised that this also accounts for smiling face emoji in CMC.

The definitions of the three studied emoji in *Emojipedia*² are as follows:

- (1) ‘Smiling face with smiling eyes’ (SFSE): “A yellow face with smiling eyes and a broad, closed smile that spreads to rosy cheeks. Often expresses genuine happiness and warm, positive feelings.”



Standard version on *Emojipedia*



Twitter version

These two versions of the SFSE emoji are almost identical. The only difference concerns the position of the cheekbones. The eyes and pink cheeks emphasise the positive aspect. The smile is described as ‘wide’. The conveyed emotion appears to be positive.

2 <https://emojipedia.org/>, last accessed June 7th, 2024.

- (2) ‘Smiling face’: “A yellow face with a modest smile, rosy cheeks and soft, closed eyes. Many platforms, including Apple, feature relaxed eyebrows. Conveys a wide range of warm, positive emotions, including love, happiness and gratitude.”



Standard version on Emojipedia



Twitter version

The SF emoji shares all the characteristics of the SFSE emoji, with the addition of eyebrows. The standard emoji differs slightly from the Twitter emoji in terms of the smile, which is more muted in the Twitter emoji. The smile is described as ‘modest’ and the emotion conveyed is positive.

- (3) ‘Slightly smiling face’: “A yellow face with simple, open eyes and a thin, closed smile. Conveys a wide range of positive, happy and friendly emotions. Its tone can also be condescending, passive-aggressive or ironic, as if to say ‘this is fine when it’s really not.’”



Standard version on Emojipedia



Twitter version

There are almost no differences between the two versions of the SF emoji. The smile is described as ‘thin’ and ‘closed’, and the eyes are wide open. The range of emotions that can be conveyed by this emoji is more varied.

Based on the descriptions above, we can therefore expect these three emoji to be used in the following ways, on a “positive-to-negative” emotion axis:



3 Experiments

3.1 Research question and methods

The objective of this chapter is to examine the emotional usage of three emoji, SSF, SF and SFSE, in French tweets. This investigation will assess whether the emoji are employed in a positive or negative manner. In order to address this issue, we will be answering three research questions:

RQ1: What are the main discursive functions carried by the three emoji?

RQ2: In which linguistic and emotional contexts are these emoji employed?

RQ3: Is there a visible trend in the evolution of the emotional use of these emoji over the years?

In a preliminary synchronic approach, the context and function of use of these three emoji will be analysed through a study of lexical collocation, as well as in conjunction with other emoji. This initial phase will enable us to define the positivity of the communicational contexts – via the lexicon – and relational contexts – via the emoji – in which the

three emoji are used. First, we conduct a collocation analysis by looking at the most frequent words (bigrams) associated with each of the three emoji studied in our experiment. We also examine the most common “emoji combinations” (McCulloch & Gawne, 2018) including our three emoji. These methods allow us to better understand in which types of context those particular emoji are mostly used, and if and how these contexts differ.

In a second diachronic approach, we employ sentiment analysis on the textual content accompanying the three emoji over a period of eight years. This step enables us to corroborate the findings of the collocation study through a diachronic approach, thereby allowing us to observe the evolution of the emotional connotations conveyed by each emoji over time. We use two different sentiment analysis tools, based on two different NLP approaches: Vader and TextBlob. First, Vader (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014) is a rule-based tool relying on a predefined lexicon of words, each assigned a polarity score (positive, negative, or neutral) based on human judgments. Second, TextBlob (Loria, 2018) extracts linguistic features from the text and uses a machine learning algorithm to measure the subjectivity and polarity of a text. Both Vader and Textblob can be used to output a sentiment score between -1 (negative) and 1 (positive) for a given piece of text (0 being neutral). Both tools also have a French version, which can be applied to evaluate sentiment of French texts. We apply Vader and TextBlob sentiment analysis to the textual content of each tweet in our corpus (described in the following section). We then use statistical tests to uncover whether there is a relationship between the overall sentiment of a tweet’s text and the presence of one of the three emoji, independently from the meaning added by each emoji to the text. Our longitudinal corpus allows us to analyse how the sentiment of tweets associated with each emoji has evolved between 2015 and 2023.

3.2 Data

Our corpus was sampled from a corpus of 153 million tweets collected by Cougnon et al. (2022) and published between 2013 and 2023 by 187,523 different French-speaking Belgian Twitter users³. We built our corpus of analysis by extracting from this collection all the tweets containing at least one of the three emoji analysed in this chapter (😊 SFSE, 😞 SF and 😊 SSF). After removing duplicates, tweets that were not written in French, and tweets containing only emoji (as the absence of textual content hinders interpretation), we obtained a total of 361,031 tweets published by 29,530 different users. We also applied several preprocessing steps to all tweets: we removed hashtags, mentions and stopwords, tokenised the messages using spaCy (Honnibal & Montani, 2017), and extracted all emoji from the tweets to be able focus on the textual content. The tweets are rather short: the average tweet contains 18 tokens, with the longest in the corpus being 76 tokens long.

3 The corpus of tweets is available on request from louise-amelie.cougnon@uclouvain.be.

4 Results and discussion

Table 1 shows that there are many similarities in terms of which words are most consistently found alongside the three emoji. Lexical words carrying a positive meaning (*merci*: “thank you”), *bien*: “well”) are present in the top-10 collocations of all three emoji, although the word *plaisir* (“pleasure”), often found in the phrase *avec plaisir* (“my pleasure”) is only present in the top-10 collocations of SFSE and SF, not of SSF. These suggest that all three emoji are mostly used with a relational function, accompanying politeness formulas (*merci*, [*bonne*] *journée*: “[have a nice] day”). In addition, it appears that SF is the only of the three emoji which is always the second element in all its most common bigrams. In contrast, SFSE and SSF precede four of their most common collocation words: before grammatical words *je* (“I”) and *et* (“and”) for both, and SFSE is often found before *merci*, while SSF is found before *mais* (“but”). This suggests that, unlike SF which mostly carries a relational function, SFSE and SSF are also used with a structural function, marking a separation between two clauses, resembling punctuation. It is also interesting to note that only SSF is used so often to introduce clauses starting with the negative conjunction *mais*, which may suggest that it is used less often to express positive feelings. It is also the only of the three emoji which is not found often with the pronoun *toi* (“you”), which marks more proximity between the interlocutors than the pronoun *vous* (“you”). In addition, *vous* followed by an emoji is a more frequent bigram with SSF than with SF, and is not found in the top 10 bigrams with SFSE.

Table 1. Ten most common bigrams containing each of the three emoji in question.

😊 SFSE	<i>N</i>	😊 SF	<i>N</i>	😄 SSF	<i>N</i>
merci 😊	5026	merci 😊	1683	merci 😊	1082
aussi 😊	4440	aussi 😊	780	😊 je	980
bien 😊	2743	toi 😊	616	😊 et	749
😊 je	2661	journée 😊	608	aussi 😊	831
toi 😊	2478	bien 😊	591	bien 😊	702
journée 😊	2478	ça 😊	539	😊 mais	672
😊 et	2432	plaisir 😊	457	vous 😊	600
😊 merci	2083	moi 😊	424	ça 😊	588
ça 😊	1812	pas 😊	367	pas 😊	585
plaisir 😊	1548	vous 😊	300	journée 😊	564

In Table 2, it appears that the most common emoji used alongside our three emoji are very similar: 7 emoji are shared through the top-10 collocations of the three emoji. First, SF is most often used with emoji representing or containing hearts: 😊, ❤️, 😊 and ☺, suggesting its tendency to be used as an emoji expressing the user’s positive emotions or for relational purposes. While 😊 is the most frequent emoji used in combination with both SF and SFSE, it only appears in seventh position in the top-10 emoji collocations of SSF.

Among the most common emoji associated with SSF are two particular emoji: 😏 and 🤔. Interestingly, these two emoji are the only emoji present in Table 3 that are not traditionally used to express a positive emotion. Instead, 😏 often carries an interpretative function, signaling irony or awkwardness in the textual content of a tweet (Solomon, 2016), while 🤔 is used to express doubt or suspicion. These observations hint again at the fact that SSF can be used in contexts that are not as positive as those in which SF and SFSE are mostly used, and that it can carry other linguistic functions than the expressive and relational functions traditionally associated with the different emoji representing smiling faces. Also, SFSE appears as the tenth most frequent emoji used in association with SSF, suggesting that they are often used together in the same tweet to emphasise the positive emotions that they convey.

Table 2. Ten most common emoji appearing alongside each of the three emoji in question.

😊 SFSE	<i>N</i>	😄 SF	<i>N</i>	😊 SSF	<i>N</i>
😊	18454	😊	3077	😊	3416
😄	14198	👩	2926	👉	2455
👉	10987	❤️	2276	👩	1224
❤️	10506	😊	2258	❤️	1197
😊	8608	👉	2142	😊	1137
👩	8078	😊	2000	😊	1122
😊	7523	😊	1831	😊	997
😊	4944	😊	1492	👋	984
🌟	4923	😊	1138	🤔	916
👋	4776	☐	969	😊	852

Then, we evaluate the relationship between the presence of one of the three emoji in question in a tweet and the overall sentiment of the textual content of that tweet. Figures 1 and 2 show that, based on both Vader and TextBlob sentiment scores, the textual content of tweets containing SSF is significantly less positive than that of tweets containing SF or SFSE. The Kruskal-Wallis H-test reveals that the difference in sentiment score assigned to the textual content of the tweet of the text across depending on the emoji present in the tweet is significant, both by using Vader ($H=1103.21$; $p < 0.001$) and TextBlob ($H=865.48$; $p < 0.001$), indicating a significant association across the dataset between the overall sentiment of the tweet and the smiling emoji used inside it. This appears to confirm the observations made through our collocation analysis. Furthermore, all three emoji are almost always associated to tweets with positive sentiment (scores larger than 0) as well as to tweets with neutral sentiment (score of 0), which are likely cases in which the sentiment of the tweet is added by the emoji themselves. The results in Figures 1 and 2 suggest that the textual content of tweets containing SFSE is overall

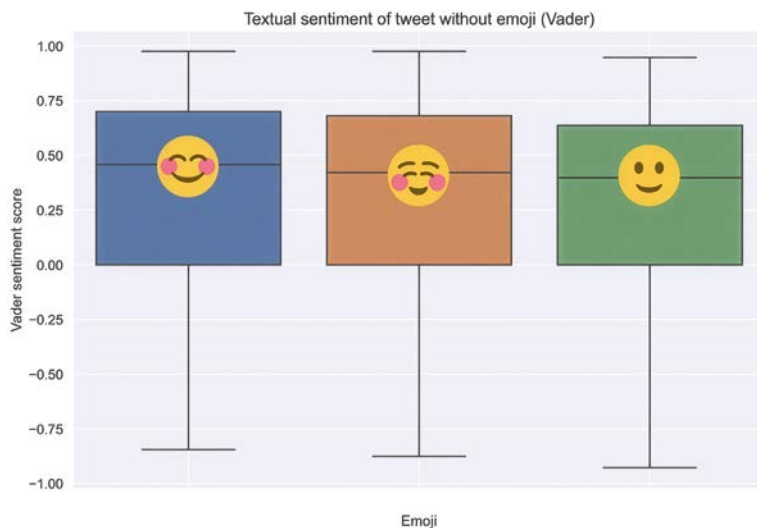


Figure 1. Boxplots representing sentiment of tweets by emoji, using Vader

more positive than that of tweets containing SF. One interpretation that can be made to explain this observation is that SFSE is more frequently used in tweets in which the textual content is already positive in itself, to enhance that emotion through emphatic function, while SF is more often added to express the user's feeling inside a tweet that did not contain any particular positive emotion at textual level.

Below, a handful of tweets from the corpus are presented to illustrate these insights. The English translations of the tweets are ours. In example 1, the speaker conveys their best wishes. The semantic content is positive, with the presence of the SFSE emoji amplifying this positivity. In example 2, the positive expression of the SFSE emoji is enhanced by its repetition. Furthermore, it can be employed as a punctuation mark to separate two sentences, as evidenced by the use of a capital letter in the first word of the second sentence ('Thank'). The semantic content of example 3 is purely informative. It describes properties specific to Maine Coons. The SF emoji takes on a relational function here, being used to maintain a cordial relationship with the interlocutor. The semantic content of example 4 is negative, and the message can be interpreted as passive-aggressive. Negative politeness is found in the corpus alongside SSF emoji, which is assumed to carry a politeness function in this context.

- [1] *Félicitations à vous deux ! Plein de bonheur pour votre famille 😍*
 Congratulations to you both! Best wishes to your family 😍
- [2] *Les souvenirs se créent toujours 😊😊😊 Merci pour votre générosité et que Dieu vous bénisse*
 Memories are always made 😊😊😊 Thank you for your generosity and God bless you

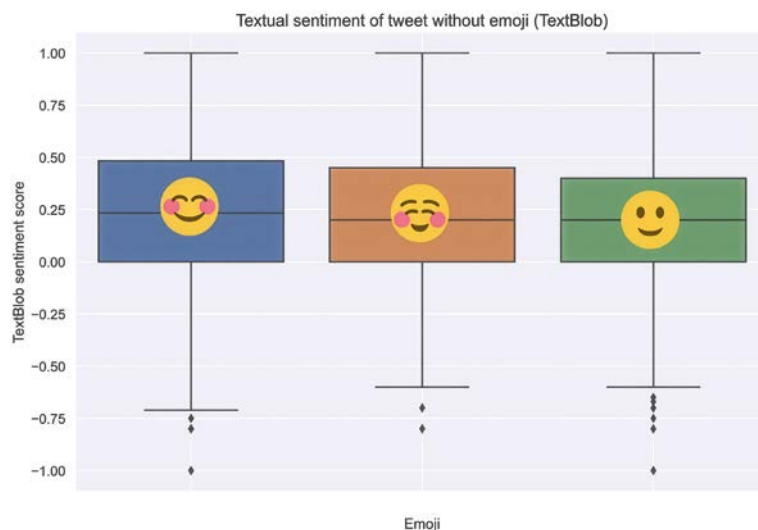


Figure 2. Boxplots representing sentiment of tweets by emoji, using TextBlob

- [3] *Il y a beaucoup de Main Coon qui sont polydactile, par exemple. Ca leur permet notamment d'ouvrir les portes ou autres car leurs sixièmes « doigts » servent comme des pouces 😊*
 Many Main Coons, for example, are polydactile. This allows them to open doors and such, as their sixth 'finger' acts as a thumb 😊
- [4] *Si tu es contagieux tu risques de contaminer des gens qui pourraient en mourir... mais c'est ton choix... 😊*
 If you're contagious you risk infecting people who could die from it ... but that's your choice ... 😊

Then, we also examined how the sentiment of the textual content of tweets in our corpus evolved through time, based on the emoji used in the tweets. We did not look at tweets before 2017, first because SF and SFSE were only added to Twitter in 2015, second because our corpus did not contain enough tweets per emoji per year before 2017 (less than 2000). We randomly extracted 2500 tweets per emoji per year, for a total of 52,500 emoji, and represented in Figure 3 the mean sentiment of all tweets published each year based on the emoji they contained. While we do not have a hypothesis for the increase in positive sentiment of tweets between 2017 and 2018, it appears clearly that since 2018, mean sentiment of textual content has been decreasing consistently, especially for tweets containing SSF. Over the seven years, SSF has always been associated with the less positive tweets on average. The gap in average sentiment between tweets containing SFSE and SSF seems to become larger year after year since 2018.

These results suggest that the simultaneous presence of these similar 'smiling face' emoji in the emoji lexicon has forced each individual emoji to find its own space and

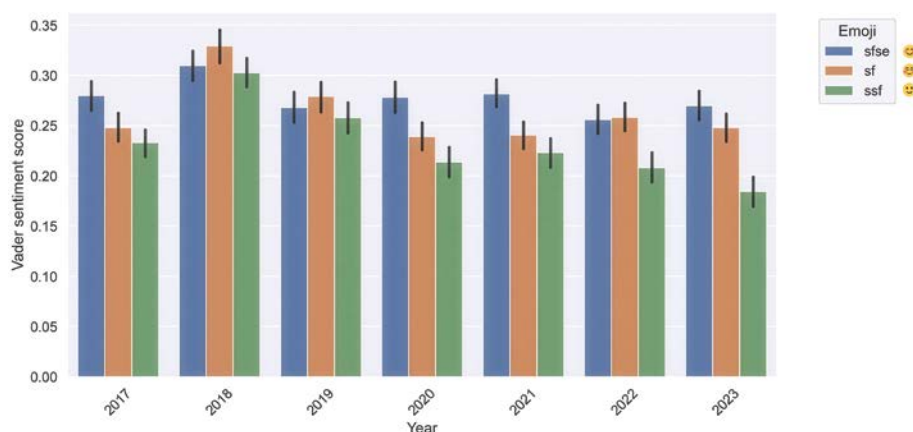


Figure 3. Mean sentiment of tweet (using Vader) based on emoji, by year, between 2017 and 2023 (2,500 tweets per year). Confidence intervals (95 %) are represented as black sticks

take on different functions in CMC. However, they do share some common functions. Most of the three emoji have a relational function in the service of politeness, whether positive or negative, and are generally associated with neutral or positive content. They are therefore generally used to manage the faces of the interlocutors and are more often found in passive or assertive communication (*cf.* Section 2.1). It should be noted that SSF and SFSE have in common that they sometimes carry a structural function, acting as punctuation marks, which does not appear to be as often the case for SF. In terms of positivity, we can clearly see two groups of emoji forming: SFSE and SF on the one hand, and SSF on the other. What SFSE and SF share is that they are often used with the pronouns *toi* (“you”), which is a personal pronoun that indicates a more intimate relationship, and with other emoji that show a heart and are therefore positive. Conversely, SSF is the only emoji that is very rarely used with *toi*, acting as an introducer of a negative sentence and accompanied by emoji that express negative or ambiguous emotions such as irony or suspicion. Finally, since 2020, SFSE has accompanied more positive content than SF or SSF, and the positive content of SSF has decreased since 2018. It therefore seems consistent to say that SFSE and SF are the representation of a genuine smile, as opposed to SSF, which can more often be considered as the digital embodiment of a miserable smile or a false smile, depending on the context in which it is used.

5 Conclusions

Analysing the uses of these three emoji in French tweets enabled us to statistically validate what we can observe in resources such as Emojipedia. In French, the SSF emoji behaves differently from the other two emoji based on the same graphical criteria (smile with mouth closed). Although it is often used to express politeness, it does not always have the same functions and does not always appear in the same emotional and conversational contexts. And this trend seems to have been confirmed over the years.

Emoji	Fonction	Contexte	Positivité
 SSF	• Main use for politeness (relational function) • Use as punctuation (structural function) • Introduction of a clause beginning with a negative conjunction (structural function)	• Most often accompanied by 😏 (irony) and 🤔 (suspicion) • Not often used with "toi"	• Most often associated with positive or neutral content • Least positive content • Fall in positivity between 2018 and 2023
 SF	• Main use for politeness (relational function)	• Most used with heart emojis • Most often accompanied by 😊 • Often used with SFSE • Often used with "toi"	• Most often associated with positive or neutral content • Positive content (not far from SFSE) • Globally in second place since 2020
 SFSE	• Main use for politeness (relational function) • Use as punctuation (structural function)	• Most often accompanied by 😊 • Often used with "toi" • Often used with SF	• Most often associated with positive or neutral content • Most positive content • Globally in first place since 2020

Figure 4. Summary of the findings for each of the three 'Smiling' emoji.

Our observations also raised new questions. For example, the drop in positivity of SF from 2019 onwards should be questioned, and it could be interesting to explore a possible link with the growing reliance on CMC during the covid crisis which began around that time.

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Gender-specific emoji in self-presentations on Tinder

In the realm of online dating, where self-presentation plays a crucial role, emojis have become powerful tools for expressing emotions, interests, and identity, i.e., in impression management. This study examines how individuals employ emoji in their Tinder profiles to express opinions about themselves and their expected dates. Following previous investigations, it was assumed that women and men tend to resort to different types of emoji with varying frequencies to evoke emotions in self-presentation and attract potential dates. The study employs several advanced computational tools that enable the analysis of emoji in isolation and texts containing emoji (such as emoji topic modelling and sentiment analysis). The results reveal which basic emotions are present in self-presentations and what topics are represented by emoji. It has been noticed that women tend to use more emotional emoji, the topics chiefly revolve around feelings in the case of women and achievements and skills in the case of men, and that women use more emoji, and their variety is higher than in male accounts.

Keywords: *Tinder, self-presentation, emoji, gender differences*

1 Introduction

Emerging due to the increasing digitalisation of contemporary communication, mainly through social media, emoji can be seen as a language in its own right, which rapidly grows from a once-marginal, teenage-specific form of expression to a widespread form of textual communication employed by individuals regardless of their age. The popularity of emoji may be seen in the fact that emotional expression is not easy to signal in writing. Unlike in a text, in face-to-face communication, emotions are expressed by the tone of voice, posture, facial expression, gestures and other non-verbal and para-verbal features, i.e., through a full-blown multimodal interaction, which any written text is deprived of. To compensate for this hiatus, emoticons and, later, emoji started to be used. They either repeat, substitute, or reinforce words, and can potentially encode a wide range of emotions. Emoji have been commonly deployed in social media, particularly in dating apps such as Tinder, where they frequently appear in self-presentations that are typically succinct and marked for a playful tone. Self-presentation is a form of impression management wherein the authors describe themselves as individuals potentially interacting with the “imagined audiences in networked digital space” (Ge, 2019, p. 427).

The aim of this paper is to compare the use of emojis in self-presentation descriptions on Tinder, displayed on male versus female accounts, in terms of their frequency across

genders, the sentiment they express, and the emotions and topics they revolve around. In what follows, the concept of self-presentation (along with self-disclosure) as a form of impression management, seen from the perspective of psychology and sociology, will be accounted for in section 2, followed by self-presentation studies across genders on dating apps in section 3. As an example of a dating app, Tinder will be described in section 4, where a justification for choosing it in the current study will also be presented. The following section (5) will be devoted to the second keyword, emoji definitions, and section 6 to emoji used across genders. These theoretical considerations will be followed by a description of the data and methodology employed in this study, as well as the research questions (Section 7) and the results of the analysis (Section 8), along with the emerging conclusions (Section 9).

2 Self-presentation and self-disclosure as a form of impression management

Impression management, self-promotion and self-presentation are concepts that, to some extent, overlap and tend to be used interchangeably (Leary & Kowalski 1990: 34). Initially embedded in its thrust in (social) psychology (Heider, 1958; Jones, 1964; Jones & Berglas, 1978; Schlenker, 1980; Schneider, 1981; Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981; Hogan et al., 1985) and sociology (Goffman, 1959), impression management (IM) has been defined as “the process by which people control the impressions others form of them” (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 34), it is a “conscious or unconscious attempt to control the images” projected in social interaction (Schlenker, 1980, p. 6). For Goffman (1959), however, IM is believed to be conveyed consciously and intentionally; it is “given” to use Goffman’s (1959) parlance, rather than “given off”, that is, revealed unintentionally (e.g., through nonverbal communication in a natural setting). Generally speaking, IM is thus a broad term, and it may refer to non-verbal clues, i.e., taking specific measures, for example, getting involved in some events, showing oneself in particular environments and milieu, surrounding oneself with carefully selected influential individuals, manipulating non-verbal clues (general image, ways of speaking, choice of clothes, making conscious choices regarding body posture and movement, especially within proxemics and kinesics), as well as to verbal expression. More seldom, it may even form impressions one has about oneself (Greewald & Breckler, 1985; Hogan et al., 1985), a thesis with which some scholars (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) disagree. If IM refers to a person managing one’s impression exerted on others, it is often used as a synonym for self-presentation (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 34; Rosenbaum et al., 2013, p. 33).

In literature, self-presentation is a strategic measure undertaken by a performing self that aims at conveying “an impression to others which it is in his interest to convey” (Goffman, 1959, p. 4). Goffman’s understanding of self-presentation thus focuses on guiding the impression receivers should have, i.e., in a way on controlling how others are to perceive us. Similarly, Jones and Pittman (1982) claim that self-presentation involves one’s efforts to “create in specific others an impression that is for one reason or another desired” by the person (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 233). The “specific others” in the present study are individuals who have accounts on Tinder and are potential dates. The specific reason, in turn, is in our study the act of encouraging these potential individuals

of the opposite sex to meet and establish a romantic relationship. On the other hand, Leary and Kowalski (1990) see self-presentations as a way to comply with the expectations others have about us.

Self-presentation may aim at approval seeking, whereby individuals focus on presenting their attractiveness, dubbed acquisitive self-presentation, or disapproval avoidance, whereby presenters safeguard against rejection and negative comments, referred to as protective self-presentation (Arkin, 1980). It is believed to be conducted consciously or unconsciously; however, online presentations tend to be more controlled than offline interactions (Krämer & Winter, 2008, p. 114). Jones and Pittman (1982) proposed a self-presentation taxonomy comprising ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication. While the scholars treated these strategies as conceptually distinct and unique, most of them can be easily combined to achieve a common goal of self-promotion. In particular, ingratiation, which aims at making others like us, and exemplification, which makes salient one's virtues by providing examples, may be used for self-promotion. Indeed, in more recent typologies, exemplification and ingratiation are treated as strategies operating under the self-promotion rubric, both of which are labelled as impression management tactics by Waung et al. (2017, p. 727). With limited space on the Tinder platform and the general tendency to provide concise self-presentations rather than elaborate ones, exemplifications tend to be shown through single pictograms in lieu of a description of one's deeds. Along with exemplification and ingratiation, another self-promotion strategy comprises positive self-description (Waung et al., 2017, p. 727) and enhancement, i.e., increasing the value of an event for which an individual was responsible (Waung et al., 2017; Ellis et al., 2020). Claiming credit for a positive event or outcome, a phenomenon referred to as entitlement (Ellis et al., 2020), also positively contributes to successful self-promotion. Finally, when an individual builds their image on the idea of successfully overcoming obstacles they had to confront to achieve their goals, we deal with the self-promotion tactic dubbed by Ellis et al. (2020) as overcoming obstacles. Compared to the recent approaches, Jones and Pittman (1982, p. 241) view self-promotion as seeking the attribution of competence encompassing both abilities (intelligence, physical abilities) and skills (e.g., artistic skills, etc.) rather than likeability (which is an ingratiation strategy), and that this is done by making others notice the attributions of competence. In the context of Tinder self-presentations, this can be realised by emojis showing some sports the author practices to boast their abilities. In a similar vein, Leary (1995, p. 100) defines self-promotion as self-presentation tactics people endorse when they "try to be perceived as competent, knowledgeable, or skilled".

Self-promotion (including its subtypes of enhancement, entitlements, overcoming obstacles, positive self-description and ingratiation) belongs to the so-called **assertive impression management tactics**, proposed by both Waung et al., (2017) and Ellis et al., (2020), whose aim is to bolster one's image (Ellis et al., 2003, p. 1201). On the other hand, excuses, justifications and apologies instantiate the so-called defensive tactics, which are used to "protect or repair one's image" (Ellis et al., 2003, p. 1201) or to protect

one's face¹ (Goffman, 1967). Furthermore, denials and disclaimers may also be classified as strategies of self-presentation, as proposed by van Dijk (2008, p. 209), yet he views them as examples of positive self-presentation whose aim is face-protecting. On the other hand, supplication mentioned above, proposed by Jones and Pittman (1982), may also be deployed for self-promotion, albeit it aims at accomplishing one's goals indirectly, i.e., at a small cost and by capitalising on the exposure of one's weaknesses or incompetence (which may but do not need to be genuine) in order to obtain help or to cede one's tasks to others. Self-promoting self-presentation, realised through supplication, thus strengthens deficiencies and apparent lack of resources, which may evoke beneficial self-promotion results.

Self-presentation is often used interchangeably with another similar term, namely self-disclosure, yet they are not conceptually identical (Kim & Dindia, 2011). Self-disclosure is a term that originated in and is widely used in psychology, and it is a strategy closely connected with impression management. In psychology, it is defined as the act of uncovering personal, often intimate, information about oneself (Jourard & Jaffee, 1970). While initially understood as verbal measures, Kim and Dindia (2011, p. 156) expanded the term to encompass images and links posted on the Internet. It is also relevant to some social media platforms, particularly Twitter (Marwick & boyd, 2010) and Tinder. In both cases, information is typically brief and concise. Self-descriptions on Tinder are in the About box, and they allow up to 500 characters (including emoji); hence, emoji, which can replace several words or even whole sentences and create a narrative out of a sequence thereof, is a common form used for self-presentation. Self-disclosure is a concept crucial for the study of Tinder accounts, where chasing a date and potential romantic and/or sexual relationship encourages authors to disclose more personal or even intimate information about themselves.

Finally, Miller et al. (1992, pp. 390–393) distinguished between positive disclosure and boasting. Both forms are built on expressing self-praise. According to these authors, emphasising one's competencies, attributes, dispositional qualities, low effort, their worth to others and stressing their superiority over others are typical of boasting while emphasising responsibility, high effort, highlighting the role of others in this process and expressing one's gratitude to them, or even showing surprise and minimising one's success are tokens of positive disclosure. Boasting relies on competitiveness, confidence, and pride, and is more likely to be used by males. In contrast, positive disclosure is often built on tentativeness, the help of others, and measures requiring hard work, and is more common in women's talk.

Taken together, impression management encompasses a number of tactics (assertive or defensive), one of which is self-promotion (assertive tactic), which in turn may involve several strategies, such as entitlements, enhancements, overcoming obstacles, positive self-description and ingratiation (i.e., boasting) or emphasising responsibility, effort and hard work (e.g., positive self-disclosure). The other impression management tactics (de-

1 Goffman (1967, p. 5) defines the term face as follows: "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact".

fensive tactics) encompass excuses, justifications, apologies, denials, disclaimers, or even supplication, and may also involve some strategies, notably self-disclosure (positive or negative). Self-disclosure can focus either on the person's self-disclosing attributes, i.e., self-enhancement, or on their weaknesses, i.e., self-depreciation (Jones & Wortman, 1973; Miller et al., 1992, p. 366). This paper claims that self-promotion may not only rely on assertive IM tactics, as contended by Ellis et al. (2020), but also on defensive IM tactics. In the context of Tinder self-presentations, it is expected that the predominant strategy employed for impression management will be based on self-enhancement, with self-depreciation being a marginal tactic and primarily used for humorous purposes.

3 Self-presentation on dating apps

Dating apps offer individuals new opportunities for self-presentation. They have "increased control" in self-presentation management over other potential romantic partners who share "local proximity" (Ward, 2017, p. 1645; Ellison, Hancock, & Toma, 2012). Therefore, impression construction in the self-description box is usually a carefully planned process (Ward, 2017, p. 1651). Users have limited space for self-presentation, with a description of up to 500 characters, where emojis are also counted as characters. The first thing one can see while swiping candidates is a picture, on which basis the decision to swipe right or left is usually made. It is thus pictorial information, i.e., physical attraction, which seems to be decisive. With the limited characters at hand, as mentioned above, emoji are often preferred over longer verbal descriptions as they are space-effective in conveying informative self-descriptions.

While Tinder is a form of meeting dates that is widely used (see section 4 for details) and extremely popular, it is not free from faults, one of which is intentional exaggeration or deception in self-presentation due to "reduced cues" (Ellison et al., 2011) in computer-mediated communication (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2006; Fiore & Donath, 2004; Toma & Hancock, 2010; Hall et al., 2010; Whitty, 2008; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Guadagno et al., 2012; Toma et al., 2008; Hancock et al., 2007). While most dating app users wish to receive a self-presentation which is balanced in self-promotion and accuracy (Ellison et al., 2011), misrepresentation in self-descriptions in online dating apps is a frequent concern among app users (Gibbs et al., 2011), even if daters are not fully aware of being deceptive (Ellison et al., 2006; Whitty, 2008). The decisions regarding what to disclose and what to conceal resonate with Goffman's (1959), Jones and Pittman's (1982), as well as Leary and Kowalski's (1990) approaches to self-presentation mentioned above, wherein self-presentation aims at influencing the target receivers in the way desired by the author of the self-description; in other words, it is strategic, censored and well planned.

Authenticity claims are common problems for Tinder users (Duguay, 2017) and they do not seem unjustified. Several studies have reported that while men tend to increase their height, women tend to decrease their weight (Hall et al., 2010; Toma & Hancock, 2010). Height is definitely important for men, as the data analysed below demonstrate (see example 3), since the sentence "Height is supposedly important, so I am ... cm high") is often a part of male descriptions. Exposing height by men in their

self-descriptions is likely to stem from the assumption that tallness is seen as a token of masculinity (Jackson & Ervin, 1992), as women tend to be shorter than men (Ruff, 2002), as well as high social status and dominance (Buss, 1994). Yancey and Emerson (2014) note that in Western cultures, women tend to admit to being more attracted to tall males. Such optimisation behaviour in online identity construction often stems from Tinder users' desire to catch the attention of specific other users they wish to attract. Thus, they adjust their profile to their imagined expectations of an ideal dater and the idealised version of themselves and publish a more favourable impression of themselves, a strategy known as selective self-presentation (Walther, 1996). This practice is so common that online daters often take this embellishment strategy of self-presentation into account when analysing self-descriptions (Heino et al., 2010).

The idealised version of themselves need not follow hidden deceitful intentions, as they may result from imperfect self-knowledge. Tinder users present themselves in the way they see themselves, which may disagree with how others perceive them, a phenomenon known as a 'foggy mirror' (Ellison et al., 2011, p. 4); therefore, misrepresentation can but need not be purposeful. Authenticity adjustments in self-presentation become problematic when Tinder users aim to meet a genuine partner for an offline relationship as they run the risk of confrontation, leading to revealing their flaws and possible rejection based on the discord between their adjusted online self-presentation and their authentic offline selves (Ellison et al., 2011, p. 2).

However, finding a partner in the real world is not always why dating app users create a profile on Tinder. Ranzini and Lutz (2017) also note that the motivation for relying on Tinder in establishing relationships (whether online or offline) differs across genders: men primarily seek hook-up sex and travelling companions more often than women do, who are more oriented towards finding friendship and affirming self-validation. This observation partially resonates with Timmermans et al.'s study (2018, p. 135), which showed that seeking one's value on the dating market was one of the motivations for users who were already in relationships. In connection with this, Ranzini and Lutz (2017) also noticed that Tinder users with high self-esteem tended to construct more authentic and less deceptive profiles, while Gibbs et al. (2006) discovered that daters who pursued relationships in the real world also tended to be more honest in their self-disclosure and disclosed personal and intimate information about themselves expecting potential future dates to reciprocate.

4 Tinder

The data used in this study were retrieved from Tinder, a location-based, real-time dating app launched in 2012 that allows both synchronous and asynchronous communication. It is best known for its swipe-left, swipe-right method of choosing potential dates. By right-swiping, people anonymously indicate who they are interested in meeting and dating. The swiping options are constrained by geographical proximity, sex and age, all of which can be set by the user. Along with durable relationships envisaged in the real world, however, casual sex and sheer killing boredom have also been recognised as the reasons why individuals swipe Tinder (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017), as well

as sheer social entertainment or ego-boost (Ward, 2017, p. 1649). Tinder has rapidly achieved global popularity. According to Statista², Tinder was the leading dating application by downloads in 2022, with 66 million downloads worldwide. Tinder is also the most used dating app by the younger population in terms of activity (Statista, 2018). The second most popular dating app in 2022 was Bumble, with only 28 million downloads from global users, and Badoo ranked third, with 26 million downloads. In June 2023, Tinder was the leading dating app in the Google Play Store worldwide by number of downloads, with over 3,5 million downloads, leaving all its competitive apps well behind (with Bumble being in second place with only 1,5 million downloads). Due to its popularity, Tinder was selected for the present study of the use of emoji in dating apps.

5 Emoji types

Emoji are pictorial elements (pictographs) used by individuals to express emotions (Cramer et al., 2016, p. 504), which are used to repeat or reinforce the expressive language encoded verbally or to substitute it. They should be distinguished from emoticons, their predecessors, which are based on combinations of ASCII signs. Face-based image emoji and activity-based image emoji were distinguished by Grosz et al. (2023a), yet the former, which comment on the propositions they are appended to, are believed to be the most frequent ones (Grosz et al., 2023b). It is also the face-based emoji that are carriers of emotions to a greater extent than activity-based images. Structurally, emoji can be divided into text-embedded and stand-alone emoji; the latter are less frequently studied than the former (Weissman, 2024, p. 16).

Two general pragmatic functions of emoji were distinguished by Danesi (2016): adding tone and injecting a positive mood of friendliness and pleasantness. The former disambiguates written discourse by providing an “emotive tone”, and the latter is a “significant thought unit” to enable visualisation of the author’s mood (Danesi, 2016, pp. 95–96). Yang and Liu (2020) are more specific and propose five functions, which encompass replacing word(s), repeating meaning already existing in a text, adding an emotional tone, adding non-tonal contextual information and using emoji creatively to add jocularity. These categories are not mutually exclusive; for example, the last subtype can simultaneously illustrate the third and fourth categories. While a number of typologies of emoji have been offered in recent years, Herring and Ge-Bradnyk (2023, p. 2) complain that “no consensus exists among them” and terminology is used inconsistently, “resulting in a proliferation of labels for the same phenomenon”.

6 Emoji use gender-wise

Analysing the use of emojis by gender, a number of scholars have noted higher results in the use of emojis among women (e.g., Herring & Dainas, 2017; Pohl et al., 2017; Prada et al., 2018). As indicated by Herring and Dainas (2018, p. 1), emoji are seen as “cute, feminine” and may be perceived in some cultures as “inappropriate for males”. Consistent with these observations, Chen et al. (2017) report a slight trend among women to

2 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1284769/top-dating-apps-global-by-downloads/>),

deploy emojis rather than among men, with the difference amounting to 53 % versus 47 %, respectively. Tossell et al. (2012) notice that women tend to resort to emoji twice more often than men, and van Berlo (2019) claims that they resort to emoji in self-presentation 1.38 times more often than men. The higher usage of emoji among women was not supported by a study conducted by Huffaker and Calvert (2005), who analysed the frequency of emoji on teen blogs and reported a trend of resorting to emoji (and emoticons) more often by males than females.

Nevertheless, most studies seem to support the view that expressing emotions through emoji is the domain of females. Interestingly, Butterworth et al. (2019) and Prada et al. (2018) conducted experiments whose results suggest that women use more emojis than men, but when men use emojis, they receive more positive reactions than women. Tossell et al. (2012) attribute this online behaviour to the fact that deploying emojis is more typical of women, who are stereotypically perceived as more emotional, oriented towards caring relationships, showing understanding, and being supportive. Consequently, males are more celebrated for acting in a more traditionally feminine manner.

Gender differences are also visible in the choice of emoji in communication. As noted by Hernandez et al. (2016), women tend to resort to emoji encoding friendship and joy (a face blowing a kiss with a heart shape and a smiling face), whereas men prefer signalling ‘ok’ (thumb up and ok hand), which corroborates the claims mentioned above that women employ more emotion-laden emoji. Van Berlo (2019), on the other hand, noticed that the ‘flag’ (🏳️) was the most popular emoji in the case of both males and females, followed by the ‘winking face’ (😉) in male descriptions and the ‘red heart’ in female biographies. Women and men frequently resorted to the ‘victory hand’ (👊) and the ‘smiling face with smiling eyes’ (😊).

7 Research aim, data sampling and methods of analysis

For data sampling, two fake accounts were created on Tinder in Polish, one for a man and one for a woman living in northern Poland. Following a systematic sampling method, 330 self-presentations were retrieved of men and women interested in heterogeneous relationships with Tinder users aged 35 to 45, i. e., up to five years older or younger than the fake account owners’ age. The total number of emoji adds up to 1095 (Table 1), which is a comparable size to other studies of emoji; e. g., Escouflaire (2021) relied on 1200 emoji in his study. The aim of the study is thus to examine the way Tinder users express opinions about themselves in order to attract possible dates.

Table 1. Emoji occurrences in male vs female self-presentations

Number of unique male profiles	Number of unique female profiles	Total number of emoji
165	165	1095

The data were collected manually for several months and immediately anonymised (December 2023 to May 2024). The search was set for other Tinder users remaining within a distance of a hundred kilometres from the fake accounts’ IP location.

The emoji typology employed in this study relies on the taxonomy proposed by Herring and Ge-Stadnyk (2023), described above, which includes modification emojis, i.e., they modify the existing text (illocutionary force indicating devices), and emojis that function as speech acts and actions (illocutionary acts). Along with emoji which modify existing textual meaning, in our analysis, emoji which are text substitutes, whether occurring as stand-alone single emoji or marshalled in a sequence, were also considered.

In connection with the general aim of the study, the following research questions will be pursued:

RQ1: Which self-presentation tactics and strategies are the predominant ones expressed by self-presentations that contain emoji, gender-wise?

RQ2: What are the predominant emoji and emoji-based topics in males' vs females' self-presentations?

RQ3: What is the predominant sentiment across genders?

The method of analysis followed the steps described below. Firstly, self-presentations were coded with the aid of Atlas.ti software (version 25.0.1.32924), where the descriptions were evaluated regarding tactics and strategies (RQ1). Next, each emoji was extracted from the descriptions to count their frequencies across genders and identify the predominating topics (topic modelling; RQ2). Finally, all descriptions were translated into English with the help of AI (ChatGPT 4), which enabled uploading the texts to the lexicon-based sentiment software VADER (utilising the SEANCE app) and identifying both the general sentiment, sentiment-related themes, and predominant emotions (RQ3).

8 Research results

The presentation of research results will begin with some general observations regarding the descriptions contained in self-presentations, encompassing both emojis and the accompanying texts. The primary tactics and strategies will be identified and presented quantitatively (with some qualitative analyses for illustration) with the view to observing differences between male and female accounts (section 8.1). In the next section, solely emoji will be analysed, namely their frequency (section 8.2) and the prevailing topics encoded by them (section 8.3). The sentiments and emotions conveyed by the self-presentations refer to the emojis and the texts in which they are embedded (section 8.4). In the same section, sentiment-related themes calculated solely based on the textual layer will be provided to complement the study.

8.1 Self-presentation tactics and strategies

The strategies (in line with Miller et al., 1992) and tactics (in line with Waung et al., 2017, and Ellis et al., 2020) discussed above were assigned to each self-presentation. In most descriptions, there is more than one emoji, and there is more than one sentence with emoji that is/are either in the initial-, mid- or (chiefly) final position. The basic unit of analysis was assumed to span one description with at least one emoji unless a single description contained several sentences, each representing a different form of tactics or

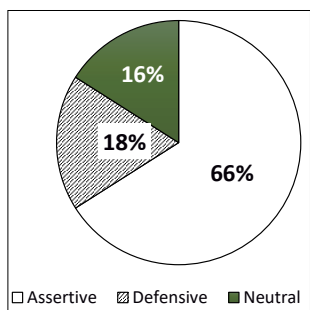


Figure 1. Self-presentation tactics used in male accounts

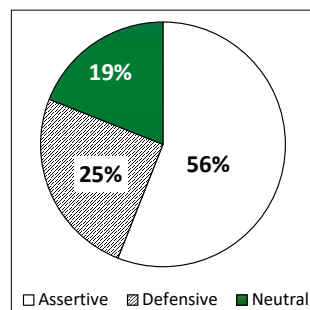


Figure 2. Self-presentation tactics used in female accounts

strategy, in which case one description was assigned several categories. The quantitative analysis of tactics is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

As can be seen, men tend to rely on more assertive, straightforward descriptions (66%) and resort to modesty, uncertainty, hedging or unemotional tactics in 34% of cases. On the other hand, while about half of the female accounts also display self-assured and adventurous women (56%), almost the other half (44%) contain neutral descriptions, bashfulness, diffidence, or embarrassment.

Occasionally, descriptions were encountered wherein the authors did not focus on themselves but on the target date, enumerating their expectations; hence, this category was also considered. This is undoubtedly a way of self-presentation since the author defines himself/herself through his or her expectations from a possible romantic relationship, which implicitly reflect the author's personality, lifestyle, attitudes, education, etc. The expectations category will be added to the strategies as an example of an implicit self-presentation strategy. Another strategy added in this study is 'boasting', which, technically speaking, can be classified as a subtype of self-disclosure, yet in the context of Tinder accounts, exaggerating or highlighting one's features seems vital as they strongly contribute to strong self-promotion, unlike sheer enumeration of one's features; hence, 'boasting' is distinguished from 'self-disclosure'.

Example³ (1) below illustrates a case wherein the male author's description adopts assertive tactics, yet he does not reveal any personal or intimate information about himself (which is typical of disclosure strategy). Furthermore, he does not write about his skills and appearance. Hence, it is not an example of a boasting strategy either. The description is thus classified as 'Expectations', which is seen as an implicit projection of the author's personality, skills, social status, etc. Therefore, instead of describing or boasting about these achievements or disclosing more personal and intimate features, the light is cast on the potential partner who needs to match the author's preferences.

3 Due to the change of policy issued in the new Regulations by Tinder in 2024, after the collection of these data, in order to conform to the current policy all the quotations originally cited in this paper have been converted into paraphrases.

The expectations reflect the author's disposition. Interestingly, the sentence-final emoji (beaming face with smiling eyes) in the quotation below (1) shifts the self-presentation into a humorous tone.

- (1) *A man would like to meet a lady for the season of autumn and winter with the option of extending the relationship, the aim of which is to share warmth [the winter was severe that year and Poles were encouraged to save energy and gas due to the Russian-Ukrainian war] and spend time together outside. The post ends with 😊.*

Humour can also be achieved by referring to self-deprecating descriptions (2), followed by a self-disclosure, or through boasting as in (3), where emoji symbolising “awesome” (😍) and “cool” (😎) emphasise self-assurance (assertive tactics). Example (4) presents boasting without a humorous tone (assertive tactics). In (5), in turn, we deal with the defensive tactics inasmuch as the female author seems embarrassed to have a Tinder account, judging by the verbal presentation, which is mitigated by the second emoji conveying playful flirting or teasing (😏) suggesting that the embarrassment is not genuine (or is partially true).

- (2) *A man who calls himself a sheriff in a company and a nutcase with the physiognomy of a messed-up peasant 😬, gives advice to approach him in a simple way as he has already experienced many complications in his life and it took him a long time to get back to normal.*
- (3) *A man, a physiotherapist by profession and a musician and photographer by passion, starts his description by providing the reader with his height, which is almost one meter and 90 centimetres, adding that it is supposedly important to mention how high a man is; this information finishes with 😬. He is interested in somebody who has more interests in life than just eating, chilling and sleeping. He does not wish for any very young users to contact him. He is not fit, but he calls himself a sportsman. He finishes by saying that he is awesome 😎 and recommends himself.*
- (4) *A man is interested in sports, loves to eat, is ambitious and positive 😊, and is very active 🏋️ 🏋️. As a postscript, he adds that he has two children 😊.*
- (5) *A woman excuses herself by saying that she does not know what she is doing on Tinder, but adds that we only live once, meaning that we should enjoy ourselves 😊 😊.*

In sum, Tinder descriptions can reveal personal features or even intimate details in a relatively neutral tone (self-disclosure), explicitly bragging and possibly exaggerating (boasting), depreciating, most likely in an exaggerated way for humorous purposes (self-deprecating), as well as implicitly, i. e., expressed by defining expectations (enumerating expectations). While boasting and self-deprecating comments can also be classified as self-disclosure, they are not neutral; neutrality is the quality of self-disclosure in this study. Quantitatively, the four strategies across genders are presented in Figure 3, which shows that men tend to boast about their virtues (45 % vs 26 % in the case of women), while women are more prone to disclose information more neutrally (32 % vs

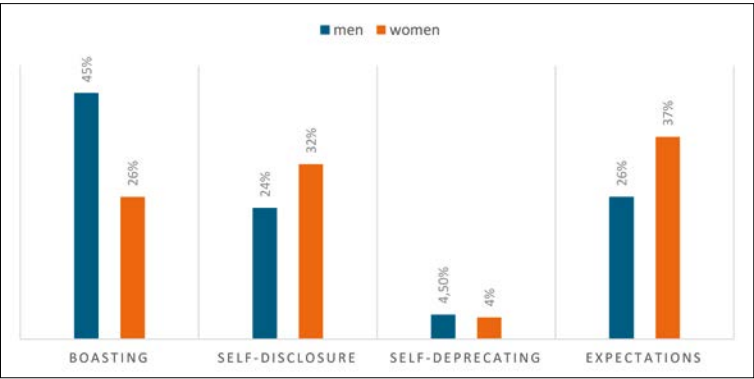


Figure 3. Self-presentation strategies

24 % in the case of men) as well as fill in self-presentation space with verbalising their expectations from a possible date (37 % vs 26 % in the case of men), which described them indirectly.

8.2 Frequency of emoji

One of the first observations is the lower number of emoji employed in self-presentations on male Tinder accounts. The differences are subtle, yet a slight predominance of emoji presence in self-presentations can be observed in female accounts, which supports earlier observation by Chen et al. mentioned above (45 % for males and ca. 55 % for females; Figure 4). Moreover, females express themselves with a broader variety of emoji (58 % of different emoji), compared to males (42 % of varying emoji; Figure 5).

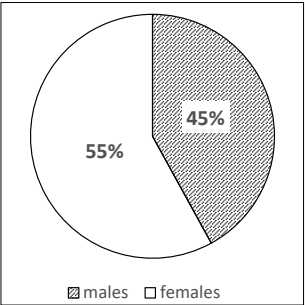


Figure 4. The percentage of emoji in male and female self-presentations

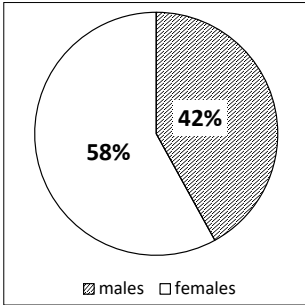


Figure 5. The percentage of unique emoji, gender-wise, in self-presentations

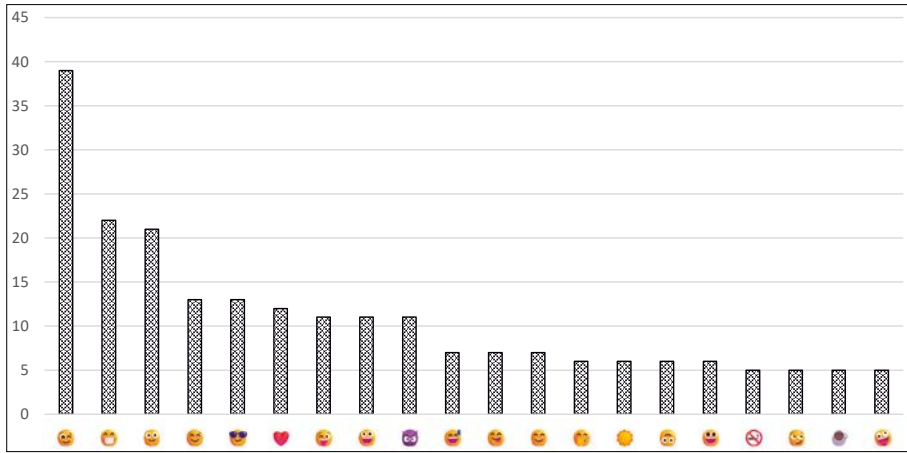


Figure 6. Frequency of emoji in male Tinder self-presentations (above five occurrences)

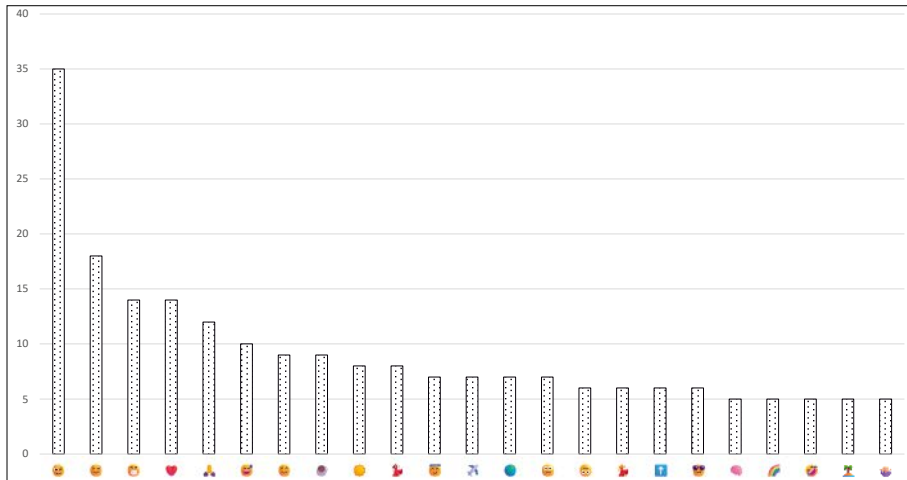


Figure 7. Frequency of emoji in female Tinder self-presentations (above five occurrences)

The most frequently used emoji across genders are presented in Figures 6, 7, 8 and 9. Even a cursory glance at the visualisations below reveals that male self-presentations primarily feature face-based, emotion-laden emojis, whereas female accounts mix face-based and other types of emojis, illustrating activities and objects. The emoji in men's descriptions are also carriers of more straightforward suggestions, such as the face with horns and various faces with the tongue sticking out. Women's self-presentations contain a smaller number of faces with the tongue, and their frequency is at the bottom of the list. Based on these data, it can be concluded that men tend to resort to more expressive, bold and wacky emoji, which are encoded by facial expression in offline communication, where-

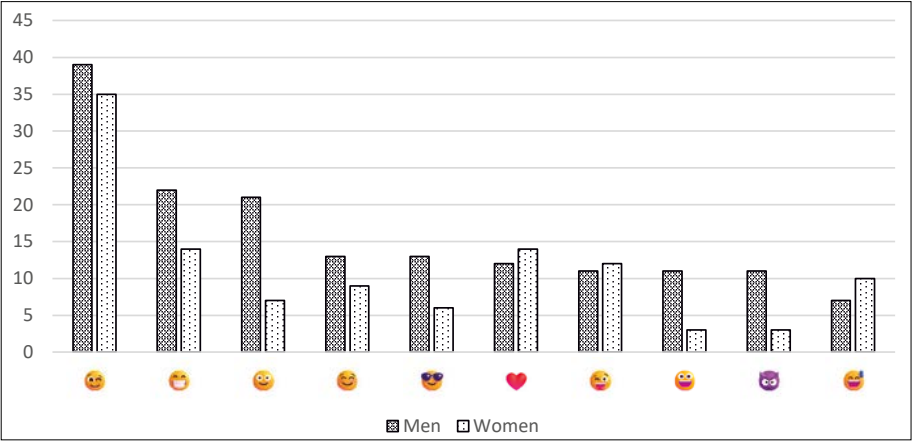


Figure 8. Top ten emoji in male descriptions compared to female accounts

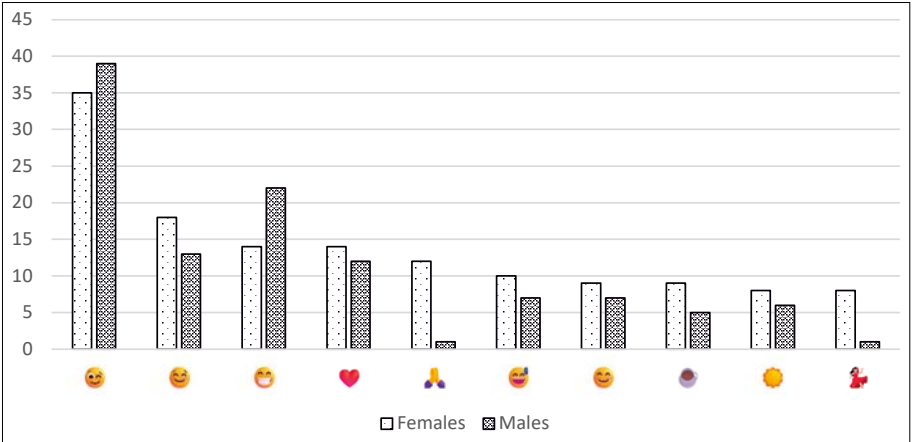


Figure 9. Top ten emoji in female descriptions compared to male accounts (with the exclusion of those illustrated by Figure 8)

as women signal face-encoded emotions, but they also reveal information about their interests conveyed by an object- or entertainment-based emoji (flying, dancing, coffee drinking, travelling or multicultural aspects, book reading). Finally, men boast about their fitness, muscle training, and muscular bodies, thus emphasising their physical attractiveness; they concentrate on themselves. In contrast, women often showcase their favourite activities, one of which is intellectual development (rather than bodybuilding).

Within the emoji used by men, variations of faces prevail (Figure 6), while within female descriptions, there are also several emoji that do not represent faces (Figure 7),

8.2 Topic modelling

Topic 1: 😊😄👍😂😁😃🌺🏡❤️💚🌳🌬️🤖🍫🛶🌲🥩🍳🏇🏆👉

Topic 2: 😊😄😂😁😃📱💎🚲💻🚫☕🧑🦹🙌

Topic 3: ⬅️☀️👉😂😁😃☢️🔞😄🏡🏠🌀🍏👣❤️💻👮🐕🗑️🧑🚜😞🔧🔨

Topic 4: ❤️✈️📌😊😎😃👑🤪👽🍷🔥💰🎓👗🧴👤🧑

Topic 1 revolves around the issues related to spending free time (hiking a mountain, waterside, sailing, forest, etc.) and eating/drinking (spaghetti, meat, coffee, mushrooms). There are also emotions of love and romance and good luck, yet the predominant one is expressed by Beaming Face 😄 (and other forms of smiling faces) and Smirking Face 😏, which is suggestive of amusement and proud and sexual innuendo, respectively.

4 <https://lettier.github.io>

Notably, a hefty body is at the top of the frequency list, which expresses boasting and physical attraction. The activities and drinking and eating preferences are thus to describe the authors' favourite outdoor lifestyle and encourage women to develop a romantic relationship with the author, who is pleased and proud of his achievements (fitness resulting from going to the gym, climbing mountains, practising surfing), travels a lot, and considers himself attractive. The predominant emotions expressed by face-related emojis comprise: pride, happiness, a feeling of being attractive, sexual innuendo, and being a party animal. Overall, a strong, masculine, assertive and active man emerges from Topic 1, who seeks a sexual relationship and offers outdoor adventures.

Topic 2 is dominated by a modest smile (Smiling Face). Love and romance are signalled through flirtation emoji and wackiness. A relationship with a young and dynamic man may be burdened with some risk. Non-face-related emoji signal a small quantity of sports activities, including dangerous sports (e.g., a racing car, rock climbing), healthy lifestyle (avocado emoji, bike emoji, non-smoking emoji) and home activities (laptop) related to work or entertainment. This topic also focuses on technology and computer-related activities, indicating a more indoor lifestyle, yet it also suggests youthfulness and dynamism. Compared to Topic 1, the combination of emojis in Topic 2 focuses more on being young, brave, and enthusiastic about technology. Emotion-wise, Topic 2 is indicative of a less confrontational and less straightforward encouragement to sexual relationships (with an emoji explicitly saying 'no' to casual sex), with a focus on friendship. Generally, it carries a milder tone of expression compared to Topic 1. In both Topics, however, the element of risk is visible.

Topic 3 emphasises a peaceful and positive attitude and joy. Unsophisticated forms of outdoor activities (such as camping, swimming, ping-pong, walking and volleyball) are favoured. Work is also associated with simple professions, such as farming, and skilled trades and hard work are emphasised. The men boast about their practical skills. Technology is not essential (a desktop computer emoji is used rather than one illustrating a laptop). Emotion-wise, there are emoji related to spirituality (😊), which signifies good deeds, angelic behaviour, innocence and purity, as well as emoji that may indicate shyness, embarrassment or distance. The 😊 emoji represents a slightly blushing face and conveys relief, serenity, and gratitude. Similarly, a Face with a Hand over the Mouth shows embarrassment.

On the other hand, the 😏 emoji signals irony or self-deprecating jokes, while Zany Face (😜) conveys goofiness, light-hearted sarcasm and fun. Hugging Face expresses warmth and conveys a friendly invitation to meet. This Topic seems to focus more on companionship than sexual relationships. It also underlines loyalty, friendship and elegance. The tone is mild, playful and calm. Compared to Topics 1 and 2, it appears to have a milder, subdued, and more playful tone, as well as a more spiritually oriented approach to partner-seeking priorities.

Topic 4 emphasises travelling, success, ambition, financial success and education. The sense of being attractive is clearly visible in this theme, too; the attractiveness is not built on physical features (as in Topic 1) but rather on intellectual curiosity, skills and openness to experiments. This topic features a fast-paced, high-flying individual who is confident,

In sum, Topic 1 can be described by masculinity and the desire for sexual adventures, Topic 2 by carefree youthfulness and friendship, Topic 3 by simplicity, loyalty and a down-to-earth attitude to life, and Topic 4 seems to characterise an intellectual and financial high-flyer. In other words, in their descriptions, Tinder male users feature these aspects in their self-presentations through emoji, and they can roughly be divided into those who confidently boast about their physical attraction or intellectual capabilities and success and express interest, more or less explicitly, in their sexual partner pursuits (Topics 1, 2, 4), and those who are more moderate in presenting their virtues and accentuate friendship and companionship in their profiles (Topic 3).

[illegible]

Figure 11. Topic modelling of emoji in female self-presentations

The second Topic describes less assertive women, perhaps even a bit embarrassed, confused and more modest. They are also more romantic and spiritual, possibly interested in magic and fantasy. They are intellectuals, dog lovers, and home lovers, including those who enjoy gardening (🌿). They have a penchant for simple outdoor activities, such as camping, and a healthy lifestyle. Similarly to Topic 1, the descriptions in Topic 2 refer to preferences towards drinking wine, music and dancing. Compared to women delineated in Topic 1, however, they seem calmer, more subdued and less adventurous. Charm, femininity, beauty and romance are emphasised (💄, 🌸), search for a date, awaiting a man (👁️👁️), opening to meetings and a romantic relationship (💞❤️👤).

Topic 3 depicts studious, romantic, prudent, reflective, and spirited women who enjoy practicing yoga, meditating, and reading books, staying at the seaside, riding a bike, drinking coffee, feeling happy and grateful, and/or praying. Judging by the interest in playing video games, it appears to be primarily aimed at young women. This topic seems to present a more introverted type of woman compared to the previous topics. Topic 4

focuses on a traveler, a somewhat insecure, dreamy, and idealistic woman who likes watching movies, reading books, and listening to music, yet at the same time, a rather mischievous and playful person, which might speak to a younger generation.

Overall, the topics depict women by showing their opinions regarding lifestyle preferences and personality features, rather than boasting about their skills, which was more common in descriptions of males. Men more straightforwardly express sexual innuendos and interests, while women highlight femininity, modesty and romanticism.

8.3 Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis is an increasingly popular text analysis method that reveals the tone or evaluation hidden in a collection of texts. VADER sentiment was used in this study and was calculated with the aid of an R Studio script and the *tidyvader* library, which enables one to compute a sentiment analysis for both the textual content and emoji. The choice of VADER, a pre-trained sentiment model, was dictated by three factors: it allows for negation rules (up to three words preceding the target word), it is well-suited to analyse social media as it includes emoji in its lexicon, and finally, as claimed by Hutto and Gilbert (2014, pp. 224–225), it has highly reliable, domain-agnostic results, adding up to 90 % in the identification of negated words, and general accuracy in measuring sentence-level accuracy oscillating around 70 %, which is similar to more sophisticated, machine learning techniques. The values for positive, negative and neutral sentiment for male and female self-presentations are almost the same, with slightly higher results of negative sentiment for men (Men=0.067; Women=0.05) and neutral tone (Men=0.687; Women=0.681), and somewhat lower for positive sentiment for Men (Men=0.246; Women=0.269). However, the outcomes are not sufficiently different across genders to be statistically significant. Overall, it can be observed that both men and women struggle to create a positive image of themselves in their Tinder accounts' self-presentations (Figure 12).

The primary emotions and other categories expressed by self-presentations are shown in Figures 8 and 9. As the emojis analysed in this study were mostly part of textual data, the SEANCE app (Crossley et al., 2017) was applied to the textual data (specifically, the General Inquire and GALC sentiment dictionaries showed the most conspicuous differences) to complement information regarding the context in which the emojis are embedded. The texts are analysed from two aspects: (i) basic emotions, which include joy, fear, hatred, anger and happiness (Figure 13), and (ii) emotion-related themes, which span social relation (indicative of the proportion of language relevant to the description of social roles and social bonds), interests (including male features, possession of vehicles, etc.), (self-)evaluation and feelings (Figure 14). Unlike topic modelling, where topics emerge in a bottom-up fashion and are based solely on emoji, SEANCE (a sentiment analysis tool) reveals emotion-related themes that rely only on the text and are discovered in a top-down fashion.

Men use in their self-presentations more words classified by SA as instantiations of strong emotions, for example, related to *anger*. It is worth mentioning, though, that such words are used for amusement purposes, as the example below demonstrates (2). The

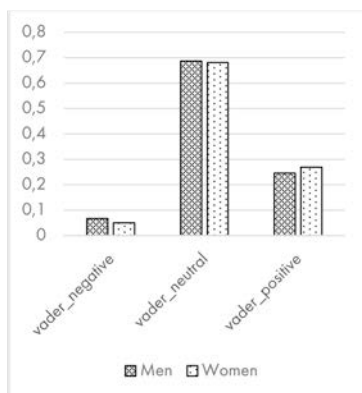


Figure 12. Sentiment analysis (Vader) across genders

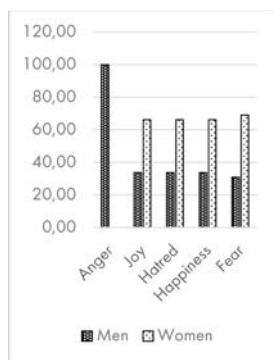


Figure 13. Emotions expressed by texts across genders (in percentages)

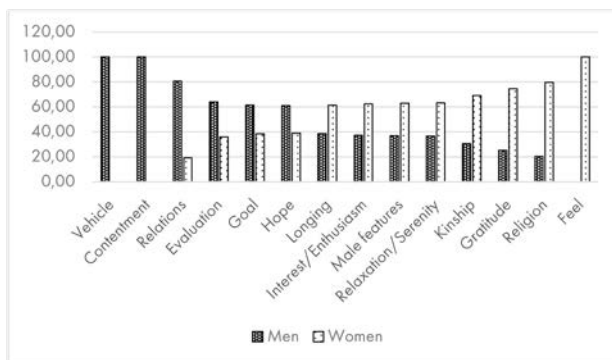


Figure 14. Sentiment-related themes expressed by texts across genders (in percentages)

“messed-up peasant phiz” and “f...ing” could be potentially classified by the app as examples of anger. The description in (2) is undoubtedly straightforward, blunt and direct, yet it has a humorous purpose, which is signalled here by using a zany face emoji 😜, signifying silliness, insanity and excitement expressed in a friendly manner. Thus, the anger emotion is cancelled out, as the author obviously suggests not to take his words seriously and literally, since the emoji changes the meaning of the preceding text in this case. As a result, the category of anger, which stems from the verbal description, shows high occurrences (in male accounts); yet, VADER, which calculates sentiment by analysing both words and emojis, revises it and demonstrates a low level of negativity and anger. Joy, happiness, hatred and fear occur ca. twice as often in female descriptions as in males’, which speaks for more emotional self-presentations women create. Interesting-

ly, SEANCE did not discover traces of such strong emotions and negative attitudes as humility, guilt, jealousy, disgust, desperation, pride and contempt.

The thematic aspects (Figure 14) reveal a reverse popularity trend across genders. Men talk mostly about vehicles, contentment, social relations, evaluation and goals, but these topics are least popular among women. On the other hand, women tend to express feelings, gratitude, longing, enthusiasm, and hope, and they often resort to words related to male features, family relations (such as kinship terms), and relaxation, which, in turn, are categories least popular among men. Put differently, women appear to resort to a more emotional tone in their self-presentations, particularly emphasising joy and happiness, yet at the same time stressing fear and hatred, even if they use them to describe their dislikes and disapproval (as in *I hate ice cream* one does not encode strong emotions of hatred but rather a firm dislike) or lack of approval (as in *I'm afraid I don't like it*).

For illustration purposes, let us analyse example (6), which contains a description of 'male features' the author declares is not interested in ('interest/enthusiasm'):

- (6) *The person is unhappy that people tend to judge others by their cover, calling it pathetic 😊. She adds that the size of one's penis is not what she is interested in! Nor is sex as such, as her libido has dropped recently. She warns potential male Tinder account owners that she will block them immediately if they even try to write about sex. 😊💋*

Secondly, the tone of the overall description shifts due to the use of emojis. The first sentence conveys criticism ("It's pathetic to ..."), which is ended by the emoji labelling genuine happiness (😊). This can imply that the author is pleased with expressing a critical opinion, but the emoji can also function here as a softener, mitigating to some extent the firm statement in the preceding sentence. Similarly, the following two sentences are also rather blunt, with three negations used (twice 'not' and once 'don't') and the verb 'block away' conveying negativity. As a result, the verbal description sounds rather harsh and off-putting. However, the last two sentences are also finished with mitigating emoji: the beaming smile (😊) expressing happiness and gratitude, followed by a kiss mark emoji (💋), often signalling affection, love or flirtation. Thus, the overall tone of the description changes, as it seems less austere due to the emojis that reduce the negativity and possible cold demeanour emanating from the textual layer of the self-presentation. The attenuation of the language used in a description, usually employing sentence-final emoji, is a frequent procedure found in the data at hand.

Thirdly, interestingly enough, the description centres on a list of expectations relative to a potential date rather than on the actual self-description of the female author. A similar observation that women focus on defining their expectations rather than their self-presentation has already been noted in the topic modelling section, where emojis were analysed and discussed. While men's strategy to attract attention through their self-presentations is to talk about themselves (often boasting what they possess, what skills they have, what they like, where they have been around the world and their lifestyle), women frequently resort to descriptions of their expectations from a potential date (expressing hope and describing expected male features), thus focusing on their future date and preferences. Moreover, men seem to focus on descriptions of objects (cars and other vehicles they pos-

ness or are interested in as a hobby) and behaviour (achieving a goal) with some criticisms (evaluation) yet also (self-)contentment, whereas women tend to elaborate on their feelings to a greater extent (expressing hope, longing, feelings, gratitude).

Finally, as the woman resorts to denials and disclaimers, this example illustrates what van Dijk (2008, p. 209) sees as face-protecting self-presentation. It is not uncommon for women to justify their presence on Tinder and possibly to cover their feelings of embarrassment, which may stem from the fact that it is not entirely socially acceptable in Poland for women to seek sexual relations openly and to initiate such contacts.

This analysis also supports the results of topic modelling. Men tend to communicate or even boast about their deeds (actions, goals, self-assurance and contentment, and virtues). Women, in turn, tend to focus on descriptions encoded by adjectives, which refer to emotional states and/or feelings (joy, fear and disgust, well-being, and affect related to family and friends). The prevailing category in both genders is the feeling of joy, which suggests that self-presentations rely on the desire to create a generally positive image of themselves, particularly for self-promotion purposes. Affect referring to family and friends also appears to be more typical of women, while descriptions of behaviour are more frequent in the case of males' self-presentations.

9 Conclusion

The occurrence of emoji in self-presentations is similar across genders, with a slightly higher frequency in the case of women's self-descriptions. The assertive tactic is predominant among men, whereas women resort to assertiveness less often; instead, they tend to use neutral or defensive tactics (RQ1). Moreover, while men prefer to boast about their achievements, skills, and appearance, women who disclose more modestly are more eager to define their future dates and are more straightforward in expressing their expectations (RQ1).

Topic modelling analysis revealed that there are differences in the predominating topics men and women choose. Whilst features contributing to masculinity (e.g., body-building), sexual adventures and physical attraction were often stressed in male self-descriptions, feminine features (e.g., charm, beauty), lifestyle preferences and romantic feelings were frequently found in female accounts (RQ2). Male descriptions tend to convey more confidence, whereas modesty often shines through in many female presentations. This observation is generally reflected in the choice of emoji as men resort to cool face (with sunglasses on) emoji, and those encoding mischief, excitement and naughtiness (smiling face with horns) as well as several emoji with the tongue stuck out, which may be interpreted as more bold, confident and sexual. On the other hand, women rely more on emojis showing gratitude and dancing skills, indicating modesty, spirituality, and more neutral emotions (RQ2).

The predominant sentiment across genders is neutral, with only minor preferences towards positive emotions in the case of women, which, however, is not statistically significant (RQ3). Anger is often associated with male descriptions, but happiness, joy, hatred, and fear can be found in both male and female accounts; still, they are more prevalent in female presentations. Sentiment-related themes further reveal that men tend to write

about vehicles and relationships and express self-satisfaction. More sentimental and romantic emotions are conspicuous in female accounts, such as the feeling of longing, serenity, and gratitude.

This chapter has aimed to analyse the use of emoji in male and female Tinder self-descriptions in terms of the frequency of occurrence, topics and sentiment in order to verify the predominant public image (face) they want to create and the opinion about both themselves and the possible expected date they express. Despite the limitations stemming from the number of emoji analysed in this study, it allowed drawing some conclusions about tendencies in emoji usage, which can be further attested to larger data samples. The observable differences reside in the way men and women present themselves to attract attention.

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Part IV

Sentiment Analysis

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Avoidives in Polish

A case study of *aby nie* ("in order not to") construction

This chapter examines avoidives as emotion markers from the cross-linguistic perspective, bringing Polish into the focus of the study. According to Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023), avoidives are grammatical realizations of apprehensionals whose major goal is to warn the hearer against unpleasant or undesirable situations. Furthermore, Kuteva (2009, 2010) defines the term apprehensional with reference to a semantically ostentatious grammatical category which represents an unwished-for verb situation that should be evaded. The research question of the present chapter is focused on the grammatical realizations of emotions in Polish, to be more precise the emotion of concern for someone. The quantitative analysis is based mostly on data from the corpus analysis of the following corpora: British National Corpus (BNC), English Web 2021 (enTenTen21), Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego and Polish Web 2019 (plTenTen19) and its aim is to provide a general perspective on the occurrence of these phrases in selected language corpora. Additionally, this quantitative analysis is supported with the qualitative one of a Polish phrase *aby nie* (in order not to). The results of the research about Polish have proved that avoidives have particular grammatical realisations and the researched phrase preserves its function as a marker of concern for someone.

Keywords: *emotion markers, avoidives, corpus analysis*

1 Introduction

Language as a tool to fulfil communicative intentions has been studied so far from a number of perspectives, including the pragmatic approach which makes an expressive function of language (as defined by Searle, 1969) prominent among others. The aim of this chapter is to provide quantitative and qualitative analyses of grammatical realization by means of which the emotion of concern for someone is expressed. According to Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023), these are avoidives that are grammatical realizations of apprehensionals whose major goal is to warn the hearer against unpleasant or undesirable situations. Avoidives are based on two major concepts, namely undesirability and at the same time high probability of occurrence (Vuillermet, 2018; Vuillermet & Schultze-Berndt, 2018; Kuteva et al., 2019) whether Kuteva (2009, 2010) defines the

term apprehensional with reference to a semantically ostentatious grammatical category to represent an unwished situation that should be evaded.

As follows, this chapter examines the complexity of avoidives as emotion markers in Polish. The discussion starts with providing perspectives connected with defining grammatical realizations that are used to express emotions. A reference study is the one carried by Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023) who provide a thorough analysis of avoidives for English on the basis of which a theoretical scaffolding for the part related to Polish has been presented. In the further part of the chapter the research focuses on a case study of a conjunction phrase *aby nie* ("in order not to") in Polish, supported with representations retrieved from corpus data for English phrases *lest*, *in order not to*, *so as not to*, *for fear of*/ *for fear (that)* and their Polish equivalents *żeby nie* ("lest"), *aby nie* ("in order not to"), *z obawy przed* ("for fear of"), *z obawy, że* ("for fear (that)").

2 Apprehensionals and avoidives

One of the leading ideas behind the use of any natural language is that it can code by means of its grammar human experience and certain common mindset that are frequently culturally conditioned (Wierzbicka, 1992). Emotions occupy a significant position in language performance, among which one can identify fear, especially in the context of concern for someone. The list of identities of grammatical constructions used to express this emotion is opened by Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p.1) who claim that the term 'apprehensional' (used also by Kuteva 2009, 2010) is applied with reference to such grammatical category which refers to a situation that is undesirable and highly probable yet not realized and what results from it a situation to be avoided. By definition "the process of grammaticalization involves, as a rule, lexical units as part of particular constructions" (Yae et al., 2023, p. 8). Apprehensionals, then, are characterized by their canonical structure that incorporates two clauses which, in the opinion of Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p.2) can be explained as structures representing accordingly:

- a) a situation understood as negative and causing anxiety and uneasiness
- b) a possibility to hinder reaction to the distress and agitation caused by this situation

However, another perspective on expressing precaution is focused on the pragmatic approach, namely, according to Evans (1995, p.264), on the influence of context that either implies or elides prevention.

Yet, Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p.2) highlight that apprehensionals were first recognized in indigenous languages of Australian, Malayo-Polynesian and Amazonian regions. One of the features characterising apprehensional phrases in general is mentioned by Dixon (1980, p. 380, quoted in Yae, Kuteva and Rhee 2023, p.2) who discusses the relation of causality between the phrases in Yidiny (ISO 639-3 yii/yidi1250), where the verb in the first/ main one prompts skirting an unpleasant situation in the subordinate one:

YiNu waguuja garba-N gudaga-Ngu bajaa-l-ji
this.ABS man.ABS hide-PRES dog-ERG bite-APPR

‘The man is hiding, lest the dog bite him (i. e., for fear that the dog might otherwise bite him).’

Additionally, Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 2) point out the selection of terms used to refer to apprehensionals that include such terminology as: adverse consequence clauses, negative purpose clauses, evitative or precautioning clauses.

In order to differentiate apprehensionals from apprehensives, Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 2) provide explanation in which “apprehensionals typically involve biclausal constructions that combine a precautionary clause and an apprehension-causing clause, the apprehensives are typically expressed by monoclausal structures”. Other features of apprehensionals include: the focus on the subordinate clause (in apprehensives the focus is on the main clause), the subject’s attitude to the propositional content expressed in a subordinate clause (in apprehensives it is the discourse-pragmatic context for the speaker-hearer dealings), the concern is assigned to the subject of the precautionary clause (in apprehensives it is realized in direct speech when it is the speaker’s concern that plays a crucial role).

Moreover, Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 3) distinguish the following categories of apprehensionals, in which apprehensives constitute a separate category and avoidives belong to the category of precaution and concern:

- a) apprehensives (e. g. Watch out!, Look out!)
- b) precautioning
 - 1. avoidives (e. g. I study so as not to starve.)
 - 2. in-case (e. g. Take an umbrella in case it rains.)
- c) timitive (e. g. I don’t go into the bushes for fear of snakes.)
- d) fear function (e. g. I fear that a tiger attack me.)

There is one more term connected with expressions used to mark fear, namely ‘avertive’ (Vuillermet, 2018) that identifies such grammatical category which depicts, according to Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 3), the past and its semantic counterfactual component (the meaning of an action obviated in the past). This is also a distinguishing element from avoidives that by a definition proposed by Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 4) “involves a verb situation which is highly probable and does not involve the past as a definitional criterion”. As far as avoidives are concerned, Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 4) enumerate also semantic-functional foregrounds which can be explained by the fact that avoidives are compound clauses (which consist of either a coordinator or a subordinator) where one clause expresses the precaution taken and the other one voices an expected but feared results.

Thus, as it has been explained above, the emotion of concern is expressed by means of apprehensionals that can be treated as an overarching term including also apprehensives and avoidives. However, the above explanation proves that the differentiating boundary between the above categories may seem blurred; in order to avoid confusion, a number of clauses that are used in a sentence and the propositional content that is voiced in these

clauses may serve as distinguishing criteria for assigning a sentence to be an apprehensive or an avoidive.

2.1 Avoidives in English

Because of the fact that these are avoidives which are the core interest of the present work, the following part provides some insight into this category as far as English and Polish are concerned. According to Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 4), one can identify the following examples of constructions that label avoidives in English with reference to their sources:

- a) *lest* (source: *less*) that falls into the category of scalar negation and can be represented by the formula: *lest* (should/would), i. e., (scalar) negation, e. g.,:
He ran fast lest he (should) miss the train.
- b) *in order not to* (source: *order*) that falls into the category of order and can be represented by the formula: *in order not to*, i. e., negation + order, e. g.,:
I finished homework in order not to be reprimanded.
- c) *so as not to* (source: *so*) that fall into the category of negation+manner and can be represented by the formula: *so as not to*, i. e., negation + manner
I study so as not to fail.
- d) *for fear (that), for fear of* (source: *fear, worry, be afraid*) that fall into the category of concern and can be represented by the formula: *for fear (that), for fear of*, etc., i. e., fear-denoting expressions, e. g.,:
They wouldn't let their cat outside for fear (that) it would get run over.
I didn't want to move for fear of waking her up.

As Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 5) rightly point out, *in order not to* and *so as not to* have also additional applications, namely they are grammatical means for expressing undesirable situations, yet they may be devoid of the fear/ apprehension element, as in:

1. They started to walk faster in order not to stay behind.
2. They talked for hours so as not to fall asleep.

Moreover, as far as avoidives in English are concerned, they are adverb-based and noun-based constructions that have undergone the process of desemanticization and semantic bleaching (Yae et al., 2023, p. 8). To be more precise, the meanings in avoidives depart from the core meanings of expressions they derive from and following Yae, Kuteva and Rhee (2023, p. 8) these interdependencies as well as individual transformations of the source structures can be represented in the following way:

a)	ńý l��s ń�	'so that less that'	smaller dimension/scalar NEG
	(Old English)		
b)	order + not	'rank, mode of progression' + NEG	hierarchy/sequence + NEG
c)	so + not	'in that style' + NEG	manner suggested + NEG
d)	for fear of/that	'fearful emotion'	emotional pain, terror

As follows from the above list, only in the phrase ‘for fear of/that’ the semantic component of concern has been initially present and preserved. Also, it seems evident that this expression has not undergone either desemanticization or semantic bleaching to the extent that the rest of these constructions have.

2.2 Grammaticalization and avoidives in Polish

The issue of grammaticalization of emotions in Polish has been illustrated by the comprehensive approach taken by Hansen and Drobnjaković (2010), among others, shedding light on the dynamic processes of language change within this context. Moreover, they (Hansen and Drobnjaković, 2010) draw attention to the following ideas:

- i. modal verbs in context of the process of grammaticalization, for example, the verb *mieć* (“to have/ possess”) has developed into a marker of strong necessity and hypothetical assumptions in new syntactic contexts and by this transformation it acquires new grammatical functions; it can be illustrated by an imperative sentence *Mam tam iść!* (“I am to go there”) (where ‘mam’- a conjugated form from *mieć* expresses a strong necessity to do something);
- ii. verbs and phrases in imperative constructions that have undergone changes to serve directive or imperative functions, illustrating the dynamic nature of grammaticalization;
- iii. avertive constructions which express actions that are intended to be avoided and which show how verbs originally used in different contexts evolve to convey specific grammatical meanings related to intent and prevention;
- iv. the influence of language contact on grammaticalization in Polish which implies interaction with other languages, particularly through historical and social contexts which contributed to certain grammatical changes in Polish;
- v. the influence of principles observed in other languages by means of which certain changes in Polish can be explained.

Thus, Hansen and Drobnjaković (2010) prove in their research and analysis that Polish exhibits characteristics related to the process of grammaticalization of emotions. Additionally, what seems significant for the present work is the fact that avertives (which as dedicated constructions to express concern/ fear are also mentioned by Vuillermet (2018) or Kuteva and Rhee (2023)) occupy a valid position in the array of constructions used to mark particular emotional states.

Another point of view is presented by Kočańska (2018) who provides the detailed analysis of specific constructions and complex mechanisms through which grammar influences emotional communication in Polish. To be more precise, Kočańska (2018) focuses on how grammatical resources are used to achieve specific interactive and interpersonal effects, for example, directive constructions in Polish that combine the vocative form of address with the 2nd person singular imperative. In her opinion this construction often conveys nuanced emotions, balancing distance-maintaining and distance-reducing elements, thereby impacting the emotional tone of interactions, for example, the

constructions that begin with *może mógłbyś* (“maybe you could”) that on the one hand introduce the emotional tone and on the other maintain distance between interlocutors.

Moreover, Herda (2018) highlights the complex interplay between semantics and syntax in the grammaticalization of emotion-related terms in Polish, providing insight into how language evolves to express abstract concepts like degree and intensity. In his research he compares Polish and Swedish with reference to the grammaticalization process of partitives into degree adverbs in Polish and Swedish, particularly the Polish term *odrobina* (‘crumb; a little’) and its Swedish counterpart “smula” (‘crumb; a little’). As follows, the explanation mentions the development paths (from a partitive (‘a part/unit of’) to a quantifier (‘a small/large quantity of’) to a degree modifier (‘to a small/large degree/extent’) which also requires a transformation in semantic and syntactic changes), semantic changes (where the meaning shifts from a concrete, physical sense (a small piece of something) to a more abstract, quantificational sense (a small quantity of something)), syntactic expansion (as with Polish, *odrobina* that can modify not just nouns but also verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs). Additionally Herda (2018) indicates the case usage in Polish, especially the accusative case when the noun appears in the subject position, coupled with a neuter singular verb form which further indicates a shift in profile from a discrete object to the quantified mass itself.

2.2.1 Avoidives in Polish

In light of the research about the grammaticalization of emotions presented above, it seems justified to supplement this research with the insight into avoidives. As it has been already explained, avoidives as grammatical representations for emotions are connected with particular phrases that fulfil certain semantic conditions and require particular syntactic realisations. From this perspective, the situation with Polish becomes more complicated since syntax in Polish is relatively loose (Nagórko, 2010, p. 268) and because of this fact meaning (especially the grammatical one) is coded at various levels of language structures. As a result, an attempt is made in the following part of this article to broaden the definition of avoidives by means of expanding it by some factors typical for Polish. Yet, it must be pointed out that these factors do not negate the appearance of avoidives in Polish but they reveal and add aspects that can be treated as additional criteria for the recognition of this kind of grammatical structures.

According to Nagórko (2010, p. 268), in its neutral and unmarked representation Polish syntax follows the order:

S (subject) V(object) O(object)

However, the departure from the unmarked order towards the marked one is characteristic of Polish syntax and it is dictated, as Nagórko (2010, p. 268) points out, by a number of reasons, including:

- a) communicative reasons (e.g. the focus is on the relation and position between a theme and a rheme, for instance *Wykonał zadanie.* (“He completed the task”) where a

theme is an implicit one (not present in a surface structure) and *wykonał zadanie* is a rheme)

- b) rhythmic reasons (e.g. enclitics¹ are always used at the end of a sentence, for instance *Wyraźnie szukał wytłumaczenia, ale nie dostarczyłem mu go.* ("He was clearly looking for an explanation, but I didn't provide it to him."))
- c) stylistic reasons (e.g. imitating colloquial language, for instance *Masz chwilę?* ("Do you have a minute?"))

Additionally, this marked order is enhanced by the fact that Polish is an inflectional language and this inflectional differentiation of declined nouns, adjectives, numerals as well as conjugated verbs enhances the marked order. Because of the fact that nouns, verbs, adjectives and numerals are marked by gender and number, it must be underlined that the marked order of elements in a Polish sentence allows for constructions without a noun in a subject position (the subject is then implicit and further identified on the basis of verb or adjective inflections), e.g. *Czyta.* ("[He/she] is reading") so the Polish inflection *-a* when added to verbs implies a subject in the 3rd person singular form and the marked order is:

$$\emptyset + V + \emptyset$$

Another example of a marked order is a sentence equivalent in a form of, e.g. a gerund: *Kupiliśmy książkę, przepłacając słono.* (Saloni and Świdziński, 1985, p. 73) ("[We] bought a book overpaying dearly") that follows a marked order

$$\emptyset + V_{\text{past}} + O + V_{\text{ing}} + \text{Adv}$$

Obviously, the central position of a verb form in a verb phrase is unquestionable; yet in Polish most of sentence equivalent structures are defined as representations of complete thoughts expressed by means of a single word² or a phrase and not necessarily by means of a construction with a personal form of a verb. An example of such phrase can be *Za mną!* ("Follow me"), which is a prepositional phrase that consists of a preposition *za* and a pronoun in the instrumental case *mną* (Szober, 1953, p. 386); when used together they form a complete order.

Furthermore, elliptic constructions allow for language constructions that are communicatively self-contained in a given communicative context, e.g. *Skąd jesteś? Stąd.* ("Where are you from? From here."). Szober (1953, p. 386) mentions other sentence equivalent constructions like: exclamations, e.g., *Dzień dobry!* ("Good morning!") or incomplete sentences, e.g. *Przykro mi* (in its complete form in Polish: *Jest mi przykro!*) ("I'm sorry"). Thus, in context of avoidives English and Polish exemplify a syntactic

1 They are language forms that do not carry stress and usually they are used at the end of a sentence (Nagórko, 2010, p. 268)

2 E.g. *Teraz!* "Now" that may mean "Do it now what we have been discussing so far!" which in Polish is a one-word phrase in an imperative mood expressed by means of an adverb.

order which in the case of Polish only in its unmarked representation can be compared to the English one.

Nevertheless, the attention should be also drawn to other characteristics of sentences that take into consideration communicative intentions as well as the classification of sentences with reference to their general categories and the way they are constructed. To be more precise, communicative intentions have impact on the choice of grammatical constructions and lexicon that are used to fulfil these intentions. As far as Polish is concerned, according to Nagórko (2010, p. 258) one can distinguish a number of types of sentences; yet for the sake of the present discussion only graphic, pragmatic and structural ones are taken into consideration. As follows, Nagórko (2010, p. 258) defines graphic sentences as such constructions that follow the rules of Polish punctuation, i. e. a sentence starts with a capital letter and finishes with a full stop or a full stops' equivalent; the assumption is that a correct punctuation depicts structural divisions (as it is presented in the further part of this article Polish avoidives are introduced by selected conjunctions which must be used with required punctuation). Another group of sentences mentioned by Nagórko (2010, p. 258) are pragmatic sentences which are based on intuitive language knowledge that is necessary for a turn of interlocutors roles, namely a sender becomes a receiver and a receiver becomes a sender even after a relatively short fragment of their conversation (in the case of these sentences communicative intentions seem most prominent). The last group of sentences are structural sentences which are defined (Nagórko, 2010, p. 258) as language forms that possess a predicative form of a verb. When analysing their construction, structural sentences are divided into:

- a) simple sentences
- b) complex sentences
- c) equivalents of sentence structure

Since the focus of the present work is on avoidives that in Polish (similarly to English) are introduced by means of particular conjunction phrases, only complex sentences fall within the interest of the present analysis. When following Saloni and Świdziński (1985, p. 305) a proper complex sentence consists of at least two simple sentences that are connected by means of a conjunction which is a central element for this construction. In Polish complex sentences are divided into coordinate sentences and subordinate sentences (Nagórko, 2010). Since avoidives in Polish remain a topic to be explored, it is suggested that avoidives in Polish should be classified as subordinate sentences/ clauses with a subcategory of complementary sentences, cause-effect clauses that mark purpose and are marked by conjunctions *żeby*, *ażby*, *aby*, *by*, *iżby* (using Nagórko's (2010, p. 311) explanation of clauses of purpose: '*p* po to, *żeby* osiągnąć *q*' [*p* in order to achieve *q*] which means that a speaker desires *q*), e. g.,

1. *Zadzwonila do niego z samego rana, żeby uzgodnić termin wizyty.*

$S_1 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + PP + Adv), + \text{żeby}_{\text{conj\_purpose}} + S_2 (\emptyset + V_{\text{inf.}} + NP)$
 ("She called him in order to arrange the date of her appointment.")

It must be also highlighted that this subordinary complementary clause of purpose that is in Polish introduced by means of conjunctions: *żeby, ażeby, aby, by, iżby* can take a form of a sentence equivalent with V_{inf} instead of a verb in a personal form, for example *Kupił samochód, abyjechać nad morze.* ("He bought a car to go to the seaside.")

Yet, avoidives in Polish are exemplified also by means of one more group of sentences, namely by subordinary complementary clauses of comparison (which Nagórko (2010, p. 311) defines as the ones where a speaker compares two hypothetical situations that are both undesirable and chooses the one which is more convenient/ less undesirable), e.g.,

2. *Wolę się z nim rozstać, niż żeby miał się tu zmarnować.*

$S_1 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + CP (\emptyset + V_{\text{inf.}} + PP)), \text{niż} \text{żeby}_{\text{conj\_comparison}} + S_2 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + CP (\emptyset + V_{\text{inf.}} + Adv))$
 ("I would rather split up with him than allow him to spoil his life here.")

However, a construction worth investigating in the context of avoidives in Polish (and also the one which is closely analysed in the analytical part of this article) is related to *aby nie* conjunction which if followed by a full sentence may be indicative of introducing the hypothetical situation to be avoided to be evaded (a detailed analysis is provided in the next section of the article). Thus, the construction that follows this conjunction resembles in its characteristics a subordinary complementary clause of purpose (yet the purpose to be evaded) e.g.,

3. *Ustawiła mu budzik, aby nie spóźnił się na egzamin.*

$S_1 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + NP_1 + NP_2), \text{aby}_{\text{conj\_purpose}} + \text{neg.} + S_2 (\emptyset + V + PP)$
 ("She set an alarm clock for him so he would not be late for his exam.")

On the basis of the above discussion, the constructions can be classified as avoidives only on condition that the subject from S_1 is different from the subject of S_2 . To be more precise, in the example quoted above, instead of nominal subjects at the beginning of sentences, subjects markers are expressed by suffixes added to verbs, for instance in *ustawiła* that consists of *ustawi* + *ła* where *-ła* is a past feminine suffix to mark 3rd person singular (according to the grammar rules for Polish, if a verb (noun or adjective) finishes with an 'a' suffix the grammatical gender is identified as female; whereas, if a verb (noun or adjective) finishes with a consonant, the grammatical gender is mostly recognized as male or neuter). Thus, taking into consideration the verb forms from the above examples and more precisely their suffixes by means of which the distinction between S_1 and S_2 is possible, these constructions can be categorized as avoidives.

Moreover, as far as Polish is concerned, analogical phrases that may be indicative of avoidives can be found on the basis of Yae, Kuteva and Rhee's (2023, p. 4) explanation of English examples:

Table 1. Selected English and Polish phrases that may be applied in avoidives

English phrase	Polish equivalent	source
lest	, żeby nie e.g., <i>Rodzice kupili mu samochód, żeby nie spóźnił się na pociąg.</i> ("His parents bought him a car lest he should miss his train.")	less (scalar negation ³)
in order not to	, aby nie e.g., <i>Dzieci czekają na autobus w szkole, aby nie zmoknąć.</i> ("Children are waiting for the bus at school in order not to get wet.")	order (negation+ order)
for fear of	z obawy przed e.g., <i>Dzieci czekają na rodziców w szkole z obawy przed deszczem.</i> ("Children are waiting for their parents at school for fear of rain.")	fear, worry, be afraid (fear-denoting expressions)
for fear that	z obawy, że e.g., <i>Na plaży rodzice są czujni z obawy, że ich dziecko może zgubić się w tłumie turystów.</i> ("At the beach parents are particularly watchful for fear that their children might get lost in the crowd of tourists.")	fear, worry, be afraid (fear-denoting expressions)

All Polish phrases are synonymous and they can function as grammatical constructions by means of which concern/ precaution and anxiety may be voiced. However, it must be highlighted that despite the fact that these phrases convey the same or nearly the same meaning, grammatical constructions that follow them differ which may allow for their further division in terms of constructions to express avoidives.

3 Analysis

3.1 Methodology and data

As has been discussed above, the major focus of the present chapter is on the grammatical means of signalling concern/ precaution in Polish. The research question is centred around the issue if avoidives have their representation in Polish and if *aby nie* ("in order not to") conjunction has potential for marking avoidives.

The examination proceeds in the following way:

1. the quantitative analysis: the corpus analysis for frequencies for each phrase (from Table1) in English and Polish;
2. the qualitative analysis of *aby nie* ("in order not to") the insight into grammatical realisation and the pragmatic context

3 Horn (1989) defines scalar negation as the use of negation in modifying scalar expressions, which are expressions involving a range or scale of values, such as quantities or degrees. This type of negation affects specific points on the scale rather than negating the entire proposition.

The organisation and the choice of the above mentioned methodological steps is explained by a number of reasons. Initially the strategy assumes the quantitative presentation of the frequency of a given phrase in the whole corpus. Next, selected grammatical realisations of *aby nie* ("in order not to") are exposed with special attention paid to the ones by means of which emotions are implied. This methodology seems plausible since the qualitative study complements the quantitative one, especially for Polish where thus far the issue of avoidives has not been thoroughly covered.

3.1.a Data characteristics

The following corpora have been used:

- a) British National Corpus (BNC) (available at app.sketchengine.eu; accessed between December 2023 and March 2024);
- b) English Web 2021 (enTenTen21) (available at app.sketchengine.eu; accessed between December 2023 and March 2024));
- c) Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (available at www.english-corpora.org/coca; accessed between December 2023 and March 2024));
- d) Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego (NKJP, Polish National Corpus) available at <http://www.nkjp.uni.lodz.pl>; accessed between December 2023 and March 2024));
- e) Polish Web 2019 (plTenTen19) (available at app.sketchengine.eu; accessed between December 2023 and March 2024)

As follows, the above list includes three English corpora and two Polish corpora. The key strategy behind such choice is to sketch the representation of the researched phrases for the two examined languages. Yet, the English corpora outnumber the Polish ones since the choice also takes into consideration two most common standards for English, namely British English and American English and as far as Polish is concerned, there is only one standard and this fact excludes the need for additional Polish corpora. Moreover, it should be highlighted that a number of corpora available for English remarkably exceeds the number of corpora available for Polish. Another issue worth mentioning refers to the quality of language input data, namely it seems plausible to point out that each of the above mentioned corpora is based on a different quality of data, i.e. these corpora are not parallel as well as for each language one of these corpora uses the data from the web. This difference in the quality of language data seems significant because it provides a broader spectrum of possible occurrences of the examined construction.

3.1.b Data presentation- general corpus results for English

The following section will present quantitative data as far as the representation of selected avoidives in English is concerned. The total normalized frequency (no of tokens $\times 10^{-6}$ per one mln) for all researched phrases in each corpus equals respectively:

- a) BNC: 9.53 %
- b) English Web 2021: 1.5 %
- c) COCA: 11.54 %

Table 2. Frequency of English conjunctions used in avoidives

PHRASE	CORPUS	CORPUS SIZE (NO OF TO- KENS)	HITS / FREQUENCY		NORMALIZED FREQUENCY (no of tokens x 10 ⁻⁶ per 1 mln)
LEST	BNC	112,338,376	411	0.0003659 %	3.26 %
	English Web 2021	61,585,997,113	266,796	0.0004332 %	0.7 %
	COCA	1 billion	5,103	0.0005103 %	5.1 %
FOR FEAR OF	BNC	112,338,376	361	0.0003214 %	2.86 %
	English Web 2021	61,585,997,113	124,592	0.0002023 %	0.33 %
	COCA	1 billion	2,884	0.0002884 %	2.88 %
FOR FEAR THAT	BNC	112,338,376	66	0.00005875 %	0.52 %
	English Web 2021	61,585,997,113	23,857	0.00003874 %	0.06 %
	COCA	1 billion	727	0.0000727 %	0.73 %
IN ORDER NOT TO	BNC	112,338,376	103	0.00009169 %	0.82 %
	English Web 2021	61,585,997,113	33,798	0.00005488 %	0.09 %
	COCA	1 billion	428	0.0000428 %	0.43 %
SO AS NOT TO	BNC	112,338,376	263	0.0002323 %	2.07 %
	English Web 2021	61,585,997,113	121,841	0.0001978 %	0.32 %
	COCA	1 billion	2,397	0.0002397 %	2.4 %

3.1.c Data presentation- general corpus results for Polish

This section aims at presenting quantitative data related to phrases that are used to mark avoidives in Polish. The total normalized frequency (no of tokens x 10⁻⁶ per one mln) for all researched phrases in each corpus equals respectively:

- a) NKJP: 36.28 %
- b) Polish Web 2019: 12.39 %

Table 3. Frequency of Polish conjunctions used in avoidives

PHRASE	CORPUS	CORPUS SIZE (NO OF TO- KENS)	NO OF HITS/ FREQUENCY		NORMALIZED FREQUENCY (no of tokens x 10 ⁻⁶ per 1 mln)
ŻEBY NIE	NKJP	240,192,461	12,241	0.0050963 %	21.22 %
	Polish Web 2019	5,216,428,620	175,139	0.003357 %	6.44 %
Z OBAWY PRZED	NKJP	240,192,461	417	0.0001736 %	0.72 %
	Polish Web 2019	5,216,428,620	5,285	0.0001013 %	0.19 %
Z OBAWY, ŻE	NKJP	240,192,461	152	0.00006328 %	0.26 %
	Polish Web 2019	5,216,428,620	99	0.000001898 %	0.000036 %
ABY NIE	NKJP	240,192,461	8,122	0.00338145 %	14.08 %
	Polish Web 2019	5,216,428,620	156,756	0.003005 %	5.76 %

3.1.e Corpus data analysis

The above data reveal the statistical representation of avoidives in English and Polish. A general observation that results from the statistical data is that avoidives both in English as well as in Polish are poorly illustrated in examined corpora (what is meant at this point is that in normalized results their frequency is marked by values multiplied by 10^{-6} , which can be interpreted as remarkably low frequency). The representation of particular phrases differ depending on the corpus; yet, Polish *żeby nie* has the highest frequency (21.22 % x 10^{-6}), followed by *aby nie* (14.08 % x 10^{-6}). As far as English is concerned, it is 'lest' (3.26 % x 10^{-6}) (the Polish equivalent of it is *żeby nie*) that is the most frequently used among linking phrases used in avoidives. Obviously, the data above provide a general overview of frequencies of the expressions in question without analysing if there may be any cases that are not indicative of avoidives. Additionally, it must be also underlined that the aim of this quantitative representation of data is to offer a general account of frequencies of avoidives in the two discussed languages because this representation also marks the position of the Polish phrase *aby nie* ("in order not to") scrutinised in the further part of this chapter.

3.1.f Qualitative analysis – a case study of *aby nie* ("in order not to")

The following part is an attempt to answer the research question if a Polish conjunction *aby nie* can function as a marker of avoidives as well as if there are any particular characteristics to its grammatical realisation and interpretation.

From a constructional/ grammatical point of view, a phrase *aby nie* consists of two units *aby* + *nie*, where :

- a) *aby* : according to the Dictionary of Polish Language (Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN), it is defined with reference to several categories, among which one can find the following characteristics:
- i. a conjunction that introduces a subordinate sentence/ clause marking the goal of this activity, e.g.: *Otworzył szafkę, aby wyciągnąć pudełko* ("He opened the cupboard in order to take out a box");
 - ii. a conjunction that links a superordinary sentence/ clause comparing the degree to which a certain feature is ascribed to something or someone with a subordinate sentence/clause marking the result of an activity that depends on that feature, e.g.: *Była zbyt nieśmiała, aby zabrać głos* ("She was too shy to speak");
 - iii. a conjunction that links a superordinary sentence/ clause and a subordinate one so that the subordinate one expresses an unexpected event, e.g.: *Wiatr przestał wiać na moment, aby po chwili zamienić się w prawdziwy huragan* ("The wind stopped blowing for a moment in order to transform into a hurricane");
 - iv. a conjunction that introduces a subordinate clause, used usually after nouns or verbs that express a will, a judgement, a proposal, a necessity, e.g.: *Chcę, aby Jan przyszedł.* ("I want John to come");
 - v. in a colloquial language a conjunction adding additional element that expresses a wish or a condition, e.g.: *Powiedz coś, aby na temat.* ("Say something but up to the topic");
 - vi. a particle introducing a wish of a speaker, e.g.: *Aby wam wszystko poszło dobrze!* ("I wish all went well for you");
 - vii. in a colloquial language a particle that expresses doubts regarding the truth of a proposition included in a question, e.g.: *Aby nie za późno na przeprosiny?* ("Yet, isn't it too late for apologies?")
- b) *nie*: according to the Dictionary of Polish Language (Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN) it is characterised by the following definitions, among others:
- i. a particle used before the major element of a sentence or a clause changing its meaning for an opposite one, e.g.: *Nie przeczytaliśmy tej książki.* ("We did not buy this book");
 - ii. a particle used before a given element of a sentence or clause structure excluding it from the content of this sentence or a clause, e.g.: *Nie z przyjaźni tu przyszliśmy.* ("We came here not out of friendship");
 - iii. a particle negating a previous judgement, e.g.: *Jedni uczniowie sami się uczą, inni nie.* ("Some students learn on their own, others do not");
 - iv. a particle used in questions when a speaker (depending on the meaning and context) counts on a positive or negative answer, e.g.: *Nie ufasz mi czasem?* ("Do you not trust me sometimes?")
 - v. a particle used in proposals or requests that are expressed by means of questions, e.g.: *Nie chcielibyście pójść do kina?* ("Wouldn't you want to go to the cinema?");

- vi. a particle used in rhetorical questions to highlight the truthfulness of what is being talked about, e.g.: *Czyż edukacja nie jest najważniejsza?* ("Is education not the most important?")
- vii. a particle highlighting that a given person, object or situation are devoid of a particular feature, or this feature is characteristic of them only to an insignificant degree, e.g.: *Prowadził samochód nie najlepiej* ("He drove his car not well.");
- viii. a particle used as an exclamation to express emotions usually because of something unexpected or to prevent someone from doing something, e.g.: *Nie! Przecież znamy się jeszcze ze szkoły! Zostaw nas w spokoju!* ("No! We have known each other since we were at school! Leave us in peace!")

As the above explanations provide, *aby* and *nie* as separate constructions are used in expressive phrases⁴ (for *aby* these are explanations: v, vi, vii; for *nie* these are explanations: vi, vii, viii). Furthermore, these two lexical units are combined into one expression, *aby nie*, in order to form a phrase (an avoidive) to illustrate and enhance an emotional state of a speaker- in this case, and in accordance with the research question, the emotion of concern/ precaution.

The following examples illustrate the application of *aby nie* construction that can be used to express the implied meaning of concern/ precaution:

4. *Kupił jej psa, aby nie bała się samotnych spacerów.*
 $S_1 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + NP_1 + NP_2), \text{aby}_{\text{conj\_purpose}} + \text{neg.} + S_2 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + NP)$
 ("He bought her a dog so she would not fear going for walks alone.")
5. *Zapakował im więcej jedzenia, aby nie były głodne podczas podróży.*
 $S_1 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + \text{Adj.} + NP), \text{aby}_{\text{conj\_purpose}} + \text{neg.} + S_2 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + \text{Adj.} + PP)$
 ("He packed more food for them so that they would not be hungry during their trip.")
6. *Transformacja odbędzie się w sposób przemyślany i tak zrównoważony, aby nie odbiło się to na ludziach.*
 $S_1 (NP_1 + V_{\text{pers.}} + PP), \text{aby}_{\text{conj\_purpose}} + \text{neg.} + S_2 (NP_1 + V_{\text{impers.}} + NP + PP)$
 ("The transformation will take a considered and balanced form in order it should not have a negative impact on people.")
7. *Zastanawiam się, czy aby wiatr nie zaziębi gniazda.*
 $S_1 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}}), \text{czy aby}_{\text{conj\_purpose}} + \text{neg.} + S_2 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + NP)$
 ("I wonder if the wind will not chill the nest.")
8. *Jechał wolno, aby nie skrzywdzić nikogo.*
 $S_1 (\emptyset + V_{\text{pers.}} + \text{Adv.}), \text{aby}_{\text{conj\_purpose}} + \text{neg.} + S_2 (\emptyset + V_{\text{inf.}} + NP)$
 ("He drove slowly so as not to hurt anyone.")

4 They are recognized by Searl (1969, p. 66) as those illocutionary acts that "express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content", thus they express the speaker's internal state.

The instances 4-8 above exemplify possible grammatical realisations of the emotion of concern/ precaution in Polish. In all of the above mentioned examples, concern for someone is implied by means of subordinate sentences introduced into a complex syntactic structures with the compound conjunction *aby nie*. When scrutinizing syntax of these subordinate clauses, one can realize that they differ in a number and quality of constituents. Thus, in the opinion of the present author, example no 4 and 5 can be taken as prototypical representations of avoidives in Polish. The justification for this conclusion focuses on the fact that, as it has been discussed in the theoretical part above, they fulfil the condition that the default subject is not the same (it does not present the anaphoric relation) for the main clause and for the subordinate one as well as they use verbs in personal forms. Additionally, it is worth highlighting that subordinate clauses refer to some hypothetical situations that are identified as unpleasant, inconvenient and definitely to be avoided.

Yet, in example no 6 the subordinate clause includes a verb in an impersonal form and due to this an impersonal subject is implied. The reason for this realisation may be the fact that the subject from the main clause is an impersonal noun that has its anaphora in a pronoun *to* in the subordinate clause. But despite the lack of the verb in a personal form in the subordinate clause, still it instantiates a group of constructions identified as avoidives since the denotation of the verb from this clause already includes the semantic feature of hurting someone. As follows, when this verb is preceded by *aby nie*, the meaning of avoidance of this situation (thus the purpose is not to achieve it) is even more enhanced together with the same impersonal subject shared by both clauses.

Additionally, in sentence no 7 *aby nie* is preceded with an interrogative word- *czy* (its equivalent in English can be 'if' when used to introduce a question) which apparently also can be applied for the sake of expressing concern/ fear. Similarly to the previous example, the use of such syntactic structure also strengthens the emotion of fear that the unpleasant situation signified by a verb in the subordinate clause should be better avoided. Another similarity is the fact that the main clause as well as the subordinate one share the same subject; but in the case of no 7 this subject is a personal noun and verb forms are personal as well.

Moreover, the example no 8 adds to a list of possible grammatical constructions to express concern. Yet, it departs from the prototypical ones for Polish in the respect that the subordinate clause after *aby nie* includes the verb in an infinitive form (which can be interpreted semantically that this concern has no direct addressee but it has a function of general statement of this emotion). This infinitive form may also suggest an impersonal subject; however, as it is shown in this example an infinitive form used after *aby nie* actually has its antecedent in a subject from the main clause.

Thus, as the research question assumes that avoidives are present in Polish and that they have a potential to express the emotion of concern/ precaution, the above quantitative analysis and the qualitative one provide evidence that may be interpreted for the benefit of these constructions. Moreover, the qualitative analysis of avoidives in Polish has revealed the following characteristics of these constructions:

- i. they are used to express a speaker's concern/ precaution for unwanted, undesirable situations that are to be evaded by a hearer (with reference to this characteristics they bear resemblance to English avoidives);
- ii. they are exemplified by complex sentences with an avoidive being presented in the subordinate clause of purpose
- iii. the main clause and the subordinate one are linked by conjunctions indication a purpose that are followed by a negative particle (e.g., a case study of *aby nie* analysed in the present chapter)
- iv. a grammatical subject of S_1 (main clause) does not represent an anaphoric relation with a grammatical subject of S_2 (a subordinate clause of purpose).

The limitation of this study may be the fact that only one Polish conjunction has been taken into account as far as the qualitative analysis is concerned. However, as follows it leaves room for further analysis of other conjunctions that may be used in avoidives in Polish to complement the current study and to provide more detailed insight into the process of grammaticalization of emotions.

4 Overall conclusions

Taking into consideration all the above mentioned ideas, it can be concluded that grammaticalization of emotions sheds additional light on implied meanings related to emotional states expressed through language. One kind of such grammatical constructions are avoidives which are at the same time in the centre of the research for this chapter. As follows, the theoretical part of this chapter provides a general overview of findings connected with avoidives (mostly with reference to English avoidives since they have already been thoroughly researched), drawing attention to the difficulty of defining them and marking differences between these constructions, apprehensionals and apprehensives.

The research question assumes that in Polish grammaticalization of emotions, such as concern/ precaution for someone, is done by means of avoidives, the representative of which is the analysed phrase *aby nie* ("in order not to"). The above analysis provides an answer to it by proving the representativeness of these expressions in selected corpora (in NKJP: $36.28 \times 10^{-6}\%$, in Polish Web 2019: $12,39 \times 10^{-6}\%$), which is supported by the qualitative analysis of a Polish conjunction *aby nie* ("in order not to"). Additionally, it has been proved in the above discussion that avoidives in Polish belong to graphic sentences (because they require certain punctuation). Additionally, as far as their construction (to be more precise syntax) from a general perspective is concerned, it may be concluded that they consist of two clauses linked by a certain/ required conjunction with a subordinate cause-effect clause that marks purpose. Furthermore, a detailed analysis of Polish *aby nie* ("in order not to") has proved that avoidives in Polish can be characterized by their internal structure. Overall, the above study has initiated the discussion of avoidives in Polish, leaving room for further analysis of other constructions that are used to mark concern/ precaution.

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BBC News coverage of climate change: Emotion words in viewers' opinions

The aim of this paper is to examine emotion words used in viewers' comments on the BBC News coverage of climate change, especially in the context of the ecological crisis. The research material includes randomly selected comments posted by YouTube users under recent BBC News releases (2022 and 2023). The comments constitute a corpus compiled with the help of AntConc. We carry out a sentiment analysis of the comments and identify the lexemes expressing both positive and negative emotions, basing on the classification of emotion words by Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989). Moreover, we examine whether the viewers use figurative language, especially metaphors, which would either refer to climate change or play a vital role in expressing emotions. Most commonly, the viewers employ words for caused emotions and emotional goals. They express their or other parties' concern or its lack about the current environmental situation (e.g., *care*, *suffer*, *worry* and *concern*), and indicate changes they wish to observe (e.g., *want*).

Keywords: *climate change, emotions, emotion words, sentiment analysis, metaphor*

1 Introduction

Natural disasters, such as floods, droughts or heatwaves, are, among others, the consequence of human-induced environmental transformations. The alternations in weather conditions, better-known as *climate changes*, have been observed all around the globe. As a result, they have become an important issue for scientists representing various disciplines, including linguistics.

Let us consider three definitions of the term *climate change* found in general and specialized dictionaries.

1. significant and long-lasting change in the Earth's climate and weather patterns (*Merriam-Webster*: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/climate%20change>)
2. changes in the world's weather, in particular the fact that it is believed to be getting warmer as a result of human activity increasing the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (*Cambridge Dictionary*: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/climate-change>)

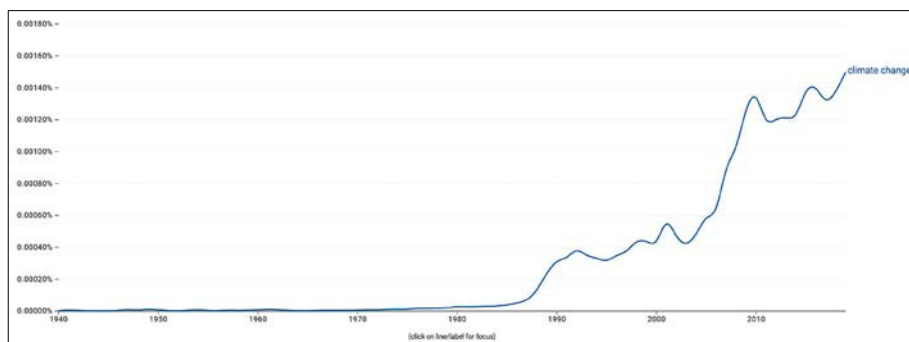


Figure 1. The expression *climate change* in books published in the period 1940–2019
(Source: https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=climate+change&year_start=1940&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=0)

3. Any natural or induced change in climate, either globally or in a particular area. Examples include the natural climate change that has caused ice ages in the past, and global warming that is now being caused by rising concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. By AD 1700 most of the standard meteorological instruments that are used to measure temperature, precipitation, and other climate variables had been invented, although good quality records going back centuries are available for only a few sites. Direct measurements of weather have been collected regularly only since about the 1850s, and many parts of the world (particularly in the tropics and southern hemisphere) only have records covering much shorter periods available. Long-term changes in climate can be reconstructed using historical evidence, and geological and biological proxy indicators which include analysis of ice cores, oxygen isotope analysis, pollen analysis, and dendroclimatology (*A Dictionary of Environment and Conservation* by Park, 2007).

What can be inferred from the first definition is that climate change is a continuous process that has a significant impact on Earth's weather patterns. The definition from the *Cambridge Dictionary* emphasizes the fact that carbon dioxide is the main factor which accelerates climate changes, especially global warming. Needless to say, the definition from a specialized dictionary offers a more elaborate and detailed explanation of this process. For instance, it mentions that climate changes can be both natural and human-induced.

Nowadays, it is also possible to observe climate changes from the linguistic point of view, using the tools offered by new technologies. Let us consider the data extracted from *Google Books Ngram Viewer*. Figure 1 shows the trend in the use of the expression *climate change* in books published in the period 1940–2019.

As suggested by the definition from the specialized dictionary, from the 1850s onward, the data concerning climate changes has steadily been gathered. On top of that, historical, geological as well as biological facts are the indicators of these processes. The linguistic data may show the points of time when particular phrases started being commonly used. Figure 1 shows that since the 1980s the term *climate change* has been increasingly used in texts. In addition, the graph indicates a steep rise in the use of this

term in the 21st century. Besides, the 2010s is the time when the issues regarding climate change began to be widely debated.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate viewers' emotions associated with currently discussed issues regarding climate change. For the sake of this analysis, comments from BBC videos available on YouTube were collected in order to compile a corpus with AntConc. We conducted a sentiment analysis of the comments and identified the most common emotion words employed by the viewers.

2 Categorization of emotion words

In this study, we follow the proposal made by Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 96) who distinguish the following categories of emotions: generic emotions, basic emotions, emotional relations, caused emotions, causatives, emotional goals and complex emotions, as well as the following generic emotions: happiness, sadness, fear, anger and disgust. We have decided to adopt this proposal because it takes into consideration emotion words from the psychological perspective and offers their clear classification. Table 1 presents emotion words which are classified by category and generic emotion.

Table 1. Categories of emotion words (Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989, pp. 96–104)

Category	Basic modes				
Generic emotions	happiness	sadness	fear	anger	disgust
Basic emotions	light-hearted carefree happy high euphoric ecstatic	wistful gloomy sad melancholic depressed wretched	timid tense anxious fearful panicky craven	grouchy touchy irritable angry irascible splenetic	queasy nausea
Emotional relations	like love adore	miss mourn grieve for	afraid of fear dread	aggrieved with angry with scorn	dislike hate loath
Caused emotions	cheered enjoyment glad delight overjoyed	dejection sorrow heart-broken inconsolable desolate	apprehension consternation afraid panic terror	disgruntled miffed indignant cross furious	disgust sick
Causatives	content please amuse delight transport enthral exhilarate	deflate disillusion dampen depress sadden disappoint desolate	disquiet perturb worry scare frighten terrify petrify	irk peeve irritate annoy enrage incense infuriate	putoff alienate estrangle repel nauseate sicken revolt
Emotional goals	love → approach	sadness → withdrawal	fear → flight	anger → aggression	hate → hatred

Category	Basic modes				
Generic emotions	happiness	sadness	fear	anger	disgust
Complex emotions	hope pride belonging closeness	despair remorse sorry for pity	shy embarrassment	bitter	self-disgust shame envy jealousy

The first group encompasses generic emotions from which more precise feelings stem. Within the category of basic emotions, there are lexemes which describe states that may seem to be perceived without any noticeable cause. Another vital aspect of basic emotions is how long they may last. The length of time may vary from short periods of time when an emotion is experienced at a particular moment to prolonged experiences. What is stressed by the authors is that words found in this category describe “mild, ordinary and intense emotions” (Johnson-Laird & Oatley, 1989, p. 98). In addition, it is worth pointing out that a precise source of such emotional reactions may not be ascribed to them. Another category encapsulates words which describe an emotional relation between the experiencer of an action and the theme. The lexemes which belong to still another category refer to states in which the experiencer is affected by a cause of a given emotion. In other words, these emotions “are experienced for a known reason” (p. 100). The category of causatives includes verbs that “express the relation between the cause of an emotion and the person who experiences it” (p. 100). There is also a category which provides achieved emotional goals. To be more specific, this group contains lexemes denoting emotions leading to certain actions. For instance, sadness might result in withdrawal, whereas anger might be the origin of aggression. The last category includes complex emotions. According to Laird and Oatley (1989), “complex emotions are experienced as a result of high-level self-evaluation” (p. 104). Suffice to say, complex emotions involve an overlap of many factors, for example, “to feel a sense of belonging is to feel happy that one fits in a group” (p. 104).

3 The corpus and sentiment analysis: Tools

We searched the BBC YouTube channel for videos concerning climate change issued in 2022 and 2023, using the following key phrases: *climate change*, *global warming*, *environmental pollution* and *air pollution*. We eliminated the videos which were duplicated or turned out to be irrelevant. As we planned to create a corpus of about 8,000 comments, from the obtained set, we selected a sufficient number of videos using Research Randomizer (<https://randomizer.org/>). The number of videos we eventually took into consideration amounts to 84. We extracted 8,504 comments made by their viewers, using Python in Google Colab, and created a corpus containing 296,455 words with AntConc (Anthony, 2021). Table 2 contains the details of our corpus.

Table 2. Details of the corpus of viewers' comments

Software	AntConc 4.0.0
Corpus size	296,455 words
Number of comments	8,504 comments
Average number of words per comment	34.86

The corpus tools provided us with absolute and normalized frequencies (i. e., the number of occurrences in the corpus and the number of occurrences per 1 million words respectively – see, e. g., Brezina, 2018, p. 46) of the most popular emotion words we identified in the corpus.

The sentiment analysis was conducted by using the add-in Azure Machine Learning available for Excel. The add-in allows one to select cells with comments and analyze them. The program generates sentiment values (i. e., positive, negative and neutral) and mean sentiment scores.

4 Analysis of the comments

In this section, we identify the most frequent emotion words in the corpus, which is preceded by the results of the sentiment analysis. Due to space limitations, we concentrate solely on the most frequent words, having arbitrarily decided that the threshold is 100 occurrences.

4.1 Sentiment analysis of the whole corpus material

As we have signalled above, the sentiment analysis was conducted with the plug-in Azure Machine Learning available for Excel. Table 2 presents the results of this analysis: 48 percent of the comments exhibit a positive sentiment and almost 35 percent – negative.

Table 3. Results of the sentiment analysis

Sentiment	Number of comments	Percentage	Mean sentiment score
positive	4,099	48.20	0.73
neutral	1,435	16.88	0.53
negative	2,970	34.92	0.20
Total	8,504	100.00	0.51

However, the results of the sentiment analysis fail to inform us about the objects of the positive and negative comments, e. g., whether the authors of the posts agree with the opinions that climate change presents a serious threat to our planet or, on the contrary, they support opinions denying climate change. Besides, the mean sentiment score, 0.51, suggests an overall neutral sentiment. Taking into consideration the aim of this paper, the overall results of the sentiment analysis actually fail to indicate any strong emotions on the part of the viewers. Therefore, a more detailed analysis is needed, concentrating on the most frequent emotion words employed in the comments.

4.2 Frequencies of the most popular emotion words

In the corpus, we identified 20 emotion words which enjoy the highest frequencies in the comments. Table 4 contains the frequency data of these words.

Table 4. The most frequent 20 emotion words

Rank	Emotion word	Category	Generic emotion	Absolute frequency	Normalized frequency (per 1 million words)
1	want	emotional goal	happiness	376	126.83
2	care	caused emotion	happiness	230	77.58
3	love	emotional relation	happiness	209	70.50
4	hope	complex emotion	happiness	169	57.00
5	suffer	caused emotion	sadness	125	42.16
6	fear	basic emotion	fear	111	37.44
7	greed	emotional goal	happiness	91	30.69
8	sad	basic emotion	sadness	89	30.02
9	hate	emotional relation	disgust	73	24.62
10–11	happy	basic emotion	happiness	67	22.60
	worry	caused emotion	fear	67	22.60
12	concern	caused emotion	fear	65	21.92
13	sorry	caused emotion	sadness	55	18.55
14	shame	complex emotion	disgust	53	17.87
15	enjoy	emotional relation	happiness	50	16.86
16	repent	caused emotion	sadness	44	14.84
17	sick	caused emotion	disgust	35	11.80
18–19	disgust	basic emotion	disgust	31	10.45
	terror	caused emotion	fear	31	10.45
20	relief	caused emotion	happiness	23	7.75

As can be seen, the most frequent emotion words exceeding the threshold of 100 occurrences in the corpus include *want*, *care*, *love*, *hope*, *suffer* and *fear*.

4.3 The most popular emotion words representing the generic emotions of happiness, sadness and fear

Below we concentrate on the lexemes representing the particular generic emotions: happiness, sadness and fear. As signalled above, we take into consideration those emotion words which occur more than 100 times in the corpus. We quote definitions of these words from the online *Cambridge Dictionary*, taking into account the part of speech identified in the comments illustrating their uses, e.g., the verb *love*, not the noun *love*, and *fear* both as a noun and verb.

4.3.1 Happiness

Happiness, according to *A Dictionary of Psychology*, belongs to a group of pleasant emotions. They encompass various feelings that are perceived by an individual in a positive manner. Happiness is classified as a basic positive emotion and it aligns with satisfaction, glee, love, to mention but a few (Matsumoto, Ed., 2009, p. 389). The American Psychological Association defines it as “an emotion of joy, gladness, satisfaction, and well-being” (American Psychological Association: <https://dictionary.apa.org/happiness>; cf. Wierzbicka, 2011, pp. 159–160; Kövecses, 1990, p. 141).

In the corpus, we identified several relatively frequent lexemes which can be classified as words referring to positive emotions representing happiness. The first word which needs to be addressed is *want*. Before analyzing exemplary contexts, we will focus on the definition of this word, provided by the *Cambridge Dictionary*.

want

- (1) to wish for a particular thing or plan of action. “Want” is not used in polite requests
- (2) to wish or need someone to be present

(*Cambridge Dictionary*: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/want>)

As has been already implied, the lexeme *want* is used when one talks about achieving an emotional goal. Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 121) provide the following explanation: “to have a goal, which if attained causes happiness”.

Let us consider several examples from the corpus.¹ As can be seen, the sentiment analysis indicates all the three possibilities: positive, neutral and negative.

- (1) If you **want** to do something about your impact on climate change, go vegan
Sentiment: positive // Sentiment score: 0.809149
- (2) If the BBC **want** to convince people that climate change is happening they should stop using this dramatised tone and rhetoric (“unprecedented heat” “creaking transport” etc). Present the facts as they are without spinning them either way. Let the facts speak for themselves and your viewers will decide.
Sentiment: positive // Sentiment score: 0.810363
- (3) Why would governments around the world just sign a weather war treaty if they weren’t already manipulating the weather?, and have been for years with GO-ENGINEERING (better known as Chemtrails) What do farmers use to make their plants grow? (plants NEED CO2) And how is it that the BIGGEST POLLUTER on the planet (BP) comes up with a ‘ reduce your carbon footprint print’ soundbite and we get taxed for it!? How many people realise that to reduce a carbon footprint, you have to eliminate the carbon making the footprint? And how many people believing all this nonsense realise WE ARE THE CARBON they **want** to eliminate?
Sentiment: neutral // Sentiment score: 0.540901

¹ We preserve the original wording and spelling of all the comments quoted in the paper.

- (4) Human extinction is imminent ! Climate change is upon us earth **wants** us all dead so she can rejuvenate like she's done before. Nothing you can do to stop global extinction so quit your crying and act accordingly. You're not special nobody is

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.289025

- (5) current co2 is 450ppm it does not become harmful till it is over 5000ppm get real and relax we need co2 to grow crops do you **want** to starve ?

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.064808

The verb *want* is mostly used in its first sense, namely, "to wish for a particular thing or plan of action". However, it is not the authors of the comments who want to achieve anything. The comments above do not show the goal which, if achieved, causes their happiness, with one exception, in (1): *If you want to do something about your impact on climate change, go vegan*. Also note the use of the rhetorical question in (5): *do you want to starve?* It is worth emphasizing that the comments found in the corpus containing the lexeme *want* are mostly assessed as negative, with the mean sentiment score is 0.264508.

In the comments above, we can identify a number of figurative expressions. Among others, we find some representing the following metaphors:

- EARTH IS A HUMAN BEING (WOMAN) in (4): *earth wants us all dead so she can rejuvenate like she's done before*;
- A FACT IS A HUMAN BEING in (2): *Let the facts speak for themselves*;
- WEATHER IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT in (3): *they weren't already manipulating the weather*;
- HUMAN BEINGS ARE CARBON (DIOXIDE) in (4): *And how many people believing all this nonsense realise WE ARE THE CARBON they want to eliminate?*

The use of metaphorical expressions like the ones quoted above undoubtedly serves the viewers to intensify the emotional load of their comments.

Another emotion word which occurs relatively frequently in the corpus is *care*. The *Cambridge Dictionary* provides the following definition of this lexeme:

care

- (1) to think that something is important and to feel interested in it or upset about it
- (2) used in polite offers and suggestions

(*Cambridge Dictionary*: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/care>)

The lexeme *care* is classified as word for a caused emotion. Consider the following examples:

- (6) Colonizers mega rich ppl **don't care about** climate change bc they plan to colonize Mars.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.400567

- (7) How strange and deranged democrats **care about** the environment but **don't care about** babies in the womb!

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.382310

- (8) As a pakistani I have to say I never really **cared** much **about** climate change but seeing how it's getting hotter Every summer I'm starting to be more concerned about it, I saw some David Attenborough's documentary on climate change it's also helping me understand the dangers of climate change and how it's slowly destroying animals habitats, humanity needs to really wake up and take steps to heal our planet otherwise it's gonna get worst for our upcoming generations, it's a serious matter that we need to **care** about

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.120058

- (9) The average person **doesn't care** to know about science, it's sad. Science, History, Technology are the most relevant topics and the least understood. It breaks my heart. Trust me when I say, the people running things, don't have the intellect to comprehend the ramifications of their decisions.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.023929

- (10) No one **cares** that the Earth is dying. No one wants to change bad, toxic, dangerous habits that are clearing doing damage to Earth, sea, air, nature, animals. It's all about greed, money and power. That's all that matters to government leaders and politicians and those mega companies with lots of money to influence (bribing) those very people into continuing killing everything around us.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.000961

Again, even though the lexeme *care* belongs to a group of words revolving around the concept of happiness, the mean sentiment score of all the comments containing this word amounts to 0.345312, which implies that the comments are predominantly negative. This comes as no surprise given the fact that in examples (6)–(10) *care* is accompanied by *not*, *never* and *no one*.

Let us now consider the lexeme *love*. In the *Cambridge Dictionary* the following definition is given:

love

- (1) to like another adult very much and be romantically and sexually attracted to them, or to have strong feelings of liking a friend or person in your family
- (2) to like something very much

(*Cambridge Dictionary*: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/love>)

Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 116) classify *love* as an emotional relation. The authors define *love* in the following way: "to experience intense happiness in relation to an object, or person, who may also be object of sexual desire". In the corpus, the lexeme *love* appears in comments whose mean sentiment score amounts to 0.536933, which points to their overall neutrality. Let us consider the following examples:

- (11) Nothing I **love** more than rich people flying around the world telling me to stop doing what they do.

Sentiment: positive // Sentiment score: 0.908223

- (12) I'm **loving** climate change the summer was great
Sentiment: positive // Sentiment score: 0.819373
- (13) people just **love** destroying the environment can I live somewhere away from you guys?
Sentiment: positive // Sentiment score: 0.816996
- (14) That right reverse climate change we are doomed because my ice cream is melting. And if ocean is getting warming up I **love** if i could pipe it into my house.
Sentiment: neutral // Sentiment score: 0.491271
- (15) No! mother nature **loves** co2, look at the Carboniferous period, stop trying to con & rip people off.
Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.405760

In the comments quoted above, the lexeme *love* exhibits its second sense, that is, “to like something very much”. As can be seen, the comments received all possible sentiments. However, the high positive sentiment values ascribed to (11) and (13) demonstrate that the sentiment analyzer fails to recognize irony: *Nothing I love more than rich people flying* and does not recognize a criticism: *people just love destroying the environment*.

Hope is another word linked to the concept of happiness which occurs relatively frequently in the corpus. The *Cambridge Dictionary* provides the following meaning of this lexeme:

hope

to want something to happen or to be true, and usually have a good reason to think that it might

(*Cambridge Dictionary*: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hope>)

Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 115) classify *hope* as a complex emotion and define it in the following way: “optimism in relation to one’s goals”. Let us consider some comments extracted from the corpus. The mean semantic score of the comments is 0.438375 which points to the fact that on the whole, they are rather negative.

- (16) You need to plant bamboos to reduce the temperature of the planet. Bamboos can arrest 35 % of CO2 and releases O2 to the atmosphere. Here in the Philippines we planted thousands of hectares especially those barren lands. We **hope** to cover bamboos and abaca all those barren lands in rolling hills and mountainous areas. We **hope** we can help lower the temperature before it is too late. If we cannot stop the increase in temperature the earth will melt. We wil all die. Thank you for this report and informing the public that U. S. China and Canada are on same goal to stop the increase of temperature by stopping the use of coal.
Sentiment: positive // Sentiment score: 0.905662
- (17) I certainly **hope** that artificial intelligence can fix this mess don’t you
Sentiment: neutral // Sentiment score: 0.469309

- (18) I live in Cagayan Valley, top most part of the mountain range. Sierra Madre had been like our fortress from typhoons. The govt have tree planting projects now. My father is one of the volunteer since our place is near the mountain. I **hope** tree planting can help save Sierra Madre.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.198684

- (19) This makes me sad and shows how little value is attributed to an intact environment in Alaska. I do **hope** that all efforts are being undertaken to protect the environment from damage caused by drilling.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.027209

- (20) We do understand that China has the highest contribution for the increase on earth's temp because they are the most populous nation with huge consumption of coal, and is the U.S. We have to consider the relativity. That is why China is now creating or probably created an Artificial Sun...in replacement to use coal? Well u i do not have any idea about the technology. I just read about it, but it was not explained further how the artificial sun is run...I **hope** that would help.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.010580

In the examples presented above, the lexeme *hope* is used to express the viewers' expectations for a change. It is worth stressing that the authors of the comments point to specific solutions that might help people to solve the problem of climate change, such as the use of AI, planting more plants to lower global temperature or creating an artificial sun. What is more, the viewers use the lexeme *hope* to express a general desire to improve the condition of the environment – that is why the negative sentiments of (18), (19) and (20) may be found surprising.

4.3.2 Sadness

Another basic emotion, sadness, is considered a main symptom of depression (Mouchet-Mages & Baylé, 2008, p. 322). The American Psychological Association defines it in the following way:

an emotional state of unhappiness, ranging in intensity from mild to extreme and usually aroused by the loss of something that is highly valued (e.g., by the rupture of a relationship). Persistent sadness is one of the two defining symptoms of a major depressive episode, the other being anhedonia (American Psychological Association: <https://dictionary.apa.org/sadness>)

Wierzbicka (1988, p. 360) notices that *sadness* prototypically refers to the past and involves events, such as losses, deaths, separations, to mention but a few (cf. Wierzbicka, 1998, p. 9).

In the corpus, we identified several lexemes which can be classified as relating to sadness. Nevertheless, only one lexeme stands out, namely *suffer*, while the other lexemes fail to cross the threshold of 100 occurrences. Let us now quote the definition of the word *suffer*.

suffer

- (1) to experience physical or mental pain
 - (2) to experience or show the effects of something bad
- (*Cambridge Dictionary*: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/suffer>)

Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 115) classify suffering as a caused emotion. The verb *suffer* is simply defined as “to feel pain”. In the corpus, the mean sentiment score of the comments containing the lexeme *suffer* amounts to 0.367375, which suggests that the comments are mostly negative. Let us now take into consideration several contexts retrieved from the corpus:

- (21) What’s all this crap I’ve heard this morning about met office presenters getting record abuse, and being told to “get a grip” etc. Leave them alone, especially the lasses, it’s about time they took the BRUTAL insane heat far more seriously, far too often they selfishly glorify the appalling EXCRUCIATING temperatures, like when I was watching a bbc weather report on the TV once a few years ago and the presenter showed somewhere abroad where there was 36C and he arrogantly referred to it as “glorious”, well what absolute INSANITY! Anything significantly above 20C is ABSOLUTE TORTURE for some folk who **suffer** from extreme heat intolerance and absolutely INSANE profuse sweating, who are trapped in a body which is FAR TOO HOT which IS a disability, and a brutally severe disability but which is never recognised as such and instead only treated with OUTRAGEOUS contempt by all those spoilt rotten, pampered SICK EASY-lifers with bodies like snakes, always so cold-blooded and desperately seeking insane heat and their insane idea of a so-called “escape” is to go haring off on a plane to somewhere insanely HOT when it’s already far too hot here in the UK. So how on EARTH can it be an escape?! What utter INSANITY! My idea of an escape would be to go somewhere where it’s much COLDER, no more than about 16-17C and wild and wind swept, and where I could get lots of really ROUGH sea journeys on ferries, just like some of those elsewhere on you tube.
Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.000187
- (22) Looks like things will get worse before it gets better. If we don’t fight against climate change and do something to save our environment, our future generations will **suffer**. We need to take concrete action before it is too late.
Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.173098
- (23) Colonizers countries aren’t worried or care about climate change bc it’s affecting dark skin nations the worst, colonizers don’t care if they **suffer**, starve to death.
Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.062813
- (24) I never asked for all these chemicals and pollution either. I do litter hauls literally every weekend and am carbon neutral so I’m absolutely doing my part. I want compensation too. This shit isn’t fair. The small handful of us who care and do our part shouldn’t have to **suffer** because of the majority who don’t care.

Pay these people!

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.003806

- (25) The world is a complete mess right now, but there is something to end it all, DESTROY and ELIMINATE humanity so that no one can **suffer**

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.194066

It may be argued that both senses of the lexeme *suffer* are encountered in the analyzed comments. All the comments quoted above criticize the lack of adequate actions to alleviate suffering and have been accurately assessed as having a negative sentiment. The authors of these comments also make them emotional by the metaphorical use of vulgar words, such as *crap* in (21) and *shit* in (24), as well as by employing capital letters, which suggests shouting, in (21) and (25).

4.3.3 Fear

The last emotion which needs to be addressed is fear. Gray (1987, p. 3) explains that fear is an emotional reaction to “the threat of punishment”. The American Psychological Association gives the following definition of fear:

a basic, intense emotion aroused by the detection of imminent threat, involving an immediate alarm reaction that mobilizes the organism by triggering a set of physiological changes. These include rapid heartbeat, redirection of blood flow away from the periphery toward the gut, tensing of the muscles, and a general mobilization of the organism to take action [...] (American Psychological Association: <https://dictionary.apa.org/fear>).

Wierzbicka (1988, p. 363) remarks that in the English language, there are many terms which allow its speakers to talk about misfortunes, and *fear* happens to be one of the most common lexical items in this group of words.

In the corpus, several lexemes expressing fear were identified. Nonetheless, only one word, namely *fear*, occurs more than 100 times. The *Cambridge Dictionary* provides the following definitions of this word:

fear verb

- (1) to be frightened of something or someone unpleasant
- (2) to be worried or frightened that something bad might happen or might have happened

fear noun

- (1) an unpleasant emotion or thought that you have when you are frightened or worried by something dangerous, painful, or bad that is happening or might happen (*Cambridge Dictionary*: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fear>)

Johnson-Laird and Oatley (1989, p. 113) classify fear as a basic emotion. In the contexts in which *fear* occurs, the mean sentiment score amounts to 0.412221, which implies

that the majority of the comments are negative. Let us now quote several examples of contexts in which this lexeme occurs.

- (26) And it's countries like India and China who are amongst the worst offenders! God help our planet. I **fear** for the future – what there is of it.

Sentiment: neutral // Sentiment score: 0.545212

- (27) The only **fear** us the STUPID POLITICIANS.

Sentiment: neutral // Sentiment score: 0.474203

- (28) Those who experience the greatest measure of **fear** in the face of the seemingly insurmountable issues such as global climate change and pandemics will oftentimes opt for the defense mechanism of denial. Thus, the bare faced lies perpetuated by anti-maskers and global warming deniers. It makes it increasingly difficult to implement proactive solutions when those who are only capable of reactionary responses to problems are clouding the issues with disinformation, hatred and anger.

Sentiment: neutral // Sentiment score: 0.451575

- (29) Pay? Climate has always changed. Always will. Weather events and climate are like comparing snooker and pool. Both are played on tables covered in baize. Both use balls, both are played with chalked cues. But are complete different games, governed by completely different rules. To suggest that someone paying money because there has been bad weather here or there. Or to suggest that humans can control or prevent the climate changing or prevent weather events. It completely and absolutely absurd. It's collective insanity, **fear** mongering and delusion. It's just another elitist grift, big on speculation, guess work and worst case scenario, doom and gloom. But short on actual provable data. That is why you will never see a debate between climatologist from both sides of the topic on mainstream TV.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.034834

- (30) There was a time i **feared** for the future of my children, and grandchildren, due to climate change caused by humans. Now i **fear** for the future of my children, and grandchildren, due to the measures taken to fight an imaginary climate crisis. Climate change is not about climate.

Sentiment: negative // Sentiment score: 0.023134

As the opinions quoted above suggest, the viewers are not only afraid of climate changes, but some of them are also worried about the future, and more specifically the future of their families, while others criticize politicians' actions and fighting the climate crisis. It is also worth mentioning that the authors of the comments use metaphorical language to express certain ideas. The following metaphors can be identified:

- A COUNTRY IS A HUMAN BEING in (26): *India and China who are amongst the worst offenders*;
- PROBLEMS ARE ATMOSPHERIC PHENOMENA in (28): *problems are clouding with disinformation, hatred and anger*;

- CLIMATE CHANGE IS A GAME in (29): *Weather events and climate are like comparing snooker and pool. Both are played on tables covered in baize. Both use balls, both are played with chalked cues. But are complete different games, governed by completely different rules.*

Also, we should pay attention to the use of the rhymed phrase *doom and gloom*, expressing pessimism, in (29).

5 Discussion and conclusions

All things considered, the analysis of the comments retrieved from the BBC YouTube channel enabled us to observe certain tendencies regarding expressing emotions by the viewers commenting on the videos.

As the sentiment analysis of all the comments gathered in the corpus indicates, positive comments are the most common (48.20 percent), while the negative and neutral comments constitute 34.92 percent and 16.88 percent of the research material respectively. We could assume that the positive comments suggest that the viewers express their desire and describe actions that they might take to improve the condition of the natural environment, whereas the negative comments point to the fact that people do not believe climate change to be true and they criticize the information provided by the BBC News. However, the examples we discuss do not support such a simple interpretation for several reasons, one of them being the inability of the sentiment analyzer to identify irony and other rhetorical devices.

As we have demonstrated, the comments contain a number of emotion words, which may be classified by category and basic emotion, following Laird and Oatley (1989). Figure 2 shows the absolute frequencies of top 20 words representing particular categories of emotions, used in the comments.

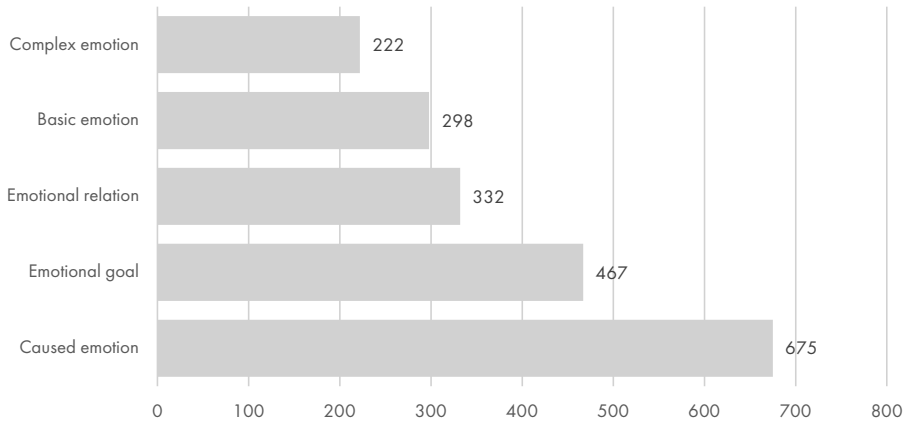


Figure 2. Categories of top 20 emotion words: Absolute frequencies

The two most common categories are caused emotions (675 occurrences) and emotional goals (467 occurrences). Using the words representing these two categories, the viewers express their or other parties' concern or its lack about the current environmental situation (e.g., *care*, *suffer*, *worry* and *concern*), and indicate changes they wish to observe (e.g., *want*). What is more, three categories: (1) basic emotion (332 occurrences), (2) emotional relation (298 occurrences) and (3) complex emotion (222 occurrences) exhibit relatively similar frequencies, occurrences and use. The use of words for basic emotions (e.g., *sad*, *fear* and *happy*) in the comments allows the viewers to express their emotions in a general way, whereas the occurrences of words denoting emotional relations make it possible to show viewers' attitudes towards phenomena or people. As has already been stated, complex emotions (i.e., *hope* and *shame*) enable viewers to evaluate many aspect of the discussed phenomena.

The emotion words can be classified into groups relating to generic emotions. Figure 3 presents the frequencies of these groups, including – again – the top 20 words.

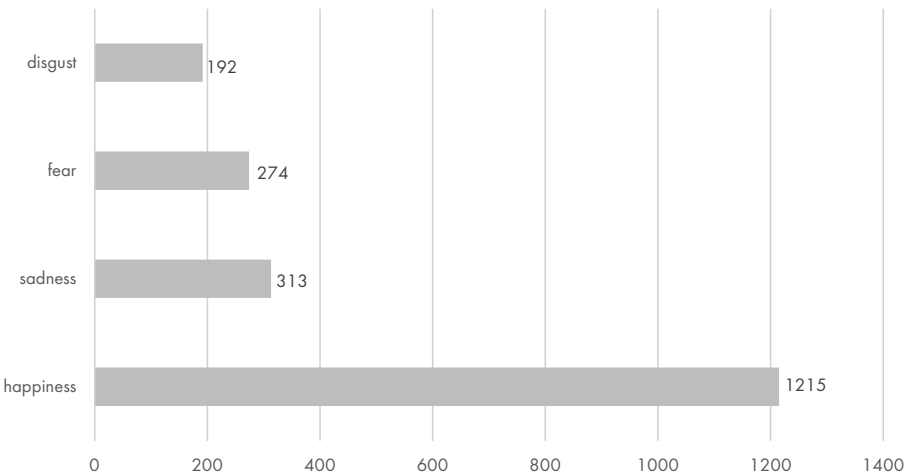


Figure 3. Groups of emotions including top 20 words: Absolute frequencies

Basing on the data presented in Figure 3, we could be misled to draw the conclusion that the viewers express happiness in their comments because this group is the largest: 1215 occurrences versus 313 representing sadness, 274 fear and 192 disgust. Yet this is not the case because the words referring to positive emotions are frequently negated, employed in rhetorical questions or used ironically. A detailed study, requiring manual annotation, would shed more light on the intended meanings of the comments.

As the examples demonstrate, in order to express their emotions, the viewers use not only specific lexical items, like *love*, *care*, *suffer* and *fear*, but vulgar words and figurative expressions as well. Moreover, they employ some typographic conventions, like capital letters, which are also emotionally charged. Obviously, emojis and emoticons – which

we do not analyze in this paper – facilitate expressing the feelings of the authors of the comments as well.

As regards prospects for further research, an analysis of the arguments, especially the ones provided by those who deny climate change, could be carried out. Besides, the interplay between the verbal and the visual (emojis and emoticons) aspects of the comments in the expression of emotions is worth investigating. In this paper, we give a relatively limited number of examples of metaphorical expressions, which – alongside metonymic expressions – deserve a separate in-depth study.

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