Spanish politicians in *Twitter*: A linguistic analysis of their written discourse

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Abstract

In Spain, politics is often seen as a profession rather than a service, and thus political discourse should be considered a specialized genre subjected to specific rules and convention. In the 2010s, a new tendency to campaign in politics was the use of social networks, allowing the publication of messages in a virtual environment and the possibility of interacting with other users, Twitter being a popular network. The purpose of this research is to analyze a corpus of 630 tweets published by four Spanish political leaders in their personal Twitter accounts, and consequently to describe their communication style in this social network with the hypothesis that their political views and interests influence their messages. In order to achieve our aim, this research focused on the analysis of written text, emoji, multimedia affordances, and hashtags, and how these elements influenced the politicians' communication style when dealing with some relevant topics at the time this study was carried out.

Keywords: written discourse, Spanish politicians, social networks, Twitter, communication.

Resumen

Los políticos españoles en Twitter: un análisis lingüístico de su discurso escrito

En España, la política suele concebirse como una profesión más que como un servicio, y, por ello, el discurso político debe interpretarse como un género especializado que está sometido a una serie de reglas y convenciones específicas. En la década de los años 2010 surgió una nueva manera de hacer campaña en política mediante el uso de las redes sociales, las cuales permitían la publicación de mensajes cortos en un entorno virtual y la posibilidad de interactuar con otros usuarios. Una de las redes sociales más populares en la esfera política es Twitter. En este artículo se analiza un corpus de 630 tuits publicados en las cuentas

personales de Twitter de cuatro líderes políticos españoles y se describe su estilo de comunicación en esta red social, desde la hipótesis de que sus opiniones e intereses políticos podrían interferir en sus mensajes. Para ello, el presente trabajo se centra en el análisis de algunas formas de lenguaje, en concreto el texto escrito, los emojis, diferentes piezas multimedia y los hashtag de sus tuits, y presta atención al modo en que estos elementos influyen en el estilo de comunicación que adoptan los políticos al tratar ciertos temas relevantes en el periodo en que se realizó este estudio. Los resultados de esta investigación sugieren la existencia de un vínculo entre el discurso adoptado en Twitter y los intereses políticos que se persiguen. En este sentido, parece que los políticos han de adaptar su estilo de comunicación en Twitter a su público objetivo, así como a sus propósitos e intereses políticos, como también sucede en otros contextos no políticos.

Palabras clave: discurso escrito, políticos españoles, redes sociales, Twitter, comunicación.

1. Introduction

Social networks first appeared at the end of the 1990s, and have been defined as online virtual environments where users connect to other people on the site (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Chen, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The purpose of social networks has progressively evolved since their origin, and in addition to being a network of contacts, they also allow people to share information, including ideas or personal thoughts (Pegoraro, 2010). In this sense, Verger, Hermans and Sams (2011) point out that social networks have changed the relationship between politics and their audience by adding interactivity, hyper-textuality and multimedia to their written discourse. Since its foundation, different personalities have been using Twitter as their channel to communicate with broad audiences and broadcast information. According to the second quarterly report provided by Twitter in 2018, 335 million people are actively using this social network; users also include celebrities from areas such as sports, cinema, music, TV, art, literature, and also politics. From a linguistic perspective, the interest of this paper lies in the analysis of how Twitter is used by four politicians whose parties are currently the most representative in the Spanish parliament: Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (*PSOE*: *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*), Pablo Iglesias (*Podemos*), Pablo Casado (*PP*: *Partido Popular*), and Albert Rivera (*Ciudadanos*). As an attempt to summarize the current political context in Spain, centre-left PSOE has formed a left-wing coalition government with left-populist Podemos, whereas the right-wing parties PP and Ciudadanos are part of the

current opposition. In this sense, it should be acknowledged that political discourse can be considered a specialized genre since it concerns a specific profession subject to certain rules and conventions, as it happens in parliamentary debate (Gavriely-Nuri, 2010; Van Dijk, 2005). In the case of Spain, politics is often seen as a profession rather than a service (Montero, 2007); and these circumstances allow us to consider political discourse a professional branch. This research aims at analyzing and describing the main linguistic features of politicians' written discourse in Twitter and at discussing how their communication style helps them approach their audience and consequently pursue their political interests and goals. To this purpose, it should be acknowledged that, depending on the genre, the language of politics has certain common rules and its own terminology, which is constantly evolving, as is also the case in other professional and academic fields. The specialization of this form of discourse may result from that technical vocabulary whose use is associated with a specific, well-defined genre. Consequently, political discourse, like journalistic and literary discourses, is different from everyday language. This paper analyzes political discourse conveyed through Twitter, resulting in digital interaction among professional politicians and large audiences who are not necessarily experts. Thus, this digital component (Twitter), whose nature is informal in terms of communication, may give rise to a new hybrid form of specialized discourse.

2. Political discourse and Twitter

Twitter is a microblogging tool launched in 2006. This tool allows users to share information expressed in a maximum of 280 characters with other users, and to include multimedia content (initially the limit was 140 characters, which imitated the SMS system in mobile phones at that time, but this was subsequently increased). Several politicians are currently using this tool to spread information about political facts, campaigning, self-promotion, and to state their opinions or to foster transparency within the political system, among other purposes (Ausserhofer & Maireder, 2013). Although tweets are a non-specialized textual genre, their use as a professional tool has recently become widespread among politicians in their campaigns as well as in their daily social interaction, with the aim of maintaining or enhancing their public image and reputation (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval & Hovy, 2010; Coliander, Marder, Falkmane, Madestam, Modig & Sagfossen, 2017; Sams & Park, 2014). In addition, this network also allows

interaction among users, both public and private, and enables people to "quickly react to current events and gauge interest in and support for their actions" (Johnson, Jin & Goldwasser, 2017: 741). As a result, Twitter, as well as other forms of social media, seems to have changed political communication worldwide (Jungherr, 2014), and it has become one of the political genres used professionally by politicians doing campaigns (Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff & Van't Haar, 2013). Gallardo-Pauls and Enguix-Oliver (2016) suggested that this change began in 2008 during the national elections in the US, when Obama used social media widely. In this case, these authors explained that the purpose of this software tool was to amplify the impact of the messages delivered by involving the audience actively in a discussion. The result was a breakthrough that changed discourse forms and the way of doing political campaigns.

Prior to our research, some previous studies on how politicians and political parties use social networks were identified. Rauchfleisch and Metag (2015) analyzed the use of Twitter in political communication in Switzerland; in their case, the study focused on explaining the shift from equalization towards normalization with the diffusion of some political information within this social network. Similarly, Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff and Van't Haar (2013) analyzed the information posted by the politicians in Twitter and how they interacted with their followers. Other examples include those provided by Zappavigna (2011), who examined the use of evaluative language to affiliate in tweets, and Mancera and Pano (2015), who analyzed the syntactic and discursive properties of a corpus of hashtags extracted from the tweets of different politicians in Spain. More recently, Alcántara-Plá and Ruiz-Sánchez (2018) published a book chapter in which they discussed the 2015 election campaign in Spain and the role of Twitter. In their research, they analyzed 16,300 messages published in Twitter by the five most popular parties and their candidates in a period of two weeks. They found that the analysis of their corpus required not only a linguistic study, but also a need to analyze text from a multimodal perspective, which also included multimedia content such as video, audio and links to other websites as well as the use of emoji. From this perspective, this is a reason to justify the view that political discourse has changed thanks to the widespread use of social networks, in this case Twitter.

As explained in the introduction, the purpose of this research is to analyze and describe some linguistic features of the written discourse of four Spanish politicians in Twitter. To this purpose, this research focuses on the

analysis of the length of their tweets in terms of characters, words, and sentences, the use of non-linguistic forms such as multimedia, hashtags, or emoji, and their interest in certain topics. In this sense, some authors have commented how these elements and linguistic features can influence communication.

Regarding the effects of language style on communication, different discourse forms can have certain reactions on the audience; in this sense, Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) suggested that various features mark the difference between formal and informal language. On the one hand, formal elements are more cognitively demanding than informal ones, and consequently they are also more restrictive to audiences with lower cognitive skills, although there are fewer chances to misinterpret those messages. On the other hand, informal elements presented for being high cognitively demanding remain more ambiguous and subjective, giving the audience an opportunity to take their own interpretations, either favoring or disfavoring the communicator's message. For example, Djafarova (2008) suggested that audiences are more attracted by brief messages; in this sense, short sentences are far more effective than those ones built with more words than necessary. In previous research, Casañ-Pitarch (2018) found that the American Prime Minister Donald Trump used shorter sentences in his oral discourse (mean: 11.58) in comparison to his predecessor ex-Prime Minister Barack Obama (mean: 21.58); in this case, Mr. Trump was clearly addressing part of his campaign to working classes suffering from job insecurity. Furthermore, if the word order is the standard (S+V+O/C), the information is conveyed more fluently and the message is clearer to the audience than if the standard order is altered; simple language increases the possibilities of being understood (Djafarova, 2008). As explained, Twitter is a microblogging tool with limited characters, but still it seems that the length of the messages and their sentences could have some effects on their audiences.

Furthermore, the use of rhetorical questions also seems to be relevant in political discourse. Nguyen (2010) suggested that rhetorical questions are used to persuade the audience by appealing to the addressee's emotions. Similarly, Lisowska (2017) explained that rhetorical questions in political discourse are usually introduced with the aim of appealing the public. Statements in the form of questions are used to make a point rather than to eliciting an answer. In addition, by delivering a rhetorical question, the speaker approaches the audience, who is indirectly invited to think and reflect. This strategy helps speakers convince readers with their own

arguments, by presupposing that their reflections are common sense. Wong and Yap (2015) went further and classified the major functions of rhetorical questions into four categories: persuasion, self-promotion, challenge, and doubt-inducing. These categories can help us understand the different purposes of politicians when they deliver a question in Twitter, as suggested by Gallardo-Pauls and Enguix-Oliver (2016).

Concerning other forms of communication, Twitter is characterized by some specific tools and features. In this sense, this social network allows attaching multimedia to texts, permits the use of emoji, and the signs # (hashtag) and @ are used for particular purposes. The first of these elements, multimedia, is used to incorporate videos, images, or links to written texts. In other words, written discourse in Twitter can be combined with aural and visual media, and it offers hyper-textuality, which enable users to freely move around large amounts of information which are interconnected with links. The result of sharing videos with the audience is that they can promote their image and somehow build brands or personality cults (Balakhonskaya, Zhuravleva, Gladchenko & Beresneva, 2018; Hwang, 2012; Millan & Ball, 2010); as result, this could reinforce their position as party leaders as it does with corporate entities (Weber, 2019). Regarding the idea of the personality cult, Paltiel (1983) introduces some examples of this practice during the Leninist Regime, a widespread practice in other eras and places such as Franco in Spain or Mao Zedong in China, or more recently with the image of Obama in the media and his popular motto "yes we can". In addition to multimedia, texts in Twitter can also be accompanied by emoji, which convey feelings and emotions and consequently provide the text with an extended meaning (Vergeer, 2015). Stark and Crawford (2015) referred to the use of smiles as a capitalist tool in the media since the 1960s; their aim was to create social bonds by sharing a positive attitude. In the case of emoji, they "help people in digital environments cope emotionally with the experience of building and maintaining social ties within hierarchical technological platforms and unjust economic systems that operate far outside of their control" (Crawford, 2015: 8). Thus, emoji offer a way of 'humanizing' written discourse, making it more informal in an attempt to approach the audience with emotions. Finally, hashtags are in-text keywords introduced by the sign # and used to find similar information by clicking on them. According to Bud (2013), hashtags can lead to discussions on a given topic; and consequently, they help popularize and spread messages among the audience as well as strengthening their information. Similarly, the sign @

is used to mention a user's account, which can also lead to increasing the impact and diffusion of messages. It should be acknowledged that all these forms are better understood and more often used by the youngest people, since they have grown up with them, and this contrasts with their more limited use by many older people (Jaeger, Xia, Lee, Hunter, Beresford & Ares, 2018; Prada, Rodrigues, Garrido, Lopes, Cavalheiro & Gaspar, 2018).

For the aim of this research, the understanding of certain topics should be reviewed together of campaigning and opposition strategies among politicians in Twitter. To this purpose, the first issue that should be studied is how right and left-wing parties conceive the concept of welfare and how they handle it. In words of Spicker (2014), there are some general differences between left and right-wing parties. According to this author, the left-wing support social and institutional welfare, public provision, minority or endangered groups, and collectivism; in the same way, he suggests that the right-wing parties are individualistic, against welfare and public provision, and support their residual welfare. In this sense, it seems that whereas the left-wing tend to defend welfare from a social perspective which promotes equality and public services, the right-wing defend individual rights based on social orders and hierarchy, and focus on the economic power of individuals in a capitalist society (Berlet & Lyons, 2018). Thus, it seems that, for the right-wing, individual welfare is connected to economy factors (Barth, Finseraas & Moene, 2015; Besley, 2016), whereas left-wing parties support collectivism and social welfare (Aron, 2017; Jones, 2018). Thus, it seems consequent that the left-wing will defend sensitive issues such as feminism and racial equality, among others, or at least they will not react or show attitudes against them (Funk, 2016). On the contrary, the right-wing might look indifferent towards these issues, or show opposition against them; instead, they may support measures that promote privatization of public services or enhance individuals' rights in the free market economy (Merkl & Weinberg, 2014; Saltman, 2015).

In addition to the concept of welfare, the strategies among politicians in Twitter to conduct campaigns and perform opposition should also be reviewed. Conway, Kenski, and Wang (2015: 365) appointed Twitter as a "new avenue for influence". They justified it by stating that Social Networks serve a similar purpose to websites and blogs, which have been previously used for the same goal. As has been previously suggested, Twitter allows interactions among users (Verger, Hermans & Sams, 2011), and this can be somehow advantageous since it can be a sign of proximity to their

supporters. In addition, Twitter is an open global environment likely to receive more visitors than websites and blogs, which visitors access intentionally rather than finding information by chance or in the news board, as it happens with social networks (Towner & Dulio, 2012). In this sense, Enli and Skogerbø (2013: 759) explained that social media constitute a useful context for campaigning since they allow candidates to approach voters and "market their candidacies, mobilize voters for the upcoming election, discuss politics or a combination". For the second aim, opposing other parties can also be understood as a means of campaigning (Graber & Dunaway, 2017). In this case, politicians tend to criticize and attack their political opponents. According to López-Meri, Marcos-García and Casero-Ripollés (2017), this function is especially used in Twitter by the parties in the opposition to criticize and discredit other leaders or the current government. These researchers analyzed the same context one year before the present study, and they found that the leader of the opposition parties addressed a higher percentage of their tweets to criticism compared to the right-wing Spanish Prime Minister Rajoy.

3. Method

This study aims at analyzing and describing the main linguistic features found in tweets sent by four leaders of the most representative Spanish parties in their personal Twitter accounts, as well as discussing how their communication styles influence their attempts to approach their audiences and fulfill some of their political goals. To this purpose, our corpus contains the tweets of the four politicians in a period of 27 days, from 15 September 2018 to 11 October 2018. The total amount of tweets analyzed was 630. The period of 27 days was chosen because this was the time the current Spanish Prime Minister needed to post 100 tweets. Then, the tweets from the other politicians needed to be set in the same period of time so they were equally contextualized.

In order to achieve the objectives of this research, this study focuses on the quantification of language forms, and a qualitative analysis of their communication regarding some current relevant topics. The first part of this analysis includes a compilation and quantification of tweets, characters (with spaces), words, and sentences, questions and exclamations, multimedia, hashtags (#), mentions (@), and emoji. The second part of this study

focuses on analyzing qualitatively how these politicians deal with welfare, campaigning and opposition, and the nationalist and feminist movements in Spain. The choice of these topics was based on their frequency, considering the three most usual ones in the account of each politician, so their communication strategies can be compared among themselves. Regarding software, *Antconc* has been used in this research to quantify the amount of sentences and words, and to identify the most frequent words.

4. Results

The first part of this study focuses on determining how frequent the four politicians use Twitter. As can be observed in the following table, Casado and Iglesias are the ones who use Twitter most often, whereas Prime Minister Sánchez is the one using this tool the least. Concerning direct tweets, Casado is clearly the most engaged in Twitter among the four; in fact, he is using it 137.30% more often than the Prime Minister and between 54.85% and 69.17% more than the other two politicians, Casado and Iglesias respectively. Regarding retweets, Iglesias is the leader in this rank, in which Prime Minister Sánchez is also the last.

	Tweets	Retweets	Tweets + Retweets	Tweets/Day (Tw/27)	Retweets/Day (Tw/27)	Total Tw. Daily
Pedro Sánchez	100	71	171	3.70	2.63	6.33
Pablo Iglesias	153	161	314	5.67	5.96	11.63
Pablo Casado	237	77	314	8.78	2.85	11.63
Albert Rivera	140	86	226	5.19	3.19	8.37

Table 1. Interactions on Twitter: 15/09/2018-11/10/2018.

In addition, this study also concerns the quantification of language forms. The table below shows the length of the politicians' tweets in terms of characters, words and sentences. In the case of characters per tweet, the amount used among them is similar except with Rivera, who clearly introduced fewer than the rest. Regarding the amount of words per tweet, the representatives of the oldest parties used more words per sentence than the newbies. For example, Casado introduced a mean of 40 words in each tweet, and a fact contrasted with Rivera, who only wrote 34.05. The percent variation between these two was 17.47%. Then, it was also observed that the left-wing used fewer words than the right-wing; in this case, Iglesias used

10.61 words per sentence, whereas Casado used 17.17, being this percent variation 61.83%. At last, regarding sentences per tweet, Iglesias used more sentences in contrast to Rivera, the percentage variation between these two politicians was 54.49%.

	Characters with Spaces	Words	Sentences	Characters/ Tweet	Words/ Tweet	Words/ Sentence	Sentences/ Tweet
Pedro Sánchez	25,344	3,826	296	253.44	38.26	12.93	2.96
Pablo Iglesias	38,021	5,505	519	248.50	35.98	10.61	3.39
Pablo Casado	59,801	9,480	552	252.32	40.00	17.17	2.33
Albert Rivera	30,015	4,767	307	214.39	34.05	15.53	2.19

Table 2. Language forms: characters, words, sentences.

Next, table 3 shows some features as to how the four politicians use *Twitter*. These features refer to the use of questions, exclamations, hashtags, mentions, emoji, and multimedia. As can be observed, the Prime Minister does not deliver questions in his Twitter account, whereas the other politicians do. These questions tend to be addressed to the Prime Minister or other parties; in this sense, Casado and Rivera addressed most of their questions to Prime Minister Sánchez and they were related to the Catalonian secessionist crisis. Some examples are "Mr. Sánchez, why did you move coup-leader prisoners to Catalonia and why are you considering possible pardon?" or "where is Pedro Sánchez in a moment of chaos and violence sown by secessionist in Catalonia?" In the case of Iglesias, he often uses rhetorical questions to promote critical thinking among the audience and against political and juridical corruption. Some examples are "who does not want to protect nature?" or "which is the limit of power company's greed?" Regarding the use of emoji, the newcomers Iglesias and Rivera were the leaders. The former used a wide range of emoji, and his choice was associated to the content of the tweet, whereas the latter also used emoji forms related to the content of his tweets but it was significant that flags, mainly the Spanish one, were used in 21 tweets. Last, the use of multimedia should also be commented. As can be observed, these politicians tend to attach videos, images and links to their tweets (retweets have been excluded). Results show that the Prime Minister was the one who used the fewest resources, whereas Casado used the most. In the case of the PP leader, he was the main focal point of the image or video in most of his tweets (94.51%). The other politicians also tended to be the focal point of their images and videos, but percentages were lower: Prime Minister Sánchez (62.32%), Rivera (38.52%), and Iglesias (20.47%).

	?	!	#	@	☺	Multim.	?/Tw	!/Tw	#/Tw	@/Tw	☺/Tw	Multim./Tweet
Pedro Sánchez	0	16	202	39	16	69	0.00	0.16	2.02	0.39	0.16	0.69
Pablo Iglesias	11	16	37	72	73	127	0.07	0.10	0.24	0.47	0.48	0.83
Pablo Casado	22	0	129	124	5	237	0.09	0.00	0.54	0.52	0.02	1.00
Albert Rivera	7	20	69	54	54	135	0.05	0.14	0.49	0.39	0.39	0.96

Table 3. Other forms: questions, exclamations, hashtags, mentions, emoji, and multimedia.

The second part of the research focused on analyzing qualitatively how these politicians deal with certain relevant topics in Spain, such as welfare, campaigning, and the nationalist and feminist movements. As shown in the following table, there are some noticeable differences among the four parties. To start with, both left-wing politicians seemed to be more interested in social welfare than the right-wing rivals. In this respect, Casado was more interested in the people's economic welfare, whereas Mr. Rivera did not publish much information on this topic. In table 4, some terms on social welfare issues were identified; for example, Prime Minister Sánchez used nouns such as *compromiso* (commitment, 0.42%), *derecho* (right, 0.31%), *apoyo* (support, 0.26%). With the same purpose, Iglesias frequently used the terms *gente/personas/ciudadanos* (0.65%), *derecho* (right, 0.38%), *trabajo* (job/work, 0.24%) or *vida* (life, 0.24%). Among the top ten most used words by the right-wing participants, Casado used the word *apoyo* (support, 0.28%), whereas Rivera used *derecho* (right, 0.34%).

	Pedro Sánchez	Pablo Iglesias	Pablo Casado	Albert Rivera
Welfare				
Social	29%	24.84%	3.38%	1.43%
Economy	6%	8.50%	13.08%	0.71%
Campaigning				
Propaganda	42%	41.18%	34.60%	32.86%
Opposition	1%	4.58%	17.72%	22.14%
Feminist Movement	20%	3.27%	0.84%	0.71%
Nationalist Movement	4%	0.65%	29.96%	41.43%
Others	2%	2.61%	0.42%	0.71%

Table 4. Main topics.

Concerning political campaigns in Twitter, it has been observed that the two left-wing political leaders have similar percentages in terms of political propaganda, and the same happens with the two right-wing candidates,

despite the fact that first group tweeted more propaganda than the second one. However, these groups vary a great deal when it comes to oppose the other parties. In this case, the complaints to the opponents were more frequent in the right wing than the left. Regarding campaigning, the four parties used the word *gobierno* (government), *estado* (state), *país* (country), and *España/españoles* (Spain/Spaniards) quite often. Whereas the left-wing parties mostly used them to refer to their positions in government, the right-wing introduced these terms to attack and make opposition. In these cases, the right-wing parties frequently named the Prime Minister *Sánchez* (Casado: 0.37%, Rivera: 0.90%), or created the word *Sanchismo* with a sense of imposition from the Prime Minister (Rivera: 0.02%). They also addressed the government with the word *estado* (state, Casado: 0.25%, Rivera: 0.36%); and Casado regularly called for *elecciones* (elections, 0.23%).

Sánchez	%	Iglesias	%	Casado	%	Rivera	%
Gobierno* (25)	0.65	Gobierno* (26)	0.47	Españ* (107)	1.13	Españ* (67)	1.41
Mujer* (24)	0.63	Españ* (22)	0.40	Gobierno* (70)	0.74	Sánchez (42) + Sanchismo (2) = 44	0.92
Españ* (20)	0.52	Gente (13) + Persona* (9) = 22	0.40	Cataluña (41)	0.43	Separatis* (27)	0.57
Igualdad (18)	0.47	Derecho* (21)	0.38	Sánchez (35)	0.37	Catal* (21)	0.44
Comprom* (16)	0.42	Polític* (18)	0.33	Apoy* (27)	0.28	Torrá (20)	0.42
Derecho* (12)	0.31	Presupuesto* (16)	0.29	Nacional (25)	0.26	Gobierno* (20)	0.42
País (10) -es (2)	0.31	Euros (14)	0.25	Estado (24)	0.25	Ley* (18)	0.38
Estado* (11)	0.29	Ciudadan* (14)	0.25	Elecciones (22)	0.23	Democra* (18)	0.38
Apoy* (10)	0.26	Trabajo* (13)	0.24	Educación (19)	0.20	Estado* (17)	0.36
Cariño* (8)	0.21	Vida* (13)	0.24	Prime Ministere* (19)	0.20	Derecho (16)	0.34

Table 5. Most frequent noun words.

Lastly, both parties showed a great concern towards certain social movements, such as the nationalist crisis in Spain and feminism. In the case of Rivera, nationalism was especially relevant among his tweets (41.43%). On the contrary, the left-wing parties did not seem to pay the same degree of attention to this crisis, and in the case of Iglesias, he only tweeted about this issue once. Rivera and Casado seemed to be the most sensitive towards this topic and they regularly used the noun words *Cataluña/Catalanes* (Catalonia/Catalans, Casado: 0.43%, Rivera: 0.44%). Rivera used other words such as *separatistas/separatismo* (separatist/separatism 0.57%), the Catalan Prime Minister *Torrà* (0.42%), or *ley* (law, 0.38%) and *democracia* (democracy, 0.38%). In addition, they also mentioned *artículo 155* (Casado: 0.21%, Rivera: 0.06%), which is an article in the Spanish constitution that

allows the government to intervene politically and militarily in any region that promotes territorial secessionism. As to the feminist movement, Prime Minister Sánchez was significantly more supporting towards the feminist movement than his government supporter, Iglesias, and much more than the right-wing politicians in this study. The most usual words tweeted by the Prime Minister were *mujer* (woman, 0.63%), and *igualdad* (equality, 0.47%), whereas the word *cariño* (love/affection, 0.21%) was mostly used to give condolences to female victims of domestic violence.

5. Discussion

As these results illustrate, Twitter seems to provide some information about politicians' communication styles. The connection of these results will be discussed in this section with the aim of describing some significant linguistic features of their written discourse through this social network, and how their strategies and styles help them achieve their political goals.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez is in the privileged position that the other politicians strive achieve in the next elections, if not earlier. He aspires to maintain his Prime Ministerial seat in the government; and thus, his strategies and objectives may differ from those of the other candidates. It should be noticed that he is the politician who tweets the least among the four leaders, and maybe this could be related to the fact that he does not need to promote himself through social networks as much as the others since he is the main focus of attention for the national media. In addition, his language also seems to be cautious and he avoids starting discussion with controversial issues such as the Catalan secessionist crisis. Instead, the Prime Minister makes his own propaganda, which includes supporting current sensitive issues such as the feminist movement. This connects with the idea of Funk (2016), who suggested that left-wing parties support social causes and they never react against them. In fact, he is the one among the four politicians who has paid the most attention to feminism. This seems to be a strategy to obtain female votes, especially considering that the magnitude of this movement and society's awareness has significantly increased in recent years. As appointed by Spicker (2014), left-wing parties tend to support social welfare in terms of collectivism and helping minority or endangered groups. With reference to his language, Prime Minister Sánchez has used approximately 3 sentences in each tweet, and they tend to be relatively

shorter in comparison with those of the right-wing opponents. This results in direct messages which are less cognitively demanding; as explained by Djafarova (2008), audiences are more attracted by short sentences and they are easier to be understood. In other words, by using plain language, Sánchez seems to focus on people with basic education rather than on those with an advanced level, who are used to receiving more cognitively demanding messages, as suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999). This fact does not necessarily imply that voters with right or left-wing ideologies have inferior or superior cognitive skills, but that these groups can be approached with some specific language forms; for example, the right-wing American President Donald Trump also used shorter sentences in his campaign in order to approach individuals with lower cognitive skills (Casañ-Pitarch, 2018). Next, Pedro Sánchez also seems to be quite neutral, neither too formal nor too informal. In addition, his political party is one of the two most traditional ones in Spain, and although they are tagged as progressive, he could be chained to maintaining certain language manners and formality in Twitter in order to keep certain proximity with their older voters. However, it may be acknowledged that this formality does not seem to prevent him from using emoji forms, which add emotion and they approach the young and the middle aged. As suggested by Stark and Crawford (2015), emoji can help establish social bonds by sharing a positive attitude. Among other features of his language, the current Spanish Prime Minister seems to have a relaxed neutral tone, which in general addresses to left-wing supporters, especially women and working class people of all ages.

Iglesias is currently giving support to Prime Minister Sánchez in the Spanish government. His political views are more left-wing than the current Spanish Prime Minister and some opponents have even tagged him as a radical. His main propaganda seems to be twofold: on the one hand, it concerns his fight against corruption, elitism, and right-wing parties and, on the other, he aims at offering more social benefits to middle and low classes as well as promoting social equality, as it is expected from a left-wing parties (Aron, 2017; Jones, 2018). In this sense, he mainly promotes social welfare, but also focuses on the economy and industrial development. His tweets do not tend to attack the other parties, but a few examples of opposition towards PSOE and the right-wing have been found. So, this seems to be a sign that he is not taking side with anyone, although he can either support or attack other parties. Regarding his views on the feminist and Catalan movements, it seems that he wants to avoid entering into conflict with certain topics, and

has not tweeted about them very often (Spicker, 2014). The reason can be that his opinion would be definitely magnified by the media and affect his propaganda. Concerning his language, his tweets contained more sentences (3-4) than the other parties, but they were the shortest. This could be interpreted as a sign to make his messages less cognitively demanding and easier to remember. This idea is supported by Djafarova (2008), and Iglesias and Sánchez seem to follow the same principle with the aim of targeting voters with less cognitive skills. He also seems a closer politician with the use of emoji, which help transfer emotions through his messages (Vergeer, 2015). These facts clearly imply that he is addressing his messages to the lower socioeconomic levels within society, and especially to younger people concerned with job insecurity.

Pablo Casado's party has historically been the main opposition to PSOE, being conservative and right-wing. In 2018, The PP party was involved in an institutional crisis after receiving a vote of no confidence, and consequently they lost the presidency in the government. Since then, it seems that some conservative voters decided to find alternatives and some of them choose Ciudadanos, which is also right-wing but more progressive in aspects like religion. As a response to this crisis, the new leader should promote regeneration within the party, and at the same time it seems that he also keeps certain parallelism with their counterpart in Ciudadanos, although this fact cannot be confirmed. However, Casado does not seem to be supported by all his party members; and thus, it is likely that he needs to show that he can be a solid and strong leader. Consequently, the need for both internal and external political propaganda could justify why he is the leader who has posted most tweets in the same period, as an attempt to reinforce his image as leader and enhance his party reputation (Weber, 2019). Furthermore, he always accompanies his texts with multimedia as photos and videos in which he appears as the main protagonist in his photos and videos. As appointed by some authors (Balakhonskaya et al., 2018; Hwang, 2012; Millan & Ball, 2010), it seems that he needs to promote his image with the purpose of maintaining his position as a good party leader with cult to his personality, a strategy that has been used in the past by other historical leaders (Hammond et al., 2017; Paltiel, 1983). As for his main focus as political leader, his understanding of welfare seems to relate to the economy rather than social rights and benefits, as it is expected in right-wing leaders (Berlet & Lyons, 2018). Casado is also concerned with the nationalist movement; and he devotes a great number of tweets to this issue. This political strategy could

be an attempt to recover the confidence of some of his dissatisfied voters in Catalonia, the region where the party Ciudadanos was founded and is most popular. Finally, he constantly opposes the leader of the current government with different arguments, being corruption one of the main topics. In fact, his party lost control of the government due to its presumed corruption, and he seems to counterattack Prime Minister Sánchez with the same topic. As suggested by López-Meri et al. (2017), this strategy is usual among the parties in the opposition to criticize and discredit the current Prime Minister and his government. Concerning his language style, the PP leader is the one who writes the longest tweets and sentences among the four leaders. This contrasts with the style of Prime Minister Sánchez and Iglesias; thus, it seems that this style is addressed to people with better cognitive skills, and this tend to be found more often in people with advanced education than in those with basic one (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999). His language is rather formal and avoids exclamation marks or emoji forms. This formal language register seems to be suitable to communicate with his elderly conservative audience (Jaeger et al., 2018; Prada et al., 2018), but his young physical appearance (39) could also be an attempt to attract younger and middle-aged people.

Initially, Ciudadanos tagged itself as a center-left-wing party. However, it seems that as time passed by their political interests and views have clearly changed towards the right-wing. It also seems that the aim of this party is to confront the Catalan secessionist movement. According to the information and data collected from his tweets, it seems obvious that his target audience is twofold: non-secessionist Catalan people, and dissatisfied right-wing voters, mainly from Casado's PP. As can be observed, there are three main topics that he covers in Twitter, and the main one concerns his opposition to Catalan secessionism. Then, he is continuously attacking the current government with the aim of complaining as for its soft attitude against secessionism, and demanding new elections. As was also the case with Casado, this is a usual strategy among the parties in the opposition (López-Meri et al., 2017). His style looks fresh and is aimed to attract right-wing voters, most of them dissatisfied with other parties. Therefore, his posts tend to include emoji; and among them, the Spanish flag is frequent. This enhances the image of a patriotic party and leader. The power of emotions transferred by emoji has been previously explained by Vergeer (2015). Regarding his writing style, his sentences are longer than the other three politicians; and although this fact may be a sign of eloquence, his messages

are cognitively more demanding than the rest, and consequently the information is more difficult to retain. As explained by Djafarova (2008), simple language increases the possibilities of being understood; therefore, his target audience seems to be oriented to voters with tertiary education.

6. Conclusion

Social networks are partially responsible for some of the communication changes that society has experienced in the two decades. In addition to the normal use of Twitter to publish and share information with other users, and interconnect those messages and people with hashtags and @ signs, politicians seems to have found their use for their political campaigns beneficial. As it happens with other forms of discourse, political discourse is also subjected to specific rules and conventions, which make it a specialized genre. In addition, politics is increasingly becoming a profession rather than a service; and for that reason, its specific language forms could be tagged in the same category as other professions such as banking, medicine, or engineering, among many others. The popularity of this social network makes that political leaders need to be present in Twitter in order to approach a part of their target audience. In this research, some tweets from the current Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez (PSOE), Pablo Iglesias (Podemos), Pablo Casado (PP), and Albert Rivera (Ciudadanos) have been analyzed with the aim of describing some relevant linguistic features of their written discourse in Twitter.

The major findings in this research are that there are some common characteristics that distinguish left and right-wing parties, and also government and opposition. In this sense, the messages conveyed by left-wing parties, PSOE and Podemos, were addressed to social causes and welfare, supporting minority or endangered groups (Feminism), and never reacting against them (Catalonia Secessionism). This contrasts with the right-wing ones, PP and Ciudadanos, who continuously attacked Catalonia Secessionism and almost ignored the feminist movement. Concerning their language, both Prime Minister Sánchez and Mr. Iglesias used shorter sentences than the right-wing leaders. This implies that these messages were easier to understand; and this fact usually benefits people with inferior cognitive skills, which mainly involve people with basic education and lower working classes. The history of these two left-wing parties is associated to laborers; and being

a coincidence or not, the difference between the left and right-wing parties on their sentence length seems to be a significant finding according to our literature review. This fact suggests that language forms in politics are modified around their interests and addressed to their target audience. In the case of the right-wing parties, they tend to be associated with capitalism, corporations and economy welfare, which results in the privatization of public services. The fact of having better jobs also implies earning higher salaries, and this leads to more possibilities to afford an advanced education, which usually results in a better development of their cognitive skills. Consequently, people with advanced education tend to have a better capability to understand messages with a higher degree of complexity in comparison to those with basic one.

Another noteworthy finding in this research is the fact that literature and the results of our experiment coincide in the fact that opposition need to attack the government, and not vice versa. In our corpus, it could be observed how the right-wing parties continuously tried to discredit the Prime Minister. On the other hand, Iglesias was more cautious on attacking his partner in the government. In addition, it should also be emphasized the fact that some parties used emoji in order to give emotion to their tweets. In this case, it seems that this fact was related to the age of their target voters and regardless of their political orientation. Ciudadanos and Podemos, the youngest parties, were keener on their use than PP and PSOE, the historically most popular parties in Spain. This fact could imply that the newbies focused on younger audiences, whereas the traditional ones, perhaps, relied on the loyalty of their older voters and avoided forms of language that are not usual among older people. At last, this research has also found that some politicians need to build reputation and a good image, and Twitter seems to be a good tool since it allows introducing media. As previously said, this is associated to the idea of promoting a personality cult, a usual strategy among political leaders.

In conclusion, this paper has attempted to explain the connection between the written communication styles and the political interests of the four most popular political leaders in Spain in 2019. This study aims at justifying the discourse forms used by these four politicians, and it seems that the ideas introduced in the literature coincide with the results from the experiment. Therefore, it seems that political discourse in Twitter could be considered a specialized genre.

Regarding limitations, it should be acknowledged that different interpretations could have been made from the same results, and extending the corpus or the participants would also be a great help to understand the political context in Spain. In the same way, further research could also be more specific and focus exclusively on one single politician or on one individual element.

Acknowledgments

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