Quantitative data as markers of truth

Conflicting Truths (in Academic and Journalistic Writing)

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Introduction

- Media control the meaning that an entire event may have in the public (Zhang, 2015).

- In critical discourse analysis, it is essential to identify the context in which the problem is situated. An explicit discourse analysis requires partial analysis of some of the relevant dimensions of the context, such as time and place, identities and roles of participants, and their attitudes or ideologies (Van Dijk 2011).

- Non-language elements are identified as markers of credibility in citizen journalism texts: majority of non-language elements such as hyperlinks imply higher level of credibility (Johnson and Wiedenbeck 2009).

- Larger number of non-language elements such as hashtags, links, numbers, videos imply higher level of credibility in citizen journalism texts than in professional journalism texts (Mitić 2019).

Subject, aim and corpus of this presentation

- Subject: the visibility of quantitative information about *1 of 5 millions* protest in two different contexts (pro-governmental and anti-governmental media)

- Aim – to identify all kinds of quantitative data as markers of truth

- Corpus – available articles from online newspapers Politika and Danas

- Period: from December 25th to April 28th

- Number of articles: 101 article from two online newspapers

- Random search: phrases „protest/протест" (protest), „protest 1 od 5 miliona / протест један од 5 милиона" (1 of 5 millions protest)

Background information

- Citizen protest named *1 of 5 millions* – citizen vs. president of the Republic of Serbia and leading political party

- Duration of protest: from December 2018 until today. Organized weekly in majority of towns. Periodically organized in Belgrade.

- Visibility of protest in online media:

- Pro-governmental media – Politika: online daily newspaper

- Anti-governmental media – Danas: online daily newspaper

Predictions

- Uncovering the truth or covering the truth about protest depends on usage of real quantitative data or on the omission of the quantitative data.

- The visibility of quantitative data as markers of truth depends on the type of context – in pro-governmental media, information about quantitative data will be hidden while anti-governmental media will contain different kind of quantitative data about protest.

  - Larger number of articles in Danas as anti-governmental newspaper (criteria: number of articles about protest in Politika and in Danas)

  - Real quantitative data will be available in Danas, while articles in Politika omit that kind of information or content untrue quantitative data (criteria: quantitative data about number of participants)

Implication for the research

- Identification of non-language elements as markers of truth: **numbers, links, videos, pictures:**
    1) numbers of articles in anti-government and pro-government media,
    2) number of organized protests (Dvanaesti protest 1 od 5 miliona – 12th *1 od 5 milion* protest),
    3) number of participants included in protests,
    4) number of people from different areas who support the protest,
    5) numbers of likes, dislikes, posted comments and shares (information from citizen journalist media, such as Twitter and Youtube, included in professional journalists articles).

- Identification of **language constructions** which contain **numbers** as markers of truth.

Number of articles as markers of truth – corpus: first 10 pages as a result of research

Politika

Total – **16 articles**

Danas

- first page – 9 articles,
- second – 7,
- third – 11,
- fourth – 9,
- fifth – 7,
- sixth – 10,
- seventh – 5,
- eighth – 7,
- ninth – 11,
- tenth – 9
- Total – **85 articles**

Quantitative data about numbers of participants as markers of truth

Politika

1) Number of participants:
- omission of numbers or usage of small numbers (*around 350*);
- constructions*: nekoliko (a few), dosta (a lot of), mnogo manje nego juče (a lot fewer than yesterday)*;

2) Without explicit information about the frequency of organized protests;

3) Background information – non!

4) Non-language elements: only pictures

5) Without information about likes, dislikes, shares, posts or comments

Danas

1) Number of participants:
- expressed by numbers and language constructions: *najmanji broj građana (the least recorder number of citizens); oko 150 (around 150); 35000 ljudi (35000 people)*;

2) Number of protest (Dvanaesti protest 1 od 5 miliona u Trsteniku – 12th *1 od 5 million* protest)

3) Background information such as number of people who support protests

4) Non-language elements: combinations of numbers, pictures, hyperlinks, video (contains number of visitors) and links

5) Pictures from Twitter contain number of people who liked posts, number of people who participate in conversation

Predictions – once again

- The visibility of quantitative data as markers of truth depends on the type of context – **CONFIRMED!**

  - Prediction: larger number of articles in Danas as anti-governmental newspaper – **CONFIRMED!**
  - Prediction: quantitative information in pro-governmental media will be hidden while anti-governmental media will contain different kind of information – **CONFIRMED**

Conclusions

- Media shapes public opinion about *1 of 5 millions* protest in Serbia

- Type of media, anti-governmenatal or pro-governmental, directly implies usage of quantitative data:

1) Politika contains smaller numbers of articles about protests than Danas;

2) Articles from Politika contain only number of participants from smaller towns, while articles from Danas contain all kind of informations about number of participants;

3) Articles from Danas contain all kind of non-language markers of truth such as videos, pictures, links, hashtags, while articles of Politika contain only pictures;

4) Articles from Danas contain number of likes, dislikes, shares, comments, while articles from Politika do not contain that kind of information.

- Pro-governmental media and anti-governmental media as two different kinds of context do not use the same strategies to share quantitative data
  - (Un)limited usage of quantitative data depends on context in which information is shared.
  - Type of quantitative data depends on type of media which share information: media can use limited numbers of sources to inform about quantitative data.

References

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