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IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT WAYS OF EXPRESSING PERSONAL OPINION ON TWITTER: THE TEA PARTY MOVEMENT IN THE USA

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This article examines the linguistic tools adopted by Twitter users to express their personal opinion on the Tea Party movement in the USA. The purpose of the current research is to define the link between the content of the message and the way it is expressed either implicitly or explicitly. The focus is on the linguistic tools aimed at fulfilling different functions. The investigation is based on the content analysis of tweets collected for three months and processed by program Atlas.ti. The program allows the coding of messages, defining the frequency of codes and their correlations. We conclude that people tend to express their opinion explicitly if they are positive about the protest or their aim is to proselytize. Simultaneously, Twitter users take advantage of metaphors, quotations and questions to express their opinion implicitly if they are negative or critical about the movement. The findings of this research illustrate how Twitter users communicate with each other and discuss political issues, and in what way they influence each other's opinion using various linguistic tools while being restricted to only 140 characters.

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to point out the ratio of implicit and explicit utterances in tweets devoted to discussion of Tea Party movement and examine the correlation between the topic of the utterance and the way it is expressed.

Over the past ten years there have been a number of changes in online communication. People take advantage of the numerous ways of communication such as email, chats, blogs, social networking sites, and web sites (Pilgun, 2012). People tend to use blogs and social networking sites not only to communicate, but also to share their personal opinion and get news. Changes have also occurred in the field of journalism. These new forms of communication and news presentation have led to such phenomenon as civic journalism (Grimes, 1999). Civic journalism attempts to regard the readers and viewers as not only the final beneficiaries of the information that journalists provide, but as crucial participants in the designation and creation of the news itself.

Preliminary findings suggest that in online communication different linguistic tools are used to affect public opinion. Most researchers look into the ways mass media influences an audience by linguistic means via social networking sites. The the media activity of the Tea Party movement is marked by an extensive use of offline, analogue, print and other low-technological forms of media, together with the most modern technological developments, such as autonomous wireless networks, and new instruments and platforms of communication like Twitter, Tumbler, and Facebook. The followers of the Tea Party movement create and exchange media elements through these platforms (including analog forms of communications and channels) in a process called transmedia mobilization (Constanza-Chock, 2011:13).

Although previous studies have addressed protest movements via blogs and Twitter in particular, not much attention has been given to Twitter as space for expressing personal opinion on the Tea Party movement explicitly and implicitly. Twitter-based sentiment analysis first received attention a few years ago when James Pennebaker, Roger Booth, Teal Pennebaker, and Chris Wilson created the website AnalyzeWords, which provides an on-the-fly analysis of a person's Twitter feed by using the text analysis program Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) (Zimmer, 2011). Later Christine Greenhow and Benjamin Gleason (2012) looked at Twitter literacy, and John Scott Willey (2011) investigated the relevancy of the Tea Party movement in the new media but there is little research which combines both research of the protest movement and linguistic features of the social networking sites.

This aspect is usually studied from different angles. Concern must be expressed at the failure of researchers to cover all the areas and combine the knowledge of the role of Twitter in the protest movement and its function of sharing opinions between users.

The article presents an overview of modern channels of communication and their role in protest movements. Later, it investigates linguistic tools implemented by users on Twitter. Then, the paper gives an analysis of linguistic tools used by Tea Party protesters to express their point of views explicitly and implicitly. Finally, the article makes a conclusion and suggests opportunities for further research.

Literature review

The purpose of literature review is to investigate new forms of media consumption and the role of Twitter in it, as well as certain linguistic tools of expressing personal opinions explicitly and implicitly. This paper argues that the Internet and social networks changed the way people communicate. In particular, Twitter is widely used not only for regular communication, but it has gained certain attention in political communication. This article gives an overview of how it has been used by Tea Party protesters. It highlights language tools implemented by Twitter users to express their opinions on Twitter implicitly and explicitly.

Twitter and the Tea Party movement

The wide use of Twitter relating to the Tea Party movement has led to 'natural learning/education' by users (Greenhow, Robelia, 2009:119-140). Such a process, in contrast to formal education, is usually unplanned, spontaneous and does not follow the schedule of an institution. Natural education is characterized as united, integrated and encouraged by the interest of an individual (Jenkins, 2006). Twitter facilitates natural education as the platform allows immediate, short social communication. One notable feature is the ability to read tweets from any public account. Since the vast majority of Twitter makes their tweets public (Madden, 2012), it is possible to find links to other web content: news stories, job postings, celebrity updates, questions, and replies. Quite often the messages contain external links to materials outside the social network. This expands the informational resources, encourages natural education and raises the level of awareness on a certain issue. Twitter exemplifies the ability of social media to provide users with an opportunity both to post and consume textual and video information. This change of media consumption, the use of the content created by users as a source of information is equivalent to watching the news. In addition, Twitter has become a convenient instrument of information distribution and citizen involvement in the Tea Party movement as it has a horizontal, non-hierarchical structure. Twitter is used for the distribution of information about venues and the time of special events. Earlier handbills and leaflets were used

for the same purpose, but Twitter significantly broadened the opportunities of informing people and gathering them, making information available for the vast majority of users, regardless of time orlocation. Such use of social networks is called 'e-mobilization' (Earl, Kimport, 2011). It also informs protesters and volunteers about the types of assistance needed in real time. Scientist claim (Conover, Ferrara, Menczer, & Flammini, 2013) that the long-distance communication on Twitter plays a role in the collective framing processes that imbue social movements with a shared language, purpose and identity.

Twitter and the language

This work is based on theories in communication which ground the conceptualization of the communicative and creative practices on Twitter. In particular, we draw on an interdisciplinary group of scholars who discuss the content and methodological issues surrounding new literacy practices (Coiro et al., 2008; Livingstone, Van Couvering, and Thumim, 2008). New literacy scholars conceptualize literacy from a broader, sociocultural perspective as a dynamic , situationally specific and socially mediated practice that both shapes and is shaped by digital technologies (Kress, 2003; Hull and Nelson, 2005; Lewis and Fabos, 2005; Lankshear and Knobel, 2006; Coiro et al., 2008). Coiro et al. claim that literacy is best conceived as dynamic and situationally specific, technologies of literacy available over the internet are constantly changing.

Eisenstein and Bamman (2014) are currently conducting research with Tyler Schnoebelen of Stanford University which examines how gender plays a role in language variation on Twitter. Besides analysing which language forms are associated with women and which are associated with men, scholars are using information on people's Twitter followers to be able to take into consideration the gender makeup of people's networks. Thus, a man with a predominantly female network may show different linguistic patterns compared to a man with a male or mixed network.

Zanzotto, Pennacchiotti, & Tsioutsiouliklis (2011) have studied information redundancy in Twitter. Users often post messages with the same, or very similar, content, especially when reporting or commenting on news and events. Scientists suggest defining two tweets as redundant if they either convey the same information (paraphrase) or if the information of one tweet subsumes the information of the other (textual entailment). In the research they presented an editorial study showing that redundancy is pervasive in Twitter, and that methods for its detection will be key in the future for the development of accurate Twitter based applications.

Biemann (2012) investigates new language phenomena on Twitter. The scholar claims that non-standard language is used extensively in Twitter, a micro-blogging service where

publicly available broadcast messages are limited to a mere 140 characters. This limitation causes users to be very creative in shortening words, using abbreviations and emoticons.

A study presented by Brice Russ, a graduate student at Ohio State University, at the American Dialect Society's annual meeting in January demonstrates how Twitter can be used as a valuable and abundant source for linguistic research. With more than 200 million posts each day, the site has allowed researchers to predict moods, study the Arab Spring and now, map out regional dialects (Springer, 2012). Twitter may enable large-scale, worldwide studies and cut out fieldwork typically demanded of linguistic scholars, but it can also limit studies to a generally younger, more urban base of users.

Explicit and implicit linguistic tools

Our research concentrates on the linguistic tools often used in online communication. In particular, we focus on implicit and explicit ways of communication. As noted, information can be presented in the text as statements, suppositions and opinions. An utterance consists of a number of layers, different from each other according to the extent of explicit meaning. Then the statements are regularly divided into evident (explicit) and hidden (implicit). Explicit statements can be easily defined from the form of the utterance without any additional conversion of the meaning, which can be based both on the word meaning and the context of the statement. The meaning of hidden statements is defined from additional analysis of sense of the statement constituting the utterance. In other words, evident statements are directly reflected in the lexical-semantic structure of a sentence, while the hidden are not. Thus, according to Baranov (2007), the extent of the explicit-implicit component of the linguistic content is not binary, but gradual. Baranov refers to ellipsis, and statements, containing anaphoric pronouns as explicit phenomena. Such forms are restored from the context of the communication. It is generally accepted that not all cases of ellipsis are comparable with explicit methods of information presentation. For example, close to ellipsis is the method of indicating a proposition, based on the use of textual macrostructure. Idioms, according to Baranov, can be classified as both explicit and implicit methods of information transition. Concerning presuppositions and consequences, these components of the content of the statement often have an implicit nature (Baranov, 2007:40).

Twitter turns out to be a tool which is widely used not only for individual communication, but also political communication. Twitter has encouraged the origin of new media consumption such as 'e-mobilization' and generated 'civic journalism' as well. In terms of political communication it has appeared to be highly popular among Teaparty movement protesters for fulfilling different functions. As a message on Twitter is restricted to 140 characters, users implement certain linguistic tools for expressing their opinions explicitly or

implicitly. The paper also argues that the choice of tools correlates with the topics of the messages and the tone of opinion (positive or negative).

Methods

Data collection

Our research is supported by a dataset of microblog posts from the social media service Twitter. Twitter is a social network which allows the posting of messages of 140 symbols in a twitter stream. There are two types of streams: the stream of a certain user (an account) and a stream on a certain topic with messages tagged with the [#] symbol (known as a 'hashtag'). Messages (tweets) of users are available for the group of users subscribed to them. However, a hashtag enables the grouping of messages into one stream, which is available for a wide audience.

We have chosen Twitter for several reasons. First, unlike Facebook the majority of the content on Twitter is explicitly public. Second, contrary to the blogs, Twitter data is encoded in a single format, facilitating large-scale collection. Our particular interest is connected with the restriction of 140 characters which seems to be a challenge for users to express their opinion on the protest movement.

The search commands "since" and "until" makes it possible to find messages with a certain tag for a definite time period. We used this function to collect messages from February to April 2009 – (100 messages for each month) with the hashtag #teaparty or #tcot (top conservatives on Twitter). First, we analysed the authors according to gender characteristics. Later we analysed the content using the Atlas.ti program to reveal the explicit and implicit appraisals of Tea Party events by Twitter users.

Data analysis

There are various ways to investigate linguistic tools. One potential way is through grammatical analysis. Traditional grammatical analysis incorporates the study of morphology, phonology and semantics. It may include grammatical description and structural analysis. The descriptive approach is used to characterize the structure of different languages. Scholars collect samples of the language and attempt to describe the regular structures of the language as it is used, not according to some view of how it should be used. The structural approach is focused on the investigation of the distribution of forms in a language (Yule, 1996). Among the methods of linguistic analysis there are oppositional, distributional and transformational analysis. It seems to us that these traditional methods do not correspond with the purpose of the current research.

Another modern approach to study the language is based on the use of specially developed programs such as the LIWC. The first LIWC application was developed as part of an exploratory study of language and disclosure (Francis, 1993; Pennebaker, 1993). The program was developed in order to provide an efficient and effective method for studying various emotional, cognitive, structural, and process components present in individuals' verbal and written speech samples. LIWC2007 applications are designed to analyse written text on a word by word basis, calculate the percentage words in the text that match each of up to 82 language dimensions, and generate output as a tab-delimited text file that can be directly read into application programs, such as SPSS for Windows, Excel, etc. However, our research is interested not in words, but linguistic tools. Therefore, this instrument was not considered convenient for the current investigation.

In our research, we used Atlas.ti software. Atlas.ti was reviewed as user-friendly and reliable. Therefore, defining language peculiarities of messages on Twitter and examining their manipulative role and influence on the audience was done with the help of this software.

Results and discussion

Before conducting the content analysis, the topics of the messages were defined. We assumed that there are certain linguistic tools, which make an utterance implicit or explicit. In our research we explored linguistic phenomena such as irony, idiomatic expressions, imperative constructions, quotations, questions. Later, a correlation was established between the topic of the utterance, its explicit or implicit nature and linguistic tools which were used to express the opinion.

According to the research data, Twitter was used for carrying out the following functions: facilitating the organization of protests and fundraising for their execution; news distribution through links and retweets; reporting on the ongoing events from the venue; expressing personal points of view on the movement; involvement in discussions, establishing personal relationships with the participants of the protest movement and the organization of online activity, connected with the movement (Penny, Dadas, 2013:7).

The authors of the majority of the messages in a defined time-period were individuals (60%). In particular, men started the discussion more often than women (40% and 20% relatively). Among the organizations that took part in online communication on Twitter were: RFD America, TCUnation.com, RagingElephants.org, Tampa Tea Party, Easy Bay Patriots,

HuffPost Politics, Accuracy in Media. The majority of Twitter messages contained a link to the outside source: a video on Youtube, the user's blog, the publisher's website or TV channel.

Topics of the messages varied from month to month. In February, when the protest had just started, the messages on Twitter had an informative nature. Topics of the messages changed each month. Thus, at the beginning they were encouraging people to join the movement and were informative. Later people expressed their critical attitude towards the government and the president. Authors of the messages also criticized the mass media and even the protest itself. However, a few messages expressed support for the president and a large number of messages supported the protest movement. A number of Twitter posts conveyed gratitude to civic journalists and asked volunteers for help. Most of the time users exploited the microblog for informing the participants of the protest about venues and times of the meetings, conferences, sessions and other protest activities. Also, the participants shared the information via Twitter, adding a link to the additional resource of information. For example:

'More pics from Chicago #Tea Party...including one of me and @ericjodom. Isn't protesting romantic? lol; 'RT Just launched a new website for centralizing info on Tea Party Protests. Post your updates to www.teapartyprotests.com'; 'Interested in joining your local tea party? Check out this site and let your voice be heard: http://newamericanteaparty.com/ '

During this period imperative constructions were widely used. Their purpose was to encourage more and more people join the movement. The examples of such imperative constructions can be examined in the following messages:

'Send your tea party photos directly to teapartyphotos@gmail.com to have them auto-posted to http://www.tcunation.com!; 'Send Tea Party pictures to teapartyphotos@gmail.com See pictures at http://www.tcunation.com #teaparty; 'Join the Tea Party tomorrow at #teaparty. Speak out against the Stimulus. Go Downtown Chicago if you can.'

In the course of the research we attempted to establish a link between the nature of the message (explicit or implicit) and linguistic means used to convey the meaning of the utterance. The results show that in implicit messages Twitter users implemented such linguistic tools as

- **Irony**: *'Teavana is expensive! Nationalize it! Free fancy tea for all!'; 'Hannity was just on his show acting like he's never heard of taxdayteaparty.com. Has he been asleep for the past two months?'; 'you supported Bush and the Republican Congress's spending spree for the past 8 years and now you're at a #teaparty ... uh, ok'*
- **Idiomatic expressions**: *'Pot calls kettle black: NYT frowns @ CNBC for promoting Santelli's Tea Party 'tirade'*

The concept of an idiom as a collocation, the sense of which cannot be derived from the meaning of its components, for the first time was formulated by a Swiss linguist Charles Bally in his work *Précis de stylistique*, where he juxtaposed them with another type of word combinations phraseological groups with a variational combination of components. As idioms represent semantically indivisible phrases and in most cases are clear only to native speakers, then for defining their meaning it is necessary to carry out a number of additional actions and an analysis of the utterance for decoding the message of the statement. That is why the use of phraseologisms or idioms in implicit expressions seems to be very justified.

- **Questions**: *'nØbama gets list of top Muslim Americans for staffing - DID he get a list of Catholics and Jews too?'; 'How soon before we see this... domestic terrorism on this side of the Atlantic? It's already here.'; 'Should a NC judge order kids out of home school into public school because he doesn't 'like it'?'*
- **Quotations**: *'The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws.' Cornelius Tacitus (55-117 A.D.); 'You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong'.*
- **Imperative constructions**: *'Join the Tea Party tomorrow at #teaparty. Speak out against the Stimulus. Go Downtown Chicago if you can'; 'April 20th - Send copies of Constitution to govt officials!'; 'If you attend a #teaparty, take your video cameras, film the liberal infiltrators, and expose them on YouTube:'*

Imperative constructions were widely used in explicit messages. Imperative constructions represent one of the meanings of the category of mood. The imperative often expresses a request, an order or advice. With imperative constructions the speaker expresses his wish for some action to be carried out by another actor. An important peculiarity of imperative statement is that it is regarded both as a message and an action at the same time: the speaker not only expresses his wish, but tries to force the recipient to fulfil it. A consequence is, that it is important to carry the sense of the message directly to the recipient in order to force him or her take certain actions, the appeal to which is hidden in an imperative statement. The meaning of the statement in this case should be as clear as possible, otherwise the aim of the imperative statement is unlikely to be achieved. The recipient should clearly understand what actions he is called to do by the author of the utterance, extra analytical operations to define the sense can prevent him from following the order of fulfilling the request.

During our research we conducted the analysis of the topics of messages. The topics for February are demonstrated in Table 1. It clearly demonstrates the main topics of the messages. At the beginning of the protest movement the half of posts was informative and aimed at the distribution of information about the movement and the enrolment of more participants. It seems

to be obvious as the movement just started at that time and protesters strived for attracting more participants. The second most frequent topic was criticism of the government. It appears to be natural as the protest was raised by the discontent with the government policy. One fifth of the messages were devoted to the support of the Tea Party and encouraging other people to take part in it. Protesters expressed their appraisal for the movement and search for more volunteers to help and participate.

Table 2 presents the results of linguistic analysis of tools and ways of opinion expression in February. It is seen from the table that in February Twitter users preferred to express their opinion both explicitly and implicitly. Equal number of messages was marked as implicit and explicit. The frequent use of imperative constructions (30%) correlates with the desire of users to encourage more people to join the movement and draw public attention to the Tea Party. We also marked a starting tendency to use irony and idioms to express individual opinions.

Further, it is important to trace the dynamics of topics and linguistic tools in the following months. There was a slight change in the topics of the messages in March. The number of informative messages decreased, while the number of messages devoted to the critics of Obama and the government went up. There was also a mere change in linguistic tools. Twitter users started to implement irony and questions in their messages more frequently than in February. Consequently, there was observed a growth in number of implicit posts.

Finally, there was conducted the analysis of topics and linguistic means in April. Table 3 illustrates the findings of this analysis. It is clear from the table that in comparison with February the number of messages, containing critics of the protest movement, rocketed up to 12%. Simultaneously, messages supporting the movement decreased twofold. It proves that the movement had started to lose the popularity by April. At the same time, posts devoted to critics of the government dropped dramatically to 1%. The drop made up 11% in comparison with February. However, the posts contacting critics of the president, multiplied by 10. The reason might be the protest event, which took place 15 April 2009 in 750 cities of the USA and provoked negative reaction among public. The event was devoted to discontent with tax policy, mass media and the way it covered the protest, as well as discontent with the policy of Obama.

As for the codes (criteria) of linguistic means, used in April 2009, they are reflected in Table 4. The table demonstrates a tendency of users to discuss political issues in April more implicitly than explicitly. The number of implicit posts surged considerably by 20%, while the posts with explicit opinions reduced almost by half. We suppose that such changes occurred because of the increase of critics. We marked a tendency in political communication to express the critics implicitly rather than explicitly. Therefore, the use of question constructions showed an upward trend as well. The use of irony has doubled since February and the use of imperatives

decreased by almost 25%. The reduction of imperatives suggests the idea that the movement ad gained by April enough participants and had no need to encourage more people to join the movement.

It is interesting to observe the interconnection of the criteria between each other. Thereby, in the course of investigation we determined certain patterns presented in Table 5. It demonstrates the fact that the most numerous coincidences occur between critics of the movement and implicit expression of personal opinion. The following examples demonstrate such phenomena:

'today on my way to work, lots of cars were managed by a clever series of lights, enabling many people to travel safely';

'What do we want? WE'RE NOT EXACTLY SURE! When do we want it? NOW!'

The messages show that the authors avoid expressing their critical opinion on the protest movement straight forward. However, the author of the first message seems to imply the necessity of taxes which provoked the protest Tea Party, as taxes provide finance for the most of public services. Thus, the user expresses his disagreement with the protesters. In the second example an individual ridicules activists of the movement by suggesting slogans which illustrate unconformity and disorganization of the protest Tea Party. The author hints at incapacity and failure of the Tea Party to state clearly defined requirements. In the same message it is possible to trace irony, which was widely used by Twitter users to express critical attitude towards the protest movement.

Even though the results of correlation of the criteria are not presented in the table, the number of coincidences between irony and implicit way of expression of personal opinion was 24. For example, such coincidence can be observed in the following posts:

'Hey guys, Obama's Hitler. Taxes are Hitler. When it rains, clouds are Hitler, too';

'We're white! We have signs! We don't understand economics!'

In the mentioned examples the meaning of the first message can be defined from the context only (to be exact, from consecutive messages). Such coincidence appears to be logical, because such a stylistic device as irony presupposes contrast between evident and concealed meaning of the utterance, which makes the effect of mockery; most of the time deliberate discrepancy of positive and negative meaning. The stylistic device itself demands additional analytical activities to discover true meaning of the message which is relevant for implicit statements.

Further, it is interesting to examine the use of questions in the messages, containing critics of the protest movement. Both irony and questions refer to implicit devices of conveying the meaning, as they relieve the author of the responsibility for articulated ideas and leave it to

the reader to make a conclusion and grasp the sense of a message. The example of the question - reflection:

'*What's a group of irritated white people called? A clutch? A flock? A smegma?*'

offers readers to choose the name for the group of people themselves. The group of people obviously means the protesters. From the suggested examples we conclude that attitude of the author of the message towards activists is negative. However, he avoids expressing it directly.

In the statement: '*How exactly am I protesting by pouring a jug of Arizona tea into a filthy river? Oh, yeah. I'm actually littering. Stoopid me.*' the author speaks ironically about the sense of protest forms and events by using a question – objectification where he answers it himself.

Question - discussion '*I remember life before the income tax! Who needs highways when you can walk this great land on bare foot and open mind?*' drives reader's attention to the sated problem and makes a user find the answer himself. In this particular case the author of the message speaks ironically about tax repeal and possible consequences. He offers to compare life before taxes and after, pointing out the fact that most of facilities (such as construction and repair of highways) are financed with taxes.

It seems to be interesting that the critics of the president were stated explicitly.

'*Obama beclowns himself in response to yesterday's #teaparty protest, of which he was supposedly 'unaware'; 'Obama in his own words making fun of 'those folks' that go to #teaparty Obama has INCREASED the debt 5.5B/day!*'

The above examples demonstrate that users express their discontent with the president rather openly. They use no attempts to veil their opinion with the help of irony or questions. This fact points out the loss of faith in the president of the USA and the drop of Obama's rating of popularity among citizens in the recent time of his governance.

As it is seen from the research results, the participants of the movement Tea Party used the platform Twitter for solving a number of tasks at the same time. Linguistic characteristics of the messages changed depending on the aim of communication. In most cases users expressed their opinion explicitly, that is characterized by the tendency to share their opinion with other users of the microblog and carry the meaning as clearly as possible within the scope of technical restrictions of the social net (the length of the message cannot exceed 140 characters). However, high percentage of implicit statements among the messages of activists and people who took part in discussion of the protest indicates the tendency to express their point of view on political events in a concealed way, especially if the opinion is critical.

Conclusion

At present time people use different channels of communication. One of the most popular tools for communication online is Twitter. The platform allows not only communicating, but also creating news by ordinary users. This fact led to the appearance of such phenomena as 'civic journalism' and 'e-mobilization'. In particular, Twitter has been widely used in political communication. This paper analyzed its use in the Tea Party movement. Both authorities and protesters took advantage of the platform for different reasons. The most frequent of them are informing about venues and time of events; sharing news and links to external resources; asking for help and encouraging more people to participate; expressing personal opinion (supporting or criticizing). The latter function is regarded as a focus of our research. Expressing personal opinion on Twitter appears to be done explicitly and implicitly. This paper argues that the nature of the message depends on the topic of the utterance. Critics tend to be expressed implicitly, while asking for help and supporting the movement are expressed through explicit linguistic tools. As for the linguistic tools themselves, they are also in close relation with the nature of the message. Irony, question constructions and quotations are used in implicit messages. At the same time, for explicit expressing opinion Twitter users implement imperatives, and rarely use idioms or quotations.

Along with the existing research on linguistic tools on Twitter, this study of explicit and implicit ways of expressing opinion will serve as a stepping stone for future research. Further research focusing on expressing critics implicitly or explicitly is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the results or this study.

This study has been limited to content analysis of Twitter messages, devoted to the Tea Party movement, which can be relatively weak. Although traditional content analysis has been a central methodological tool for analyzing Twitter messages, it has displayed the following limitations: linguistic-based perspectives analyzing single sentences and phrases are usually limited in external validity; content analysis is highly selective in its approach. To break through these limitations a computer-mediated Atlas.ti program was used.

Computer-aided analysis used in this study complemented traditional content analysis. It helped classification of numerous Twitter messages and the grouping of meaningful concepts. In addition, the procedure used in this study can be repeated by other researchers and costs are minimal.

The present study has also highlighted the need for more research to investigate a number of important features and patterns observed in political communication. For example, the

following question could be researched 'Are there any special linguistic tools to express critics for the protest movement explicitly and implicitly?'

Further research examining explicit and implicit linguistic tools used for other reasons, not only expressing personal opinion, might develop a more comprehensive evaluation of the methodology and results of the current study, which will serve a stepping stone for future research.

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Appendix

Tab. 1. Topics of the messages in February

In percentage points

Topic of the message	Example	Frequency of use for the month, %
Support for the movement	I support the #Teaparty I'll be at each one in spirit. Symbolic teaparty in my backyard noon tmrow	20
Ask for help	We need someone who can help write a full 'how to guide' for the April 15 Tax Day #teaparty events	5
Critics of the	I'm teaching my son that stealing	13

government	is wrong somebody needs to teach Congress	
Critics of mass media	'LATimes.com reports that #teaparty lit up Twitter, but didn't get covered by MSM'	5
Critics of the president	Alan Keyes: Stop Obama or U.S. will cease to exist	5
Critics of the protest movement	MY PRESIDENT, RIGHT OR WRONG! AMERICA, LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT! EVERY TIME YOU QUESTION OUR PRESIDENT YOU EMBOLDEN THE TERRORISTS!!!	7
Giving information	For those unfamiliar with #teaparty protests in DC, Chicago, Jax etc today, check out @michellemalkin & @TCOTTV for details.	45

Tab. 2. Codes in February

In percentage points

Code (criteria)	Example	Frequency of use, %
Explicit expression of opinion	Awesome Chicago #teaparty vid with yours trully in the very beginning	28
Implicit expression of opinion	i wonder if the #teaparty folks recognize that nearly every gop governor is on board with obama's plans	28
Irony	Teavana is expensive! Nationalize it! Free fancy tea for all!	12
Idioms	Pot calls kettle black:	2

	NYT frowns @ CNBC for promoting Santelli's Tea Party 'tirade'	
Imperatives	Join the Tea Party tomorrow at #teaparty. Speak out against the Stimulus. Go Downtown Chicago if you can	30
The general number of analyzed tweets		100

Tab. 3. Topics of the messages in April

In percentage points

Topic of the message	Example	Frequency of use for the month, %
Support for the movement	People can roll their eyes but in America, EVERYONE should have the equal right to protest and agreement isn't a litmus test.	10
Ask for help	Want to help make the Columbus #teaparty huge? Donate $10 towards our flyer fund at http://bit.ly/cU4zB and get us 100 more color prints!	2
Critics of the government	...then this isn't America we know &love This is country ruled by top-down invasive barely accountable elite	1
Critics of mass media	News from Captain Obvious: Media shill for Obama.	5
Critics of the president	Obama mocks national #TeaParty protests, arrogantly disregarding millions of angry Americans.	55
Critics of the protest	I am disappointed by my fellow	12

movement	Southerners that went to this inappropriately named #teaparty. Some of us have respect for our Forefathers.	
Giving information	2,000+ activists have now signed up for the 09.12.09 March on DC, have u? Invite everyone u know!	13
Gratitude to civic journalists	Thanks to all #pjtv citizen reporters who reported via CelleCast on the 15th. Keep it up!	2

Tab. 4. Codes in April

In percentage points

Code (criteria)	Example	Frequency of use, %
Explicit expression of opinion	#TeaParty is doing a great job of uniting	16
Implicit expression of opinion	#Austin #teaparty tax protestors walking on tax paid street to tax paid bridge by tax paid police escort	42
Irony	you supported Bush and the Republican Congress's spending spree for the past 8 years and now you're at a #teaparty ... uh, ok	22
Question constructions	What's a group of irritated white people called? A clutch? A flock? A smegma?	14
Quotations	You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.	2
Imperatives	If you attend a #teaparty, take your video cameras, film	4

		the liberal infiltrators, and expose them on YouTube:
The general number of analyzed twits		100

Tab. 5. Correlation of the codes

	approval of the protest	ask for help	critics of the government	critics of the media coverage	critics of the movement	critics of the president	giving information	gratitude to civil journalists
Explicit			0	2	5	7	1	2
Imperative			0	0	0	0	3	0
Implicit			1	0	40	1	3	0
Irony			0	0	22	0	0	0
Question			0	0	12	0	1	0
Quotation			0	0	2	0	0	0

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