



Facing the New Far Right in Southern Europe

Analysing the Rise of the Extreme Right
After the Financial Crisis

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Essays by Oscar Barberà (coord), Manuela Caiani, Tiago Carvalho, Camille Kelbel, Maria Elisabetta Lanzone, Riccardo Marchi, Marco Lisi, Anna López, Marc Borràs, Astrid Barrio, Juan Rodríguez Teruel, Beatriz Gallardo Paúls and Idoia Arreaza



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Negation as enunciative position: Spanish radical right's discourse in the social network context¹

Beatriz Gallardo Paúls

Approach: four tweets, one election

It is already commonplace to assume that regarding 21st century politics, especially if we look at its discursive substrate, social networks, and particularly Twitter, have become a relevant channel for ideological transmission—with Facebook being more important if we narrow our analyses down to the relationship between social networks and the media. (Trottier & Fuchs 2015; Engesser *et al.* 2017; Enguix 2019; López-López & Oñate 2019).

This work will analyse political party Vox's most used discursive strategies on Twitter. As a starting point, we propose a comparison (Figure 1) of four tweets reacting to the results of the European Parliament elections held in May 2019:

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Figure 1. Twitter accounts on the night of May 26th after vote counting for the European elections took place.



As shown, Marine Le Pen's official account's (@MLP_officiel) tweet talks about "the French" and "#ThePeoplesVictory", as well as candidate Jordan Bardella, whom she praises. In the second case, while the tweet is not a reaction to the elections' results, since it is the pinned tweet posted on the Brexit Party account (@brexitparty_uk) during the last days of the campaign, it remained pinned even after the first triumphant statements by Nigel Farage; highlights include the "Thank you" message and implicit mention to that surveys are not actual reality. The third case is Lega Nord's leader Matteo Salvini's (@matteosalvinimi) tweet, in a photo

that conveys informality and emotion, with a simple handwritten message with a text that echoes the image: "One simple word: Thank you, Italy ". Finally, if we observe political party Vox's message, a striking difference with the other three can be easily pinpointed: it is neither a message of gratitude to its electorate nor a celebration of the political "we", but a message that refers to a different discursive position: "We have already passed". This message replaces the clearly positive expressiveness in the other three parties' messages with a tone evoking negative expressiveness, one that seems closer to imprecation.

In order to describe this difference, we can firstly turn to the meanings introduced by the use of the adverb "already". This element works as a presuppositional trigger that performs a double function:

- On the one hand it activates intertextuality, since the well-known slogan "They shall not pass"—the republican slogan in the face of Madrid's siege by Franco's forces—is introduced into the discourse, in turn conveying an idea of temporal flow and the culmination of a long historical process, which links these 2019 elections with the 1930s.
- On the other hand it establishes a dialogue, since it is a response to "They shall not pass". This answer denies the republican slogan and is based on interactive discrepancy.

A second important element is the colloquialism of the participle "*pasa'o*", typical of informal conversational situations, which seems to appeal to street-level speech but also has cocky and boastful speech connotations. Thus, a defiant discursive tone is conveyed: One of a certain arrogance which is not directed at the party's "us" or its voters, but at a "them", made up of those who could currently align with the slogan "They shall not pass".

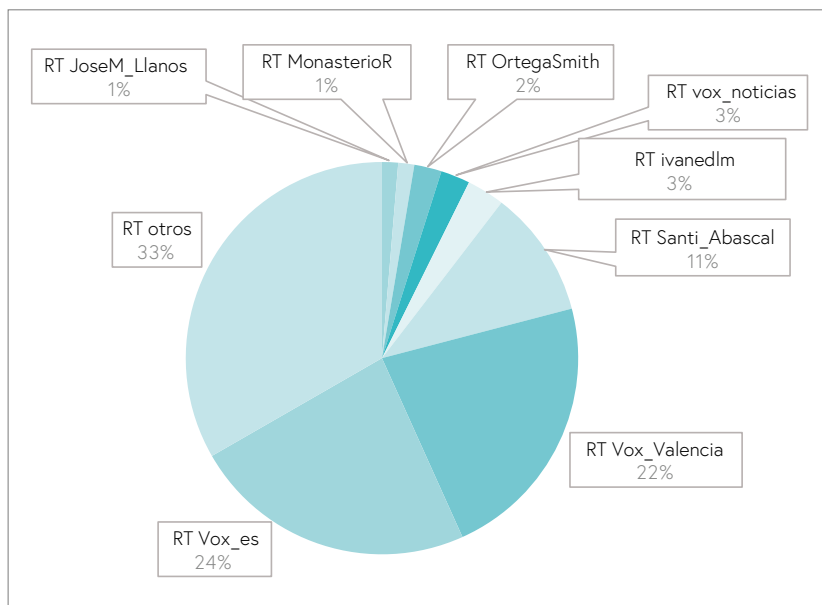
Theoretical and methodological tenets

In the following paragraphs we analyse Vox's speech using Vox Valencia's Twitter account's (@vox_valencia) messages between January 4 and May 5 2019 as the main corpus. This period includes the significant events such as the feminist marches that took place in March as well as both Valencian general and regional elections that took place on April 28 . The sample was obtained through TwDocs, a

program which provides the last 3,200 messages of each selected profile—in this case we specifically obtained 3,157. Our aim is to identify the generic use of the discursive strategies used in these messages which, contrary to what the example mentioned above seems to suggest, are not always far removed from the rest of the European radical right parties.

A global view of the sample's tweets shows Vox's Valencian account's minimal specificity as a first basic conclusion. As shown in Figure 2, 73.7% of the published messages are other people's accounts retweets. The retweeted messages are their own messages (22%), those of the party's general account (@vox_es), and those of its main national leaders: Abascal, Espinosa de los Monteros, Ortega Smith and Monasterio; with regional leader José M. Llanos barely obtaining 1% of these *remediation* messages (Alcántara 2019).

Figure 2. @vox_valencia account's retweets.

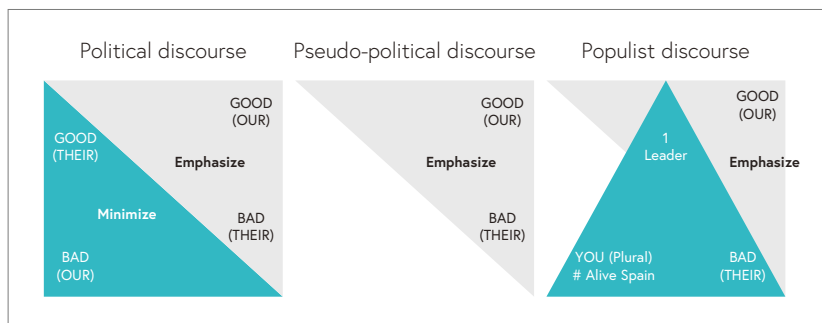


Presently most parties ascribed by political theory to the radical right are linguistically characterized by the use of populist discourse (Charaudeau 2005,

2009). In order to characterize this rhetorical mode our starting point will be the well-known idea that all political discourse implies the construction of a "we-us" versus a "they-them"—an idea that the analysis of modern discourse summarizes in the *ideological square* described by Van Dijk (2004). Figure 3 shows three descriptive models that correspond to three different discursive situations, whose appearance does not necessarily occur in linear order of appearance:

1. The general political discourse builds an ideological square that emphasizes the positive aspects in the "us" and the negative ones in the "them", while minimizing their opposites: "our" bad and "their" good. The way in which this difference is managed is, in theory, proportionate, rational, and claims to be objective. This discourse is compatible with the unfolding of the three Aristotelian discursive spheres: *ethos* (evidence derived from the "moral character of the speaker"), *logos* (evidence based on "discourse itself") and *pathos* (evidence emanating from of the "listener's disposition").
2. In pseudo-political discourse, especially boosted by social networks (Gallardo & Enguix 2016), the ideological square is replaced by an *axiological square* which only highlights—hyperbolically (Gallardo 2018)—its own positive aspects and the others' negative ones. Difference is thus loaded with both identity and exclusive values, hence imposing subjective and emotional aspects—*ethos* and *pathos*.
3. Populist discourse introduces a discursive triangle by splitting the "we", on the one hand, into "I (the leader)", and on the other, into "you (the people, living Spain, etc.)". This leader's protagonism is thus ambivalent, since it is constructed equally in opposition to the second and third person, meaning that the resulting speech has to emphasize both the rejection of others and his or her follower's cohesion.

Figure 3. Three structural models of political discourse.



From this standpoint, we hold that the construction of the "we/the good"—typical of populist discourse— lies on the distinction of a charismatic leader and a "you/the people", which in Vox's case is lexicalized through hashtags such as #ThePartOfSpainThatGetsUpEarly [#LaEspañaQueMadruga], #LivingSpain [#LaEspañaViva], etc. The leader's figure (as well as his or her speech) as both a victim and a saviour becomes essential as an articulating axis for a divided society:

- Ex.1 Tweet by @vox_esp's on 01/11/2019, 9:41AM.
@Santi_ABASCAL at @EspejoPublico
"I'm not a creature of the system but of my own convictions"
#CaféAbascal
[Interview screenshot]
- Ex.2 Tweet by @libertaddigital on 02/05/19, 10:56AM.
Abascal accuses Sánchez of "betraying Spain and the Constitution"
[Interview video]
- Ex.3 Article by @Santi_ABASCAL in @larazon_es
"In short, we must prevent misgovernment from forcing the Crown (once again) to warn regarding the limits of political incompetence."
[Link to article]

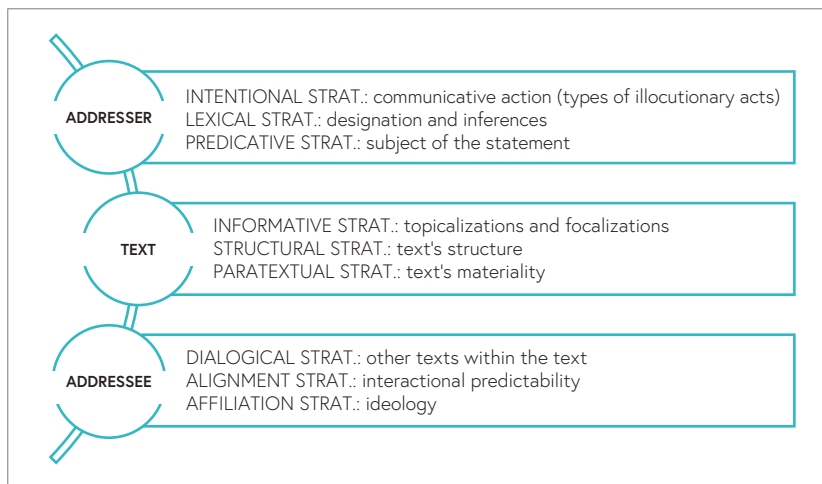
The triangle's "they", as we shall see, is also polyhedral since it points towards a catch-all discursive strategy: the media—although only some (Oleaque 2019)—, other parties, Spain's enemies, liberals, communists, separatists, the fearful, feminism, immigrants... The tweet in Ex. 4 sums up this identification of the enemy well:

- Ex.4 Tweet by @Santi_ABASCAL on 03/19/2019, 1:46PM.

NOTICE for the MEDIA and PARTIES that are tracking our lists and scanning our candidates: You will not find a single enemy of Spain. Nor any ally of Spain's enemies. Neither will you find liberals, communists, separatists, or fearful.

Regarding our method for analysis, we use a cognitive linguistics model that identifies various strategies to determine the framing of texts. Figure 4 schematically presents the different strategic levels of the discursive framework, which we will review in the following sections:

Figure 4. Schematic summary of the analysis model.



Framing enunciative strategies

Framing's intentional strategy corresponds to the communicative action carried out by texts. Using Searle's typology of illocutionary acts we can identify basic trends in tweets. Regarding the most prominent communicative intention, it is worth noting the predominance of a positive expressive illocutionary force that is used to create a discursive *pathos* (Charaudeau 2008).

Ex.5 Tweet by @vox_es on 01/18/19, 1:59PM.

"Among the dead there will always be a living language to shout that Spain does not give up."

Spectacular @Santi_ABASCAL yesterday in Zaragoza.

Long live Spain! [Spanish flag and "give the finger" emoji].

RT. You won't see this on television. [Video Abascal's rally].

In this construction of the "we", typical rhetorical elements of the fascist idiolects of the 20th century can be observed (De Santiago 1992; Pérez-Bowie 1988; Sesma 2006; Francesconi 2009), such as:

- Triumphalism, rhetoricism, emotionality.
- Creation of a "we" built around moral and sentimental values alien to general politics:
 - Compassion (selective: under age victims in current events, Christian victims in terrorist attacks).
 - Pride (athletes, security forces, the military abroad...).
 - Solidarity (diverse groups: hunters, bullfighting in rural areas...).
 - Essentialist patriotic identification (praise of traditions: fallas festivals, religious processions...).
- Peculiarity rhetoric: appropriation strategy regarding groups neglected by the classic progressive rhetorics on peculiarity (Gallardo 2018).
- Victimization: victim/perpetrator rhetorical investment. The binary exclusionary dynamic is updated by presenting themselves in their own messages as victims of the political or media system.

A collective's defence is always carried out through attacking another collective and through confrontation. See the following examples:

- Ex.6 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 03/14/19, 9:18PM.
 May the two little ones rest in peace. My prayers and my condolences. Violence can only be reduced through education and values, and it sees no sex or age. Domestic violence is the most terrible. @vox_es is certain of that.
 [Link to a news item by lasprovincias.es about the finding of the bodies of two murdered children]
- Ex.7 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 02/28/19, 0:27AM.
 VOX supports hunting for economic and environmental reasons and in order to defend the rural world. We've had enough with arrogant urbanites telling countryside people how they ought to live. Stopping hunting in Castilla y León is nonsense.
 [Link to a news item by diariodeleon.es about the suspension of hunting by the Spanish Supreme Court]

Ex.8 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 02/24/19, 1:49PM.

"It isn't easy to campaign when many media change and manipulate our message" @JoseMa_Llanos at @COPEValencia #ForSpain

[Photo of the interview]

Alternatively, the construction of the "they" is characterized by negative expressiveness. Mouffe (1994: 6) has described this situation from an identity reformulation of the we/them opposition:

the 'other', who up until now has been considered simply as different, starts to be perceived as someone who is rejecting 'my' identity and who is threatening 'my' existence. From that moment on, any form of us/them relationship – whether it be religious, ethnic, economic or other – becomes political.

Secondly, the remaining illocutionary possibilities also unfold with some clear trends. Thus, and with regard to representative illocutivity, certain type of messages that we may call *sobering tweets*, and that are not as frequent in other political parties' profiles, stand out (Gallardo, Oleaque & Enguix 2018). A large part of some leaders' profiles is comprised of long strings of tweets ("threads") in which a concrete, compact line of thought is exposed, explaining the party's position regarding flagshit issues. A pedagogical, simplistic, explicit, and often sarcastic tone is used. In this regard Espinosa de los Monteros' account stands out. Following is a partial reproduction of one his threads, comprised of is a string of a total of twelve threaded messages as allowed by the platform. Note the lexical uses and the teasing/sobering tone:

Ex.9 Tweets by @ivanedlm on 01/05/2019, 3:54PM.

Warning: long thread ... but I think it won't disappoint.

Here it goes:

This week has revealed—and clearer than ever—the gap between progre elites and Spaniards' reality. It has been a very interesting experiment. Let's go ahead:

[Second tweet] In reply to @ivanedlm

Let's start with the context: after the results of the Andalusians [regional elections in Andalucía], Cs [Ciudadanos party] and PP [Popular Party] agreed for an "anti-Vox agreement" led by Cs. Let us remember that Cs, far from the desired sorpasso, only managed to be third ... which explains why they have been giving a histrionic show for a month.

[Third tweet] In reply to @ivanedlm

First came that absurd thing where @JuanMarin_Cs had to be the president. And Rivera's spoiled child challenge that "there was no reason to prevent it" Then, more spoiled children's whims: "I get angry with the PP if they sit down and negotiate with Vox". And lastly...

[Eleventh tweet] In reply to @ivanedlm

For every hysteric who attacks Vox on TV, a calm interview with @Ortega_Smith or @monasterioR or an article by @Santi_ABASCAL putting things back in place. The truth prevails if you have conviction and courage. Cs previously defended the same, but backed down after criticism.

[Twelfth tweet] In reply to @ivanedlm

And after all, dear friends, precisely this is what defines the progre gap, and it is also that which the progressives of all the parties do not understand, especially Cs "the weathercocks". @vox_es does not change when the storm approaches: Vox is the storm!

The compromissory illocutivity obviously corresponds to the electoral promises, and the directive illocutivity to the publication of harangues that encourage voting, party affiliation, and patriotism:

Ex.10 Tweet by @Santi_ABASCAL on 03/10/19, 9:16PM.

Once in office, VOX will declassify and make public PSOE [Socialist party]/PP's arrangements with Eta [terrorist group]. We want to know why Josu Ternera is free. Beyond dark negotiations, Justice must act. [Video showing PSOE leaders]

Ex.11 Tweet by @VOX_valencia on 04/15/19, 3:25PM.

If you love Spain, if you want to strengthen your motherland, if you want to recover the freedoms that have been stolen from you, for the nation, for freedom, for Spain! #28A: VOTE FOR VOX
#FearNothingOrNobody #ForSpain
[Electoral campaign Vox video]

As part of this "voxist idiolect", the choice of words—the lexical strategy—is absolutely essential, since designation mechanisms directly guide conceptualization. It uses a haughty lexicon, with solemnity connotations, rhetoricism, and pseudolyrism. The "idiomatic monumentality" characteristic of 1930s nationalisms,

meaning the "abuse of superlatives, pleonasms, tautologies, *epitheta ornantia*, etc." with a masking function (Pérez-Bowie 1988: 357) is updated. In addition, vulgar tones and slang is used, with transgressions of the Gricean principle in the way they activate inferences and identifications (Gallardo & Madrid 2020).

A particularly profitable and productive mechanism is the creation of lexicalizations with the function of conceptual "packaging": "progressive dictatorship" [*dictadura progre*], "plasterboard Spain" [*la España del pladur*], "living Spain" [*la España viva*], "the orange weathercock" [*la vetea naranja*, meaning *Cs*], "the cowardly righty" [*la derechita cobarde*]. In doing so they quickly coin labels that, almost like slang, establish group complicity. These are nods of recognition close to the implicit understandings:

Ex.12 Tweet by @VOX_valencia on 02/10/19, 6:18PM.

The squatter's government, the far left, the separatists and "la Sexta" [center-left Spanish TV channel] will claim that this morning there were only 45,000 people in Colón [square]. The reality is that not one single soul more could fit in the square or in the surrounding streets.
#SánchezLeave10F

These lexical uses adjust to negative expressiveness and therefore are more frequently used in the construction of the discursive "they". Furthermore, the explicit use of nonsense and disparaging terms is made, often with echoes of the past: "*the Frenchman*" or "*little Napoleon*" [Napoleoncito], to refer to Emmanuel Macron or Manuel Valls; "The squatter" to refer to Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Any hint of correction is disregarded as political correctness, and therefore incorrectness and the violation of minimal cooperative codes are exhibited; the rudeness becomes "true talk": "*femalism*", "*spit on the progres*", "*progre dictatorship*", "*feminazis*", "*gender totalitarianism*", "*supremacist feminism*", "*Torra's puppies*", and so on. A tweet by @vox_noticias describes a speech by Ortega Smith in the European Parliament as "*shame-free, courageous, no sign of half-baked measures or political language*".

These lexicalization mechanisms, as is the case with insults and hate speech in general, imply a means to avoid dialogue and to establish a monological discourse, excluding and lacking alternatives, which eliminates any real possibility of argumentative replication or communication (Butler 1997). At the time of writing, for example, every time the press asks spokesperson Espinosa de los Monteros for explanations about corruption cases reported against him by newspaper *El País*, he systematically answers by speaking of "*PRISA group's inventions*", with a victimizing

counterattack that not only avoids all possible discursive justifying lines on his part, but also manages to avoid the simple denomination (of the facts of which he is accused of and of who is accusing him). Consequently, much of the transmitted meaning is entrusted to the unsaid (Gallardo & Madrid 2020).

Among these uses of implicit meaning *trap inferences* stand out. These entail a concealment mechanism that consists of placing falsehoods in the non-explicit scope, thus making their deactivation difficult:

Ex. 13 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 02/06/19, 6:48PM.

@VOX_Valencia's regional president @JoseMa_Llanos
"It is inconceivable that in Valencia keep being taught
that we're Catalanian".
#LivingSpain
[Link to news item by valenciaextra.com]

Ex. 14 Tweet by @vox_es on 04/04/19, 2:05PM.

We will continue saying that there are Islamists who want to colonize Europe and that they are an enemy to fight. They will have to put all VOX leaders in jail, since we will continue demanding the State to control those who want to impose burqa on Spanish women.
[Video of Abascal's interview].

Finally, the distribution of roles in political action—the *framing's predicative strategy*—perpetuates the binary situation "we/others" that we have been describing, reaffirming the global axiological square. Notice how the following message does not name those "others", and dilutes them in an anonymous pronominalization that (again) has a masking function:

Ex. 15 Tweet by @vox_valencia on 04/22/19, 10:31PM.

Some did not comply and now they have no credibility. Others are lukewarm and are undecided. We will be firm in restoring order and freedom in Catalonia. #ForSpain

Furthermore, the use of Sketch Engine software for extraction of the verbs that conjugate the "we" shows a really poor semanticity. No great political agency can be deduced from this, but only static discursive positions:

Figure 5. Word cloud from the full list of 1st person plural verb forms.



Framing textual strategies

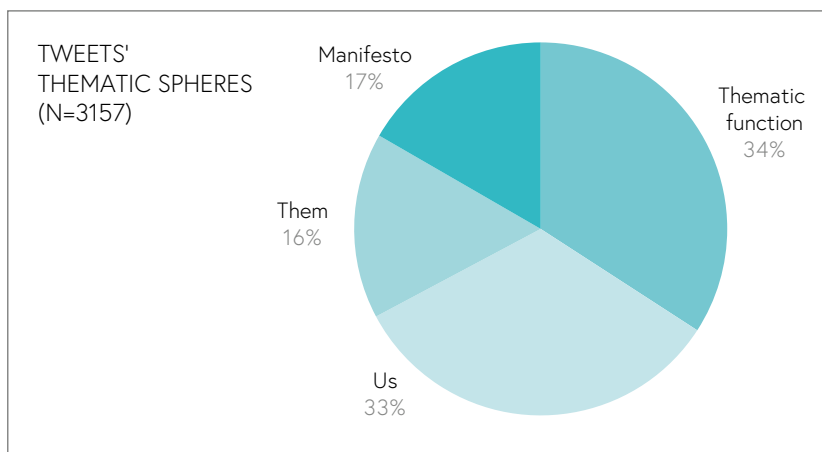
Informative strategy deals with the thematic management of texts and focuses on their content: what is talked about (and what is not). If we consider the messages' basic functions, whether they are own tweets or retweets, we can differentiate four main thematic areas:

- Phatic function tweets: agenda and campaign teams, appearances in the media, attendance to events, creation of new delegations, calls for demonstrations...
- Configuration of the "we": messages contributing to exalting values and feeding back the "living Spain", messages of re-interpretation of their premises (mainly Iván Espinosa de los Monteros), of vindication of their role in Andalusia. Development of peculiarity rhetoric (bullfighting, security forces, hunting, prison officials, falleros, popular festivals, ETA terrorism's victims, weapon bearers, taxi drivers ...). Our symbols. Our leader. We victims.
- Configuration of the "them": attack on other leaders and parties, various groups.

- Electoral manifesto presentation: messages that refer to the specific policies defended by the party on multiple issues, although with special emphasis on those related to feminism and immigration.

Figure 6 shows how tweets are distributed according to these key subject areas:

Figure 6. Thematic predominance in tweets: only 17% of them refer to the party manifesto.



As we have already confirmed in previous works—and despite appearances—what gets talked about on Twitter is basically issues that are peripheral to real political action. In Vox's specific case, it especially gravitates towards mythifiable material and topics that can be easily channelled into stereotypes; the flag, language, nation, bullfighting, hunting, tradition... they act almost like McGuffin in thrillers, they are an excuse that serves as support for the introduction of the actually important topics and community building. These elements establish a very ambiguous interpretive framework, but one that functions as a compact package with evocation of the past: An idealized and monolithic past that evokes both an *obligation to be* and an *obligation to feel* (Horchschild 2016). Some of these fetish themes are:

- Spain as a nation whose sovereignty is threatened from multiple fronts that demand a response: the Catalan independence process, European directives, social movements, immigration.

Ex.16 Tweet by @vox_esp on 03/07/19, 8:03PM.

Ortega_Smith in Brussels stood for what millions of Spaniards think.
Soon we will have MEPs who will defend our identity and sovereignty
in the European Parliament against separatists, liberals, globalist
bureaucrats and feminist supremacists.
[Video by El País with Ortega Smith's appearance in the European
Parliament and subsequent statements]

- Global attack on feminism; denial of gender violence (vs. intra-family violence, domestic violence).

Ex.17 Tweet by @vox_es on 03/08/19, 1:00PM.

This is how @monasterioR in SER stood up to the supremacist feminist
discourse of socialist Carmen Calvo, who claims that men and women
are unequal before the law.
[Link to video from Hora25 radio talk show on radio station SER].

- Immigration, highly narrative xenophobic discourse, focus on Islam.

Ex.18 Tweet by @vox_esp on 04/04/19, 5:41PM.

Let no one doubt about this: VOX will continue to denounce and fight
the Islamist invasion. We have to be vigilant and we have to expel
anyone who poses a threat to the safety of Spaniards.
[Video showing compilation of images of Islamic fundamentalists
attacks]

- Minorities selection: hunters, athletes, the military, bullfighters and farmers...
The diversity discourse generated by the left since the 70s is speculatively
reformulated and applied to new groups.

Ex.19 Tweet by @RFEcaza on 03/05/19, 10:33AM.

@RFEcaza meets @vox_es to present ##HuntersAlsoVote
@Santi_ABASCAL conveyed to @A_LopezMaraver his "absolute
commitment to #hunting and the federative institution", endorsing
#HuntersAlsoVote #Spain
#TruthAboutHunting @voxnoticias_es
[Photo of the meeting and link to video]

Ex.20 Tweet by @Santi_ABASCAL o 03/15/19, 3:42PM.

Interesting to see that the same people who remain silent when victims are Christians (there's a genocide underway in Africa) are now so alarmed by the anti-Islam terrorism in New Zealand. We must always condemn and combat all terrorism, no exceptions, wherever they come from.

Ex.21 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 04/11/19, 3:09PM.

Earlier this morning we met at VOX Valencia's headquarters with the Valencia Sliding Sports Association. We work for everyone
#ForSpain
[Photo of the meeting]

The lexical frequency analysis through Sketch Engine, eliminating the phatic function and the electoral agenda tweets, draws us the lexical map shown in Figure 7. The hashtag #Don'tTalkOnMyBehalf [*#NoHablaEnMiNombre*] has a prominent place in it because it is the reaction to the International Woman's Day March 8 demonstrations:

Figure 7. Lexical frequencies of the corpus after eliminating the phatic function and agenda tweets.



However, most of the time themes are not elaborated, they are only enunciated as emotional rather than argumentative anchors. The vagueness of their referential messages is worth highlighting, which is consistent with the lexical support provided by the inference and the connotation that we have already described. The notable exception is the aforementioned *sobering tweets*, which appear almost exclusively as retweets of Espinosa de los Monteros' profile.

The format adopted by the texts corresponds with the structural strategy of the discursive framing. The corpus tweets use narrative and argumentative superstructures in such a way that we can speak of certain predominant tendencies for the two fundamental types of textual schema. For example, we observe narrative predominance in victimization tweets:

Ex.22 Tweet by @ivanedlm on 04/22/19, 5:38PM.

Even when they attack us we end up winning. We stopped for lunch in the wonderful Navarra and some radicals have punctured our van's wheels. In turn we have met some fantastic @guardiacivil agents who have helped us change the tyre. #Thanks to all the guards!
[Photos of the event]

Narrative messages are also optimal for prejudice consolidation, and above all, for mythologized stories at the service of hate speech to be reinforced and for the creation of negative stereotypes referring to women, immigrants, the media...

Ex.23 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 03/28/19, 7:38PM.

@apunt_media, the pancatalanist TV in @ximopuig and @monicaoltra's Valencian C. serving @QuimTorraíPla, closes its first broadcasting year with more than 48 million in losses!
#Waste
Point 35:
At vox_es we propose the closure of all regional televisions..
[Link to lasprovincias.es]

On the other hand we find argumentative predominance in the sobering messages:

Ex.24 Tweet by @monasterioR on 03/07/19, 9:00PM.

We women do not want supremacist feminism to use us.
That is why tomorrow we will work like any other day. Because we are already strong. We are already independent.

#DontSpeakOnMyBehalf [Photo of Monasterio showing a page on which the hashtag can be read]

It is relatively frequent for *common sense fallacies* to be used as a valid argument for a multitude of topics:

Ex.25 Tweet by @santi_ABASCAL on 03/08/19, 9:26PM.

Let's leave behind this suicidal madness that aims to confront men and women. They will never win because their war is against common sense and nature.

[Video of the 8M marches].

Ex.26 Tweet by @vox_esp on 03/20/19, 4:22PM.

We do not want firearms to be sold in supermarkets, we want an effective right to self defence that won't imply that if you defend yourself from a violent robber, you end up prosecuted for murder. It is pure common sense.

Ex.27 Tweet by @vox_esp on 03/31/19, 0:31AM.

#LivingSpain overflows Barcelona:

We are extremely normal Spaniards.

We are radical advocates of obvious things.

We are extremists of common sense.

We are populists if that means loving our people.

RT if you are too [Video of Abascal at a rally]

Ex.28 Tweet by @vox_esp on 02/03/19, 01:35AM.

@Santi_ABASCAL in Toledo: "When common sense kicks in, no insult can stop it. We have come to set Spain in motion, led by common sense".

We also find cases of *exaltation fallacies*, by means of which the argument is emptied of referentiality and resolves itself into ravings: since the apparent representative illocutivity does not hold it is replaced by sentimental expressiveness.

Ex.29 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 04/15/19, 11:25AM.

If you love Spain, if you want to strengthen your motherland, if you want to recover the freedoms that have been stolen from you, for the nation, for freedom, for Spain! #28A: VOTE FOR VOX

#FearNothingOrNobody #ForSpain

[Video showing images of socialist and independentist leaders]

The textual level closes with the *paratextual strategy* of the frame. The materiality of the texts has to do, basically, with the visual and sound aspects (especially prosody). Most of the tweeted messages are accompanied by photos and videos.

The political use of extraverbal elements in order to create an interpretive context is constantly and universally found. The following quote by Santamaría indicates how ministry rooms where high-level political meetings take place were traditionally accompanied by figurative images:

In a place like this it used to be common for the walls to be saturated with images of historical figures capable of touching the people's heart, subjects whose mere image coagulated national principles and heroic postulates, scenes of glorious battles, etc. (Santamaría 2018: 13).

However, the semantic load is undoubtedly greater in non-figurative symbols and emblems, the meaning of which requires a historical and cultural elaboration. In our data we stick to the importance of the visual elements that appear in tweets, the most important element of which are undoubtedly flags, although the national anthem also acquires great importance.

Ex.30 Tweet by @Ortega_Smith on 04/06/19, 8:54AM.

The Nation standing invincible.

#Ibiza #LivingSpain

[Video of the start of a rally with a Spanish flag flying over the stage while the national anthem plays and the standing audience also waves many flags]

These symbols, which do not need explicit language/discourse, are advantageous in that they are essentializing, they appeal to identification, and above all they supply argumentation, which leads us to tropic relationships by leap, since each element exercises metonymy with respect to the others.

Interactive strategies

Interactive strategies operate on three different levels, the most obvious of which is the quoted discourse (*interactive strategy*). In this regard, we have already pointed out the importance of quoted tweets which broadcast the message of national leaders on the @VOX_Valencia account. The party's profile shows an echoic conception of the leaders' discourse, something that is absolutely common for Twitter profiles of all Spanish political parties (Gallardo, Oleaque and Enguix 2018).

The *alignment strategy* reveals that the speech disseminated on the Twitter account is to a very high extent a reactionary one, in the literal sense, meaning that it can be described as a discourse "against" something, obviously in line with confrontational—*clash* (Salmon 2018)—and discrepancy dynamics. However, as we have already pointed out, it is a unidirectional discrepancy which leaves no room to continue a refutative debate, and which blocks the way to any possible discursive continuation. This is a political stance represented in repeated phrases like "We won't allow for", "Vox won't tolerate", and the use of verbs begging with negative prefixes. The following tweet perfectly sums up this "no' enunciation":

Ex.31 Tweet by @VOX_Valencia on 01/05/19,
#2019VoxYear:
Suppression of Autonomies
Illegalization of separatist parties
Drastic tax cut
End of subsidies to parties, unions, employers ...
Defence of our borders
Repeal of the Historical Memory Law
Spain first
[Link to lasprovincias.es]

Therefore, we can infer that interaction and dialogue—elements which lie in this discursive level's foundations—are actually minimal. As a pragmatic category negation always acts as a presuppositional trigger that introduces the opposite affirmative voice into discourse. From this standpoint, it can be argued that the message constructed by Vox Valencia's Twitter profile is essentially a discourse based on denial and blocking any subsequent intervention, which in terms of interactive orientation can only be described as a kind of long reactive shift which, at the same time, is monological.

Conclusions

The analysis of the messages disseminated by Vox through social networks by means of a cognitive analysis model, based on the identification of the different discursive strategies, allows us to identify, at the enunciative level, the predominance of an expressive illocutionary force, of a markedly negative character in the construction of the "them" (insults, imprecations) and of a positive nature in the construction of the "we" (exaltation, sophistry, rhetoricism, victimhood).

At the lexical level this fundamentally expressive intentionality, placed at the service of discursive *pathos*, relies on mechanisms such as the use of inference, changes in register (especially dysphemisms), and the creation of lexicalizations, which in all cases serve a masking and concealment function. This concealment points to another fundamental feature revealed by the analysis of the predicative strategy: the actantiality of the "we" is virtually non-existing. Hence both the emotionality and the rhetoric of confrontation can be interpreted as substitutes for a truly political discourse centred on argumentation for political proposals.

At the textual level this basic enunciative position is completed with the abuse of narrative structures (in the construction of the "they" and in victimization) and paratextual elements (flags, hymns, uniforms), as well as in the specialization of certain tweet threads intended for pedagogical transmission of argumentation (*sobering tweets*). Finally, at the interactive level, the abundance of retweets shows the absence of a specific "partisan" voice, which is displaced by leaders' voices, in line with the personalism and hyper-leadership of current politics of all kinds. In a different regard, the analysed discourse stands out because it can be condensed into the idea of *negation acting as a fundamental enunciative position*: the other is negated and consequently any discursive legitimacy is also denied. The analysed speech is above all a reactionary speech (in a literal sense: non-initiating) as well as a monological one.

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