

Understanding the role of the subjects in the language act: a case study of the events of March 15, 2015 on Twitter

Compreendendo o papel dos sujeitos no ato de linguagem: estudo de caso das manifestações de 15 de março de 2015 no Twitter

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Abstract *This article analyzes the hashtags used in interactions posted on Twitter due to the demonstrations of March 15, 2015, and the reply given by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and the government in a statement to the press, seeking to define the subjects of the language act, establish their role and check the communication contract effectivity. This research presents reflections by Lévy and Lemos (2010), Santaella and Lemos (2010) and Israel (2010) on digital social networks and Twitter; and Charaudeau (2014) on communication contract, language act and its subjects. From the analysis, it is clear that voters are outside the verbal configuration, assuming the role of MEc and leaving to the hashtags the one of MEe; President Rousseff is the YOUd and the government is the YOUi. It is also noted that the communication contract was signed, because the YOUi recognizes the messages from the MEc.*

Keywords: *Speech analysis; Politics; Digital social networks; Subject; Twitter*

Resumo *Este artigo analisa as hashtags usadas em interações publicadas no Twitter nas manifestações de 15 de março de 2015 e a resposta dada pela presidente Dilma Rousseff e o governo em pronunciamento à imprensa, buscando*

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definir os sujeitos do ato de linguagem, estabelecer seu papel e verificar a efetivação do contrato de comunicação. Esta pesquisa apresenta reflexões de Lévy e Lemos (2010), Santaella e Lemos (2010) e Israel (2010) sobre redes sociais digitais e Twitter; e Charaudeau (2014) sobre contrato de comunicação, ato de linguagem e seus sujeitos. A partir da análise, percebe-se que os eleitores estão exteriores à configuração verbal, assumindo o papel de EUc e deixando para as hashtags o de EUe; a presidente Dilma é o TUD e o governo, o TUi. Também se constata que o contrato de comunicação foi firmado, pois o TUi reconhece as mensagens do EUc.

Palavras-chave: *Análise do discurso; Política; Redes sociais digitais; Sujeito; Twitter*

Introduction

IBOPE [Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics)] (2014) data report that, in Brazil, 53% of the population regularly access the Internet, which has become the primary source for the search for information to 47% of the population. The use of digital social networks also stands out among the Brazilians' objectives to access the Internet, either for relationship or exchange of views on various issues. It is noticed that the digital space is not only to exchange trivialities as people also use it for producing and publishing more in-depth content, which qualifies the type of information exchanged.

Among the digital social networks with greater penetration in the country, the online social networking service Twitter stands out, recognized mainly by its always-on character that the association between mobility and temporality allows, and the non-need for an off-line relationship.

This article analyzes the protests that took place in Brazil on March 15, 2015 from the perspective of hashtags used in messages posted on Twitter and the government's announcement that occurred at the end of day at a press conference. The choice of Twitter is due to the real-time nature of the microblogging, its mobile use dynamics and the scope of the posts published. The issue becomes relevant as political and social issues that have been the agenda of many mediae are discussed. Considering, then, that the access to the Internet and social networking Websites already reaches more than 50% of the population that uses these spaces to defend views and positions, including political ones, the search for a better understanding of the conversational dynamics, as well as its users' positioning as subjects of language acts are understood as critical.

Thus, answering who the subjects of the language act in public conversations on digital social networks are and how they behave in such act were sought. The goal is to define the role of those involved in the speech (virtual protesters and the government), analyze the language

act and the effectiveness of the communication contract formed among them.

From the monographic method, which examines the topic aiming at observing all the factors that influence it, a descriptive research is carried out (PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013) from standard techniques of data collection. As a technical procedure, the option is towards the literature from Lévy and Lemos (2010a, 2010b), Santaella and Lemos (2010) and Israel (2010) to define and characterize the digital social networks and Twitter; and Charaudeau (2014a, 2014b, 2014c) to analyze the communication contract and the language act and their subjects.

Also the analysis of examples from a documental research is performed, from 376 tweets published by Brazilians on Twitter marked by the 22 hashtags monitored³ on March 15, 2015 and the press conference in response to public demonstrations held at 8:00 pm. The 22 hashtags were selected from the conversations displayed in the week before the public demonstration and, therefore, are related to the agenda of the demonstrations both for and against the government.

To realize the goals presented, this article is divided into three parts. The first one presents a theoretical review to conduct the analysis of the corpus in which the Speech Analysis is conceptualized and characterized and the subjects constituent of the language act are defined. The second part, also theoretical, defines and characterizes Twitter, the digital social network from where the statements that make up the corpus were extracted. In the third part the corpus is analyzed from the intersection of theoretical frameworks presented with the corpus.

Understanding the discourse analysis

When analyzing a language act it is necessary, first of all, to keep in mind that a statement is not the first, single, monological one. As pointed out by Bakhtin (2010), every word has two faces: it is determined by the fact of coming from someone (Me, the speaker) and be directed to someone

³ Monitoring of interactions from hashtags was performed by the Seekr software.

(You, the listener). Every statement has relations with the statements made above (interdiscursive relations) and also with future statements that the recipients can produce (interlocutive relations), in a double dialogism that makes the speech escape from the utterer, even when there are no language marks.

The choice of words used in an utterance depends on social relations, because it is the product of the interaction of two socially organized individuals, which makes that its structure only becomes effective between speakers. That is, this choice is from a dialogical movement in which the speech meets the speech of another one and has with them lively and intense relationships. This relationship indicates that the language act is constituted by an explicit one (expressed) and an implicit one (a place of multiple senses that depend on communication circumstances). Its purpose is beyond verbal configuration, as it depends on the game that the subject shall establish between this one and the implicit one.

The circumstances of the speech intervene in the language protagonists' knowledge sharing as collective subjects in relation to social practices. They include the "set of supposed knowledge circulating among the protagonists of language" (CHARAUDEAU, 2014b, p. 32), which includes shared social practices and the filters building sense. They are the ones transforming the material environment in words and they build the Extralinguistic Situation – a concrete situation which, according to Bakhtin (2011), is directly linked to the understanding and explanation of verbal communication.

Defining the subjects of discourse

To understand the roles that the protagonist subjects take in the language act established in relation to the corpus of this article, it is necessary to define and understand its concepts, as well as the features and functions within the act.

When resuming that the verbal communication takes place between two people (ME and YOU), Bakhtin (2011) opposes the studies dealing with the relationship between the partners (speaker and listener)

as a passive act of perception and understanding by the listener. He understands that this form does not represent the whole in verbal communication, as the listener receives and understands the significance of the speech and has about it an active responsive attitude, that is, they agree, perform and respond – or not.

As all understanding is likely to get an answer, as soon as the utterance is given, the hearer (YOU) becomes the speaker (ME), a movement that lays out the entire language act as an exchange between two people. Another point highlighted by Bakhtin (2011) is the possibility that the listener does not say or do something. This act, seen as a passive response (no action) is actually an active response, because by not answering to the speaker the listener is also expressing themselves.

In developing his theory of utterance, Benveniste (1989) emphasizes that when the speaker (ME) appropriates the language, they immediately recognize the other (listener) before them, regardless of the degree of presence that they assign them. In this context, he defines three categories: people (ME and YOU as subjects of the act who divide the space of discourse and maintain a strong relationship of identity and otherness; and THEM, a role of the referent) that are challenged by concrete ideology, time and space, making every statement to be made here and now.

Every language act depends on the supposed knowledge among the protagonists of the language, who are loaded with implicit and explicit dimensions. Both Bakhtin and Benveniste go beyond the communication concept that reduces the language act to the relationship *Sender -> Message -> Receiver*, since the latter is not passive: they build an interpretation of the statement from their point of view about the circumstances of the speech and also on those who utter (ME) and their intentions.

Therefore, there is a YOU-interpretant (YOU_i) who is different from the YOU-recipient (YOU_d) whom the ME addresses. When the YOU_i interprets the utterance, they have an image of ME_c that is different from the one that the utterer ME wanted to convey.

This understanding makes the language act one metalinguistic activity divided into two processes among four subjects: the Production,

in which the ME_e addresses a YO_d who is idealized by the ME_c; and the Interpretation, in which the YO_i builds an image of the ME_c of the speaker.

From these points presented by Charaudeau (2014b) it is possible to establish who the four individuals involved in the communication process are:

- YOU_d – the recipient YOU is the interlocutor manufactured by the ME as the ideal recipient, on whom the ME is the master, transparent and understood as the subject of the speech;
- YOU_i – the interpretant YOU acts outside the utterance act produced by the ME, being responsible for the interpretation of the utterance. Opaque, they depend only on themselves and are instituted in the moment at which they interpret;
- ME_e – they are responsible for the act of speech and hide, to a greater or lesser degree, the ME_c. As the YOU_d, they exist in and by the act of production and interpretation;
- ME_c – this is the subject agent who is as a speaker and articulator of the speech, determined as a communicant subject. They participate in all the language act, despite being in an external position with respect to the verbal act setting.

The conception of Charaudeau's (2014b) subjects gains value when analyzed in the language act, in which each subject assumes their role and displays their main features.

The subjects' role in the language act

Because it is not the result of one single intent from the sender or the result of a double symmetrical process between the sender and the receiver, the language act is characterized by being larger than a language act. This is because, as stated by Charaudeau (2014a), it results from the game between the implicit and the explicit ones and depends on specific speech circumstances, the meeting point between the processes of production and interpretation and is staged by two entities as subject of speech (ME_e/ME_c) and subject agent (YOU_d/YOU_i).

The language act and its subjects can be understood in the graph:

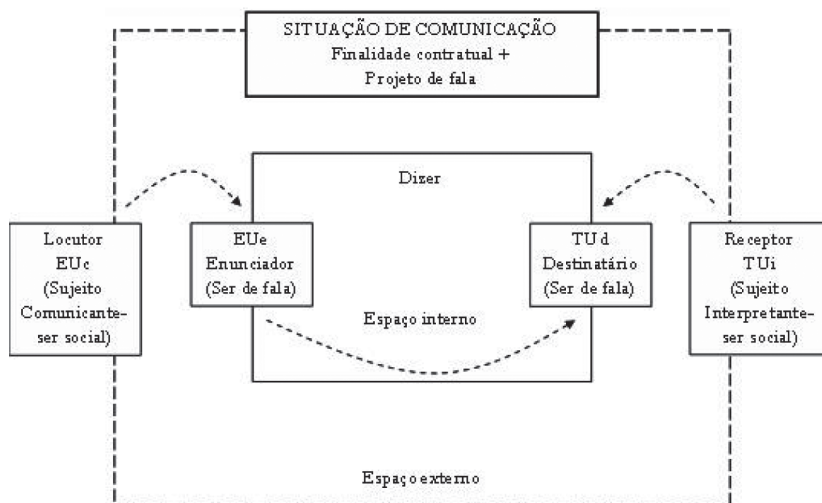


Figure 1. Language act representation

Source: Charaudeau (2014c, p. 52)

As shown in Figure 1, every language act has two production circuits of knowledge, defined by Charaudeau (2014c) as the internal circuit of the configured speech (which includes the speech beings MEe and YOUd, as well as the discursive representation) and the circuit external to the configured speech (representation of the communication situation, it gathers the beings agents set as communicant subject image – MEc – and interpretant – YOUi).

In the production of the language act, it is the MEc who organizes, within their powers and restrictions, the intended global project of communication. They aim their language act to succeed, and for that they need it to match the interpretation between the YOUi and the YOUd. For this, they will use communication contracts and strategies.

The communication contract, according to Charaudeau (2014c), assumes that individuals who participate in the same social practice body can reach an agreement on the language representations of these

practices. For this to occur, the MEc needs to provide elements that allow the YOUi to recognize in the words used the same meaning of the MEc, which generate by the YOUd the connivance or agreement desired by the MEc.

Every act of language depends on a communication contract, because it shall overdetermine the protagonists of language in their dual existence of subject agents and subjects of speech and legitimizes the speech to provide the social language status to the subjects.

The strategy, for Charaudeau (2014c, p. 56) is based on the hypothesis that

The communicant subject (MEc) conceives, organizes and stages their intentions to produce certain effects – of persuasion or seduction – on the interpretant subject (YOUi), to take them to identify – consciously or not with the subject to the ideal recipient subject (YOUd) built by MEc.

Thus, it reinforces that the communication is surrounded by a double bet: who speaks expects their contracts to be well perceived by the recipient and also their strategies to produce the desired effect. This double bet converges on an act, which is received and reviewed by the interpretant subject, which detects and interprets the message and can react in three ways: not completely dominate the effects produced by the MEc; not dominate their own unconscious and disclose evidences that are external to their language act, i.e., react in an unexpected or unwanted way; and understand wrongly the act for not being aware of the sociohistorical context that started it.

When performing the analysis of a language act, it is necessary to go beyond the intention of the communicant subject (MEc) or the understanding of the interpretant subject (YOUi), to get away from a simplistic vision under only one point of view. It is necessary to account for the possible interpretation⁴ that arises when the production and

⁴ As the language act goes through a group's social practices, it constitutes the language representations of their subjects' experiences. By analyzing language, semantic and formal elements that compose it, the possible interpretation arises. (CHARAUDEAU, 2014c).

interpretation processes meet by answering, “Which subjects does the text make talk?”

Digital social networks and conversations on Twitter

Currently, 53% of the population have regular access to the Internet, according to IBOPE. The Internet is now the primary source accessed in the search for information for 47% of the population. Among young people 15-32 years old, 90% of the population accesses the Internet regularly, 93% browse social networking Websites and 43% consider the Internet their main source of entertainment.

Digital social networks demonstrate the “individuals’ extraordinary ability to generate, disseminate and exchange meanings in the collective interpersonal communication, in a massive network system and in real time, in which everything tends to be connected” (GARCIA; DALY; SUPOVITZ, 2015, p. 55, our translation).

The organization of the digital social networks is made into categories, which include platforms of *social networking* (Facebook, LinkedIn), *microblogging* (Twitter), photography (Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest), video (Youtube, Vimeo), *social news* (Digg, Reddit), streaming (Periscope, Meerkat, Ustream), *social gaming* (World of Craft), *bookmarking* (Delicious, StumbleUpon) and blogs (Wordpress, Blogger), among others.

Lemos and Lévy (2010b) point out that the use of digital social networks can not be reduced to the exchange of banalities, as an increasing use and production of content can be seen, which tends to raise the quality of information exchanged between users. The expansion of its use is responsible for a wave not yet fully measurable, defined by the authors as the “release of the issue,” which includes not only the written word, but also sounds, photos and videos that are freely distributed among people. This release of the expression, which excludes a filter by a professional mediator (such as journalists), can be considered the main advantage of the Internet over traditional mediae.

This article has as an object of analysis the interactions posted on Twitter during the demonstrations that took place in Brazil on March

15, 2015, which makes it necessary to understand this social media, its dynamics and singularities, which shall be done next.

Twitter: The digital social network of conversations in real time

Among the networks mentioned, this article highlights Twitter, a free social networking Website where users write 140-character messages (tweets), which are sent to followers who have chosen to receive content. A tweet lets you add text, image, video, links and also hashtags, which are words or phrases preceded by the # symbol, which converts the text in metadata. Using the hashtags allows indexing a particular subject, aiming at a quantitative verification and a qualitative understanding of the tweet content from the rest of the information that is associated with them.

Twitter is currently the faster, simpler and more economic social media in which all kinds of information, news, ideas, events, rumors, multimedia materials, etc. circulate, received from any business environment or other social media in real time. Therefore, on Twitter both the professional social media (television, newspapers, magazines, radio, etc.) as any other social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, blogs, forums, etc.) cross paths, part of a vast record of types of user profiles (individuals, NGOs, government institutions, the mediae, lobbyists, scientific journals, companies, brands, etc.). (GARCIA, DALY E SUPOVITZ, 2015, p. 57, our translation).

Twitter's use dynamics include retweets (or RT, which are the replication of third parties content to the user followers' network, which may or may not add new content), reply, mentions (citing a certain user in the text of a tweet), likes (when the receiver "likes" a content received), blocks (when a user blocks another one, who may no longer receive their content or contact them), listing (including the sender in thematic lists created by the receiver to organize content), Direct Messages (or DMs, private messages to a user or group).

Israel (2010, p. 5) highlights the Twitter users' different interests and objectives: "people tweet to raise contributions to a cause, to make the government take action, to find and distribute news, to build personal and professional networks, or just to kill some time with the people they love."

According to Santaella and Lemos (2010a), an important advantage of Twitter is that it combines the mobility (allowed by the association of the growth in the number of active smartphones and improvements on mobile Internet signaling) to the always-on character of temporality⁵ inherent to the 3.0 social networks. It is "a true global digital agora: university, entertainment club, a social and political 'thermometer', a civil resistance instrument, a cultural stage, an arena of continuous talks." (SANTAELLA; LEMOS, 2010a, p. 66).

Twitter's information flow occurs in two ways: the inflow considers the content selected by the user to be received, while the outflow covers the content that shall be released by the user, depending on the analysis of their personal strategy.

Exchanges can generate what Lemos and Lévy (2010a) define as a virtual community: a group of people who relate in cyberspace. In addition to the technical structure of the computer network, virtual communities depend on the existence of shared interests, intimacy and continuity in relationships. Thus, there are in the digital social networks communitarian relations (where there are a symbolic territory and an affinity among their members, such as on Facebook, which are based more on friendship relations) and non-communitarian (a venue for meeting and sharing information and experience that are more ephemeral and dispossessed, like on Twitter, where exchanges occur mainly by affinities by themes and not by a previous relationship).

In other words, Twitter stands out by privileging the quality and type of content transmitted by a specific user, regardless of off-line social relations. This is because "Twitter serves as a multidirectional means of attracting custom information. It is a vehicle for continuous

⁵ Always connected, in a free translation.

dissemination of ideas and a collaborative space where questions [...] can be freely discussed and answered.” (SANTAELLA; LEMOS, 2010a, p.66) Thus, Twitter reinforces the idea of dispossession of “me” of Lemos and Lévy (2010b, p. 202):

They (the ME) is increasingly tied to a physical location, a social class, a body, a gender, or an age. [...] We must understand, as several studies on subjectivity and contemporary culture show, that our identity shall bind differently to our knowledge, core interests, and social and language skills. Our “informational body,” virtually ubiquitous, is increasingly defined by its coordinates in the semantic space.

Worldwide, Twitter has 241 million active users per month, who publish 500 million tweets per day. Brazil is the fifth country in total participants, with about 10 million active users. This number represents about 5% of the Brazilian population – or 9.4% of the Internet users in the country. Of this total, 65% access the microblogging by cell phone or tablet computer (worldwide this rate reaches 76%), which emphasizes the network mobile character and real-time communication. An interesting fact is that 40% of active users never tweet, they just consume content, i.e., they favor the *inflow*.

As in other networks, Twitter is a source of data produced in an ubiquitous, constant and massive form, which is defined as *Big Data*. This data set provides a great opportunity to research and analysis, since, besides its quantitative value, it carries opinions, which allows a qualitative analysis of these opinions and feelings, desires and demands.

Methodological procedures

In this article, according to Prodanov and Freitas (2013), a descriptive research is applied, in which the facts are observed, recorded, analyzed, classified and interpreted without interference or manipulation of the researcher on the phenomenon. This type of research uses standard techniques of data collection. In this article, there was an option for a systematic observation from monitoring digital social networks via a specific software.

As a technical procedure, the option is for literature research and an analysis of examples from documents research. The corpus consists of publications by Brazilians on Twitter on March 15, 2015, during the public demonstrations against Brazilian political party The Workers' Party (Portuguese: Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) and (36th President of Brazil) Dilma Vana Rousseff's government. The choice of the corpus is due to the fact that Twitter is digital social network that best relates to real-time events. The always-on character of the microblogging is added to the mobility, highlighted by Santaella and Lemos (2010a) as a factor that stands out.

For collecting the data (*tweets*) the choice was for Seekr, the monitoring software of digital social networks. In it were registered 22 hashtags previously selected from monitoring the network during the week before the event. The analysis shall start from the measurement, on the tweets collected from preselected hashtags, of the mentions of the hashtags selected for and against President Rousseff and the government, which shall allow listing the political position of the people who spoke via a digital social network.

At the same time, the Brazilian government ministers' speeches shall be analyzed [José Eduardo Martins Cardozo (Justice Federal Executive Department Attorney General) and Miguel Soldatelli Rossetto (General Secretariat of the Presidency)], given at the press conference held on the evening of March 15, 2015, to determine whether there was an understanding of the popular position by the current government in the period and if it a language act was established. Thus, it shall be possible to identify the utterer subjects (MEe and MEc) and the role of President Rousseff and the government as receiving subjects.

Definition of subjects in the language act and the communication contract

Before highlighting the demonstrations of March 15, 2015, it is important to discuss the presence of this type of event in the history of the

country. In the last two decades, the population has gathered to go to the streets to protest in at least five crucial moments for the country.

In the early 1960s, for example, the *Campanha da Legalidade* (Campaign of Legality), led by Brazilian politician Leonel de Moura Brizola, promoted large demonstrations in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, RS, in defense of the 24th President of Brazil, João Belchior Marques Goulart's tenure as a President, which occurred in 1961. At the same time, there was "an advance of social movements and the emergence of new actors" (FAUSTO, 1995, p.443), such as the creation of peasant leagues and the strengthening of the labor union movement. Besides, "the students, through (the most important student organization in Brazil) UNE [The National Union of Students (União Nacional dos Estudantes)], radicalized their proposals for social transformation and began to intervene directly in the political game" (FAUSTO, 1995, p.445).

In opposition to João Goulart's government and his acts of reform (such as the agrarian reform and urban reform), there were popular demonstrations as the *Marcha da Família com Deus e pela Liberdade* (March of the Family with God and for Freedom, a series of public demonstrations that took place between March 19 and June 8, 1964, in Brazil), which brought together about 500 thousand people, "demonstrating that the supporters of a coup could count on a significant social base" (FAUSTO, 1995, p. 460). According to Fausto (1995, p.465),

the movement of March 31, 1964 (the 1964 Brazilian coup d'état, a series of events in Brazil, from March 31 to April 1) had apparently been launched to rid the country of corruption and communism and to restore democracy, but the new regime began to change the country's institutions by rulings called Institutional Acts (IA).

With the Institutional Acts and the growth of repression, there was a decrease in popular movements, which followed until the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the 1979 amnesty law and the end of the military regime. In 1984, 20 years later, the population returned to the streets in several Brazilian cities to call for direct presidential elections for the presidency of the Republic (the *Diretas Já!* Movement, Direct (Elections)

Now, a civil unrest movement which, in 1984, demanded direct presidential elections in Brazil), which ended up not being realized in that year, but gathered, in events such as the ones in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, more than one million people (ARTIGO 19, 2014).

In 1992, that is, eight years after the Diretas Já! Movement, there were new street mass mobilizations, at that time against the 32nd President of Brazil Fernando Affonso Collor de Mello's government. At the time, the

maximum expression was the Painted Faces – students painted their faces (Brazilian flag colors) green and yellow in the demonstrations – that also led thousands of people to the streets in several demonstrations around the country, contributing to the president's resignation, followed by an impeachment ruled by the Federal Senate. (ARTIGO 19, 2014)

It is also important to emphasize that in this period there were many events of specific movements, from parts of classes and social groups, such as rallies and demonstrations of steelworkers in the (industrial region in Greater São Paulo, Brazil) ABC Paulista in the 1980s, as well as state teachers in different country states. More recently, are highlighted the “Marcha Nacional pela Reforma Agrária, Emprego e Justiça” (National March for Agrarian Reform, Employment and Justice) (1997), a walk that started from three different parts of the country, toward (the federal capital of Brazil) Brasília, attended by hundreds of thousands of people; the “Marcha dos Cem Mil” (March of the Hundred Thousand) (Brasília, 1999) criticizing the 34th President of Brazil Fernando Henrique Cardoso's economic policy and corruption in the federal government; the “Marcha da Liberdade” (Freedom March) (2011, in 41 cities of the country) against police repression of social movements in demonstrations; as “Marchas das Vadias” (SlutWalk), protest marches calling for an end to rape culture; the “LGBT Community Pride Parades,” celebrating the LGBT community pride, which even has a schedule of marches in cities across the country.

In 2013, 21 years after the Painted Faces, in addition to the events previously mentioned, the activities organized by the Movimento Passe

Livre (MPL, Free Fare Movement, a Brazilian social movement that advocates the adoption of free fares in mass transit, a horizontal movement without a formal leadership) centralized the popular mobilization process that year. From the increase in the price of public transport fares in many cities of the country, there were protests called by the MPL, especially in Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The “4^o Grande Ato contra o Aumento das Passagens” (4th Great Activity against Increasing Transportation Fares), which took place on June 13, 2015, in São Paulo, gathered about 20 thousand people; the next activity, on June 17, 2015, was attended by over 100,000 people (both in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, according to the organizers), resizing the public opinion about the demonstrations.

After the demonstrations, the increase in the transportation fares was revoked in several cities of the country, indicating a victory of the popular mobilizations. However, the protests were kept, with the people going to the streets with a more diffuse agenda, expressing dissatisfaction with the lack of public services quality:

After the repeal of the increase of the fares, the MPL did not continue calling all the other subsequent protests. The demonstrations consisted of numerous groups of different organizations, but none of them was able to take a leading role in such events to the point of their leaders being recognized as representatives of the whole movement in June. Another specificity was the diffuse nature of the agendas and the lack of clarity in the claims, which marked the demonstrations in 2013, after the repeal of fares. [...] The demonstrations in 2013 had as one of their main points the non-acceptance of the representative political system as a legitimate interlocutor, with acts of rejection occurring in several demonstrations, the participation of political parties, even parties historically linked to social struggles and central agendas of the protests. (ARTIGO 19, 2014)

In 2015, new demonstrations took the country's streets, these ones contrary to President Rousseff and the PT government, reelected in 2014. The demonstration on March 15, 2015⁶, differently from the

⁶ To calculate the information about the demonstrations, there was an option for the articles published on the Websites of the three Brazilian newspapers with the highest digital edition circulation

previous ones, “drew attention for its national character: all state capitals and the Federal District had protests which, under the aegis of a fight against corruption, aimed to attack President Dilma Rousseff (PT party)” (GUTEMBERG, LEAL, 2015). Also in 2015, students from public schools in São Paulo began an occupation movement of their schools, demanding better study conditions for them and working conditions for teachers (ARTIGO 19, 2014), the kind of event that has been, in 2016, also held in other country states.

The interest of this study lies on the impact of the 2015 protests, which gathered, according to Brazilian daily newspapers *O Globo* and *O Estado de São Paulo* (2015), nearly two million people in the 26 Brazilian states and the Federal District, including all capitals. As for Brazilian daily newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* (2015), it emphasizes that there were a million protesters. As for the number of cities with protests, the three newspapers diverge: *Folha de São Paulo* states 152 municipalities, *O Estado de São Paulo* states 185 and *O Globo* states 147. According to Brazilian polling institute Datafolha, this was the largest demonstration in Brazil since the *Diretas Já!* civil unrest movement in 1984. (*O ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO*, 2015)

The three papers point out that the (Brazilian flag colors) green and yellow set the tone of the protests. *Folha de São Paulo* (2015) states that the protesters’ speech would call for the impeachment of President Rousseff and accused PT of corruption cases in (Petróleo Brasileiro S.A. — Petrobras, more commonly known as simply Petrobras (semi-public Brazilian multinational corporation in the petroleum industry) *Petróleo Brasileiro S.A. — Petrobras*. To these motivators, *O Estado de São Paulo* and *O Globo* (2015) adds claims on the economic policy situation, anti-PT and, at times, a request for military intervention.

In an article that analyzes the influence of the events of March 15, 2015 in posts made by President Dilma Rousseff in her Facebook page

(MÍDIA DADOS, 2014): *Folha de São Paulo* (54,930 copies), *O Estado de São Paulo* (46,050 copies) and *O Globo* (39,380 copies).

between February 15 and March 29, 2015, Soares (2015, p. 5) details that

The protests were organized by groups who were dissatisfied with President Rousseff's government. The issue of corruption was widely remembered. The impeachment of the President was a common point to the demonstrations. The economy was also the focus of some protesters. There were also some claims from smaller groups, such as the request for military intervention, for example.

Peruzzo (2013, p. 77) points out that the movement of June 2013 and also the one on March 15, 2015 are not social movements, but rather political and ideological movements fighting “for political participation, protests due to political antagonisms, demands for democracy, regime change,” among other claims.

Monitoring performed via Seekr software on Twitter during March 15 resulted in 376 entries from the hashtags selected. Considering that this article defines as a starting point the hashtags used in messages posted on Twitter regarding the public demonstration, the markers were classified as positive (they agree with the demonstrations, opposing the current government); negative (they advocate or support the President and the government and disagree with the demonstrations); and neutral (without favor or against identifications). Thus, the following division and quantification are reached:

- Fifteen positive hashtags, with 288 mentions: #15demarco, #antipt, #chegadecorrupcao, #foracorrupTos, #foraDilma, #foraPT, #impeachment, #impeachmentDilma, #intervencaomilitar, #mudaBrasil, #panelaço, #ptnuncamais, #reformapolitica, #vempraru and #vempraru15demarco;
- Three neutral hashtags, with 52 mentions: #Dilma, #Dilma-Rousseff, #menosodiomaisdemocracia;
- Four negative hashtags, with 36 mentions: #dilmafica, #DilmalindaoBrasilteama, #domingoeunaovouporque, #Globogolpista.

From the use of hashtags it is possible to establish that among users who used a marker to be part of the conversation and at the same time

send their opinion, 76.5% position themselves in favor of the demonstrations against the government, 9.7% are in favor of the government and against the demonstrations and 13.8% are neutral. Among the positive hashtags, the most used one was #vemprarua (Come to the streets) (168 mentions) which, besides being an invitation distributed via outflow, is also an ownership of the watchword of the demonstrations that took place in Brazil in July 2013.

Thus are formed what Lemos and Lévy (2010b) define as virtual micronations, those formed by people connected by interests without necessarily being in the same territory. In the case of the demonstrations, all the people are in the same country, but the use of hashtags allows to extrapolate the boundaries among the country states and monitor in real time the demonstrations in other places (including abroad).

The analysis of the use of hashtags leads to the reflection on their role as a subject in the language act and allows the development of a new representation of the event (Figure 2):

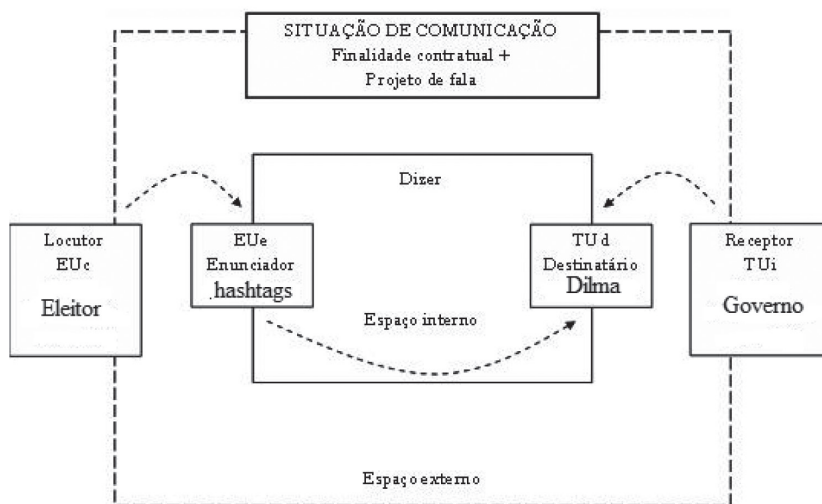


Figure 2. Representation of the act of uttering hashtags on March 15, 2015
Source: prepared by the author from Charaudeau (2014c)

Figure 2 identifies the hashtags as MEe and the voices behind the utterer (Brazilians who unify their speech by hashtags) as MEc. It is possible to reach this understanding when it is established that Twitter is a collaborative discussions channel on which ideas and feelings are expressed in conversations and on which information is exchanged and consumed in real time. Posting a message on Twitter does not depend on prior acquaintance among the subjects, that is, this digital social network is a non-communitarian virtual community, defined by Lemos and Lévy (2010a) as a deterritorialized meeting and sharing place, where exchanges occur by affinity for themes.

Another factor that contributes to this understanding is the findability of information. If there is interest in a specific topic, there is no way to search publications by each user who speaks individually. Thus, the centralization of postings from hashtags allows real-time monitoring of what is said. Therefore, it is understood that the speech directed to President Rousseff stems from the hashtags as MEe, because they order and gather the statements (as one voice), which are structured by the MEc, which gathers the Brazilians.

President Dilma Rousseff, to whom the messages mediated by hashtags are addressed, takes on the role of YOUd, the ideal recipient manufactured by the MEc. *Hashtags* such as #foraDilma and #Dilma-lindaoBrasileama mark the destination of the messages and put the President in the production act. The response from the YOUd depends on the YOUi, who interprets the statements from their personal experience. Considering that the government is a collective and that the President is its representative, it is possible to identify the government itself as YOUi.

The fact that the President did not respond to the protesters refers to Bakhtin (2011), which states that this passive response is an active one, as not speaking is a listener's way of expression. Instead, Brazilian government Ministers José Eduardo Cardozo (Justice) and Miguel Rossetto (General Secretariat of the Presidency) take part in the press conference, leaving the communication situation external space, taking on

the role of intermediary ones in the language act. This new position is highlighted in the ministers' speeches, who at various times use phrases like "President Rousseff believes" to argue on her behalf.

At the press conference, the government ministers sought to respond to what had been dealt with by the media during the day of the demonstrations and also mentioned in the posts that contained the hashtags monitored, especially in relation to the themes "corruption," "political reform" and the needs for change in the country (which also appeared in the posts, with markers #chegadecorruptao, #reformapolitica and #mudaBrasil), for which they presented measures to be implemented by the government. They also repeated at various times the importance of holding demonstrations of democratic order, legal and away from a coup d'état agenda alternatives, which may be understood as a response to hashtags #foracorrupTos (Out, corrupT ones!, which emphasizes the acronym PT in the marker, linking corruption to The Workers' Party (Portuguese: Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT)), #foraDilma, #foraPT, #impeachment, #impeachmentDilma and #intervencaomilitar, acts seen as undemocratic by the interlocutors, which also had a strong presence in the media and on the streets. This evaluation is made from their world interpretations, including political positions.

Thus, the effectiveness of Charaudeau's (2014c) communication contract is confirmed, because it is perceived that the subjects participating in the event have reached an agreement. When using certain hashtags issuing the message (MEe), the voter (MEc) provided information that helped YOU to recognize and agree on the meaning of the MEc.

Final thoughts

This article has attempted to analyze the events that took place in Brazil on March 15, 2015 from the perspective of the messages posted on Twitter to understand how what is said on this network through hashtags establishes who the subjects of the language act are in public conversations on digital social networks and how they behave in the act.

Therefore, the mentions at 22 hashtags on Twitter on the demonstrations day were monitored.

An objective was established to define the role of those involved in the speech, being them the virtual protesters and President Rousseff, the representative of the federal government. When verifying the relationship among the messages mediated by hashtags and directed to the President, it is possible to indicate the four subjects mentioned by Charaudeau (2014b, 2014c) for the language act, being the hashtags the MEe, the Brazilians the MEc, the President the YOUd and the government the YOUi.

When analyzing the language act, it is possible to realize that the communication contract was signed, because during the press conference the ministers responded to the points highlighted in the demonstrations, the media and also in the hashtags, especially the markers related to combating corruption and having a political reform. This is because the YOUi has acknowledged and agreed with the information provided by the MEc in the messages issued by the MEe.

From this study it is possible to develop new analyses, using messages posted on Twitter in relation to other events or even publications made on other digital social networks, seeking to understand the role and value of hashtags in each. Because each network has its audience, its use dynamics and characteristics, this article can serve as a benchmark with other realities.

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Date of submission: 9/8/2015

Date of acceptance: 6/28/2016