

## Politics-related emotions in citizens' text-image social media content

Catherine Bouko, Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication, Ghent University, Belgium  
Catherine.bouko@ugent.be

### Abstract

I am interested in visual political engagement online – how citizens participate in the dynamism of life in society by expressing their opinions and emotions on various issues of democratic life in image-based social media posts, independent of collective actions. In this contribution, I will focus on *affect* and *judgement* (Martin and White 2005). Affect and judgement (roughly emotions and opinions, respectively) are often tightly interwoven and their expression relies on a broad range of devices, cues, and related discourse patterns that are not always easy to distinguish. My approach is structured around three broad modes of the *semiotisation* of attitude in discourse: 1) *thematised*, 2) *signal-like* and 3) *supported* attitude. Firstly, in discussing thematised attitude, we will see how *emotions* and *opinions* become the object of discourse either through direct denotative processes, or through more figurative and more –or less conventionalised, connotative expressions. Secondly, for *signal-like* attitude, specific patterns signal the presence of emotions and/or opinions in discourse, especially when they are combined with each other (e.g., exclamation marks can signal emotions and/or opinions). Unlike thematised attitude, which concerns discourse *about* emotions and opinions, signal-like attitude refers to discourse *as* emotion or opinion. Lastly, supported attitude is informed by cognitive schematisations rather than by specific linguistic patterns, as in the case of thematised and signal-like attitude. I am concerned here with the clues of what causes certain emotions and opinions rather than their consequences in discourse (i.e. signal-like attitude). Analytically, I rely on a set of eight appraisal criteria that help me to infer emotions and opinions from manifest text-image content, like the proximity in time and space between a situation that is schematised in discourse and its writer/speaker.

I will illustrate my approach with a case study in relation to the Brexit Referendum.

Martin, J.R., and Peter Robert Rupert White. 2005. *The Language of Evaluation. Appraisal in English*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

### Keywords

Visual citizenship, social media, thematised emotions, signal-like emotions, supported emotions

### Bio

Catherine Bouko is Associate Professor of Communication and French at Ghent University (Belgium). Her main research is on political communication, extremism and citizenship on social media, with a special focus on image-based communication. Her methods of research include (multimodal) discourse analysis, quantitative content analysis, semiotics and ethnography.

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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4663-7344>

Personal page: <https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/catherine.bouko>