

The era of political tweets

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Abstract

The Indian political system has changed drastically in terms of electoral campaigning. The use of language on twitter has been one of the major research subjects for the linguists worldwide. This study has tried to investigate the use of language by the prime minister in his tweets, Narendra Modi before and after he became the prime minister of India. The significance of this study lies in analysing the discourse which will tell us how the public relates itself with the prime minister. The voters can identify the positive and the negative changes in his use of language before and after his prime ministerial tenure. The study has investigated the use of vocabulary, grammar and the text in a tweet.

Keywords: tweets, India, politics, discourse, social media

Introduction

The use of social media went on boom for electoral campaigning in India and worldwide. Before 2014, the majority of the Politicians in India were not using social media for campaigning but after the surge of the internet and most of the urban population rapidly recognising the value of social media, especially Twitter, the online advertising and campaigning took the world by storm. In India's 2014 elections, social media was used widely for political campaigning for the first time (Ahmed, Jaidka, & Cho, 2016; Malge & Deshpande, 2017; Pal et al., 2017). Advertising agencies were approached by political parties to handle a new form of election campaign and it drastically impacted the result of the polls along with the ground work done by the parties. The era of political tweets made it easier to follow up with the latest update of the thoughts and the process happening with the ministers and the ministries. It made it to understand the working of the ministries effortless for the common public to understand. This study provides a clear understanding of the use of the language affected by the power. Since language use is a context bound activity. This study carries three research objectives as follows;

- a. What changes can be seen in the language of the head of the state, before and after the elections?
- b. How does the language affects the voters?
- c. How has the online election campaigning changed the perspective of elections and electorates in India?

The past researches have proved that social media has evolved its own language and with time it has taken more space in our lives. Today, twitter and social media has become an important tool for political advertisements and political campaigning. According to previous studies, social media has become a significant tool for political advertising as well as a forum for public and political sentiment expression (Kalampokis, Karamanou, Tambouris, & Tarabanis, 2017; Safiullah et al., 2017). Many research, including those by Tumasjan, Sprenger, Sandner, and Welpe (2010), Zhou, Tao, Yong, and Yang (2013), and Rathore, Tuli, and Ilavarasan (2016), looked at the predictive ability of Twitter data in predicting election outcomes. According to this research, the frequency with which opposing political parties' tweet during an election campaign can predict the election's outcome. On the other hand, several research, such as those by Sang and Bos (2012), Jungherr (2013), and Suresh and Ramakrishnan (2015), find that tweets cannot anticipate results of the election and that a high level of involvement on Twitter does not always imply a large vote share. Kumar et al. (2016a) established a link between political brand-making by the use of social media and the party's electoral fate in India, and discovered that emotional connect through social media plays a significant role in political branding.

Research methodology

The methodology used in this investigative study was followed in Five steps. In the first step, a twitter account was created, next the tweets of the prime minister were extracted using 'Twint'. For the analysis, we focused on extracting tweets of different political parties from twitter.com. The scraping of tweets was carried out from <fill out the dates> to <fill out the dates>. We used a command line tool twint (<https://github.com/twintproject/twint>) written in python for scraping tweets from Twitter profiles without using Twitter's API. Twitter API limits to last 3200 tweets only. However, twint allows user to scrape all the tweets of a user. Twint uses twitter's search functions to scrape tweets from specific users, scrape tweets relating to topics or certain hashtags.

After the tweets were extracted, the tweets were analysed using the Linguistic enquiry word count. The LIWC is a word analysis program designed to make an effective vocabulary system that could measure both psychological processes and the content of what people were writing or talking about (Tausczik & Pennebaker 2010:29). After the text analysis, the tweets were categorised into positive and negative tweets. Also, the main themes of the tweets were analysed manually.

The frequency of the words was analysed in a tweet. This was done using the word frequency analysis (WFA) online which can create word clouds and tell us the words used the greatest number of times. The bigger the text, the higher is its frequency. The lexical density of a text is a measure of how descriptive it is or how much information it contains. By dividing the total number of words by

the density of lexical words (adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs), the lexical density or density of lexical words (adjectives, adverbs, nouns, and verbs) was calculated. Information. Textalyser also included other indices, such as a readability index for the intended audience of the tweets.

Results and discussion

1. PM Modi's tweets before 2014 were more focussed on negative emotions and criticism on the central government's policies. The tweets were written in third person and mostly were in self-praise while the later tweets used sarcasm and irony more.
2. PM Modi's political speeches are full of emotions. Usually, he chooses a topic to tweet which is full of emotions which in turn arouses the public sentiment. The tweets of the prime minister are very power centric.
3. The language of the prime minister is simple and clear to understand, mostly tweeted in Hindi language. Most of the vocabulary used by him are in positive sentiment. The adjectives used see a positive trend. Also, his tweets are self-promotional and ideology focussed.
4. The verbs used mostly reflect his language used towards nation building. The emergence of the verb will in Modi's tweets is synonymous with the word must, demonstrating Modi's willingness to take steps toward the citizens' well-being and the nation's overall development. Modi also portrays a strong statement regarding the future, whether it is within or beyond one's ability.
5. The number of tweets increased significantly after he rose to the post of PM. The use of pronominal increased which indicates that it has been used in a collective and persuasive sense. The use of personal pronouns is mostly associated with the identity and ideology. The use of more personal pronouns is a part of political strategy adhering to the strictness and responsibility of the state head according to Van Dijk. The tone of the prime minister changed to more positive and affirmative one as compared to that of his tone during the CM days.
6. The number of tweets increased significantly from CM days to PM days. Before 2014, Modi criticised Congress more as compared to after 2014.
7. Most of the tweets are in Hindi. The syntactic structure is mostly of the compound nature. In the negative sentences used, there are a lot of coordinators which pushes an emphasis on the negation.
8. The ideology is mainly reflected by the choice of the lexical words and in the tweets prior to 2014, the opponents are mainly shown in the negative light whereas after 2014, the choice of the words mostly focusses on the self-praise.
9. The presence on the social media and the consistent growth in the tweets helped him significantly in connecting with the public. Modi started following his karyakartas which was a great way to connect with the general public. The public sentiment connected itself with his majority of emotions like 'Hindutava'

and 'jai shri Ram'. Also, the crafted quotes like, "Mai bhi chowkidar", "Chaiwala" and "Abki bar Modi Sarkar" acted like a booster.

10. Most of the sentences used by Modi includes words like, mitron, bhaiyo and behno which makes his tweets more family oriented. The critical discourse analysis says that his tweets previous to 2014 were more focussed on the Gujrat and the people of Gujrat criticising the then government where he used interrogative sentences and were referenced to him in third person. The first person has been replaced by the use of third person while maintaining the identical truth conditions, while the tweets after 2014 were mostly exclamatory in nature. This condition of Illeism represents self-promotion. Those tweets quickly changed to first person. The rich use of numerals and past tenses show his eagerness to convince the public of his achievements and personalisation of power.

His tweets have been ironical in nature and are very contradictory before and after he rose to PM. Despite of his contradictory language, he won the 2019 elections, due to his extraordinary ability to emotionally connect with the audience. This study to a great extent shows that the public largely connects with the national sentiment portrayed by the leader rather than trusting in the facts stated.

The future of the Indian elections seems to be very much influenced by the social media. The online campaigning has taken a lot of space in the lives of the urban middle class of the country. It certainly has changed the thought process of the voters and the leaders as well.

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