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Voice and Voices : Exploring tensions between plurivocity and univocity

Polyphonic contents and monophonic core:

Comparing Chinese diplomatic Twitter accounts in Ottawa and Brussels for public diplomacy

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China’s “Major-Country” diplomacy :

- In foreign policy, “*to forge a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation*”(Xi, 2017)
- In public diplomacy, “*Tell China story, spread the voice of China.*”
-- Xi Jinping, speech in the “National Conference on Propaganda and Ideology”, in 2013

“Wai Xuan” – the main channel to tell China story

“...a form of international communication which refers to a positive connotation associated with such essentially benign activities as the release of news, general shaping of ideology, or even advertisement or publicity” (Y. Wang, 2008, p. 259)

- The foundation of the “Voice of China”
- The use of diplomatic Twitter

Introduction – The limitation of Chinese diplomatic Twitter : Twitter, it's hard to say “*I love you*” ...

A less number of Twitter accounts

- Chinese government only so far operated 8 diplomatic accounts on Twitter (Official Statistics from the social media monitor center, *People's Daily*)
- The cautious official attitude on the use of social media and its uncertainty on international unfavorable critics on this democratic platform.

The strict information censorship

- The fear of distress caused by multiple and democratic voices (Arsène, 2011; Li, 2015)

Prescribed actions

- The missions of “wai xuan” is led by the *Publicity Department (宣传部)* of the *Communist Party of China*.

Research questions

Under the party-state system,

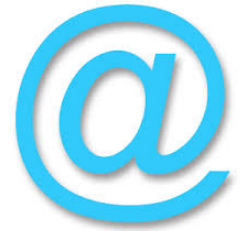
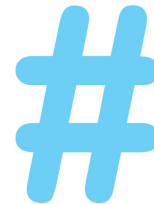
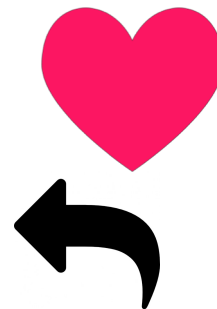
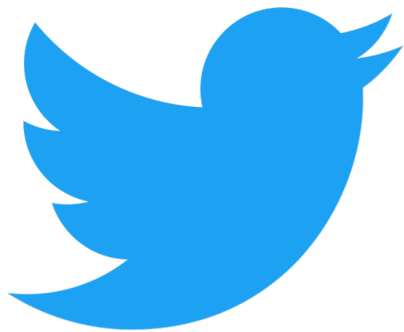
- How does China's diplomatic service use Twitter as a social media tool for its public diplomacy?
- In the content of Twitter, how do Chinese diplomats try to express polyphonic voices while respecting governmental “prescribed actions”?
- How do Chinese diplomats use Twitter to interact with other political leaders and international audiences?

Conceptual Framework : different aspects of the Public Diplomacy

Approach	Public diplomacy could be seen as...
Public relations	a country's dissemination efforts in the international arena in order to affect foreign audiences and the attitude of foreign voters in a very gentle and covert manner; to strive to build a favorable public opinion environment in the international arena for strengthening a positive national image while achieving mutual cross-cultural and cross-border understanding.
Competitive intelligence	a form of international public relations insofar as it also involves relationship management and public relations tactics intended to effect change in foreign publics”(Zhong & Lu, 2013, p. 543)
Political science	an achievement model of Track-II diplomacy (Desmoulins & Huang, 2017), a political communication practice participates in in the Nation-State's soft power consolidation (Keohane & Nye, 2012; Melissen, 2008; van Ham, 2008)

Conceptual Framework : Polyphony, social media and Chinese Timid polyphony

- Polyphony :
 - Language never has a natural state, “contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293)
- Intertextuality:
 - As a basis for intertextuality, the use of polyphony theory allows “every text has its meaning (...) in relation to other texts” (Allen, 2011, p. 6).
- Words could considerate as a two-sided act. They are given meanings equally depending on the sender’s intentions and orientations as well as the understanding of their recipients.



H. Although the Chinese government has opened up some diplomatic Twitter to try to establish polyphony, its external propaganda strategy dominates by monophonic objective and external propaganda strategy.

Method: quantitative + qualitative studies

1 year observation : 01/01/2017 – 12/31/2017

2 Twitter accounts :

- Mission of China to the European Union (*@ChinaEUMission*)
- Chinese Embassy Ottawa (*@ChinaEmbOttawa*)

3 tools mobilized :

- *TweekDeck*, monitor platform for collecting a total of 1 592 tweets;
- *ConText*, a quantitative and text mining analysis tool, developed by the University of Illinois, for the “sentiments analysis”.
- *Nvivo*, a qualitative study tool for discourses analysis.

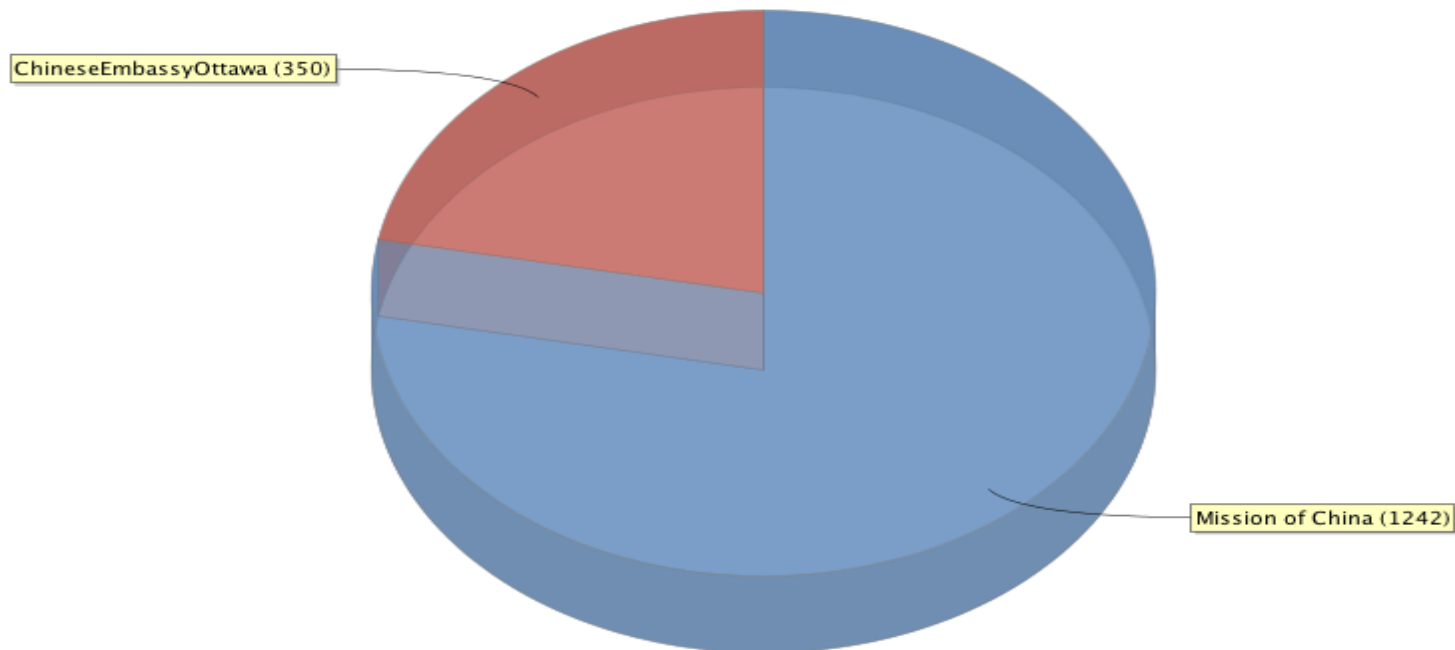
Focus of this investigation:

- 1) the analysis of China’s official communication strategies on Twitter;
- 2) the discovery of Chinese diplomats’ timid polyphony discourses on the “monophonic” platform;
- 3) the identification of different content typologies through China’s official and unofficial diplomatic discourses.

Finding. 1. : China's official diplomatic keywords on Twitter: polyphonic terms for a monophonic orientation

1. Chinese Embassy in the EU plays a more active role on Twitter communication and has a high degree of publicity, it has issued 1,242 posts, nearly three times that of the Chinese Embassy Ottawa.

● Mission of China (1242) ● ChineseEmbassyOttawa (350)



China's official diplomatic keywords on Twitter: polyphonic terms for a monophonic orientation

2. China intends to use a various of terms to promote the “brand” or “label” of *#China* and its political claims

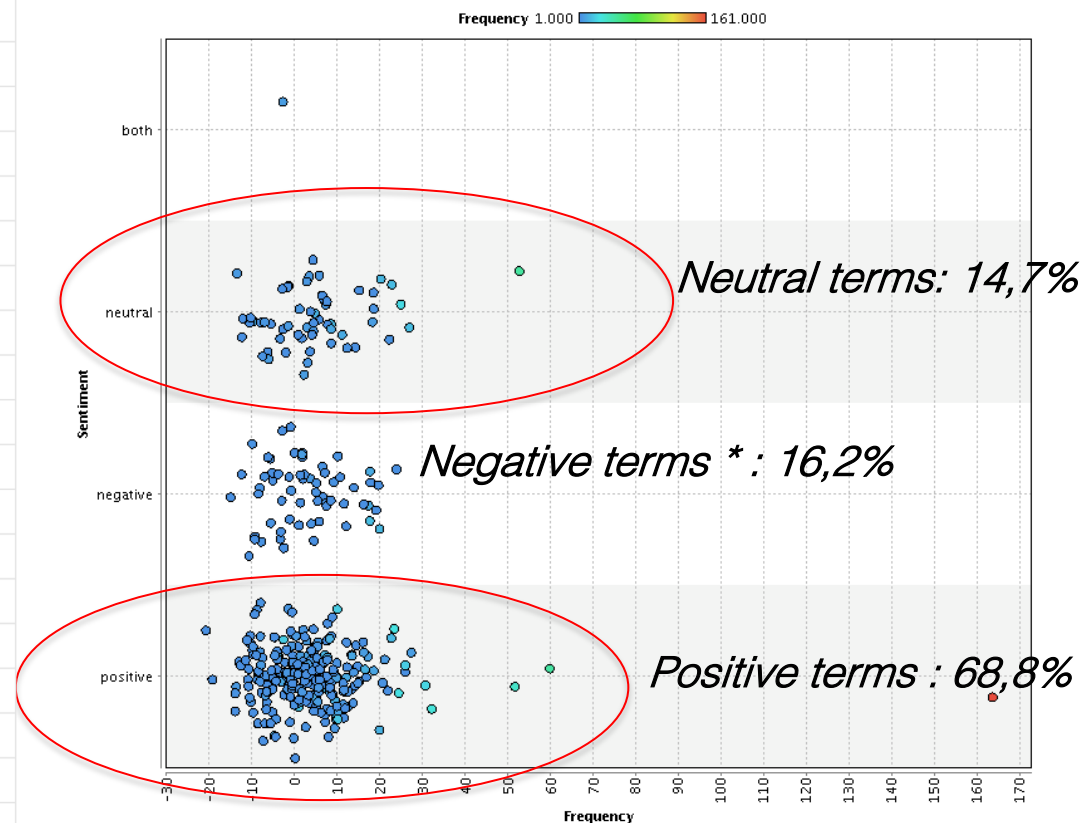
Row No.	Term	Frequen... ↓
1	#China	424
2	#BeltandRoad	151
3	#EUChina	52
4	#ChinaEU	51
5	#wef	40
6	#trade	28
7	#DidYouKnow	28
8	#ChineseNewYear	28
9	#climatechange	24
10	#innovation	23
11	#Xijinping	18
12	#BRF	18
13	#ParisAgreement	15
14	#davos	14
15	#OBOR	13
16	#FDI	13
17	#BRI	13
18	#MustRead	12
19	#DiplomaticNews	12
20	#AIIB	12

Row No.	Term	Frequency
1	cooperation	161
2	world	117
3	global	66
4	economic	57
5	development	52
6	relations	46
7	investment	42
8	economy	41
9	growth	39
10	people	36
11	FriendsofEurope	35

China's official diplomatic keywords on Twitter: polyphonic terms for a monophonic orientation

3. Chinese diplomats intend to use positive reporting and constructive orientation as the mainstream tone on Twitter.

Row No.	Term	Part Of Spe...	Sentiment	Frequen... ↓
229	positive	JJ	positive	276
402	cooperation	NN	positive	162
10	premier	JJR	positive	49
171	relations	NNS	neutral	47
13	great	JJ	positive	35
40	top	JJ	positive	29
319	support	NN	positive	27
343	important	JJ	positive	26
92	full	JJ	neutral	24
79	open	JJ	positive	23
166	happy	JJ	positive	20
223	commitment	NN	positive	20
257	boost	VB	positive	19
237	ready	JJ	positive	18
181	innovation	NN	positive	17
225	strong	JJ	positive	17
279	fight	NN	negative	16
304	central	JJ	neutral	16
71	security	NN	positive	15
155	peace	NN	positive	15
409	prime	JJ	neutral	15



Finding. II. The timid polyphony in China's monophonic voice on diplomatic Twitter

5 typologies of Chinese diplomatic discourses on Twitter:

1) Advocacy and political discourse for expressing China's position;

457 tweets found

Sensitive issues - the use of storytelling and narrative on Twitter:

- **Tibet**



Finding. II. The timid polyphony in China's monophonic voice on diplomatic Twitter

5 typologies of Chinese diplomatic discourses on Twitter:

2) China's "Major-Country" image building;

182 tweets have been found

Keywords: trustworthy, responsible, major country

Main subjects :climate change, poverty, COP 23

Smart use of ***negative terms**: fight poverty, fight climate changes, etc.

Retweet as the main "channel" :

- Retweet the European Union diplomats'/officials' pro-China discourses
"RT @ErikSolheim: World's largest floating solar farm has started generating power in Huainan, East China's Anhui province" (08/17/2017 12:33:18 @ChinaEUMission);
- Retweet NGOs' reports to confirm the Chinese contribution
"RT @GreenpeaceEAsia: Great news! China has already beat its 2020 solar power target" (08/28/2017 11:55:02 @ChinaEUMission);

Finding. II. The timid polyphony in China's monophonic voice on diplomatic Twitter

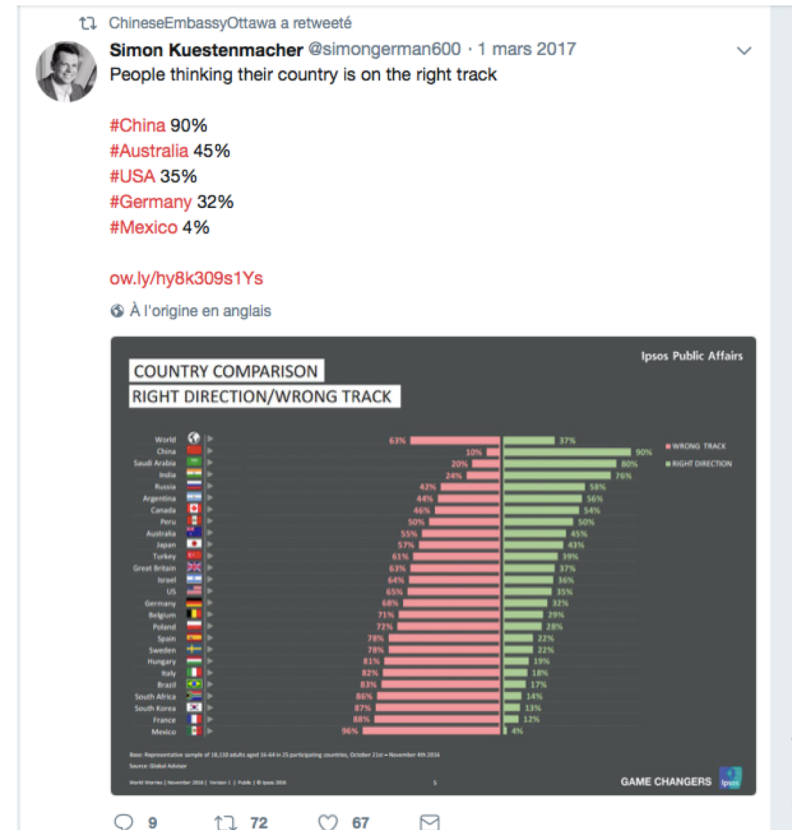
5 typologies of Chinese diplomatic discourses on Twitter:

3) China's soft power promotions;

342 tweets have been found

Keywords: economic statistics, technological innovation, scientific achievement, traditional culture, panda

Retweet foreign scholars'/officials' viewpoint to endorse China's soft power



Finding. II. The timid polyphony in China's monophonic voice on diplomatic Twitter

5 typologies of Chinese diplomatic discourses on Twitter:

3) China's soft power promotions;

342 tweets have been found

Keywords: economic statistics, technological innovation, scientific achievement, traditional culture, panda

Interact with Chinese companies for promoting the Chinese marks



Finding. II. The timid polyphony in China's monophonic voice on diplomatic Twitter

5 typologies of Chinese diplomatic discourses on Twitter:

4) Forwarding official news agency information by playing as an info-intermediary for official information transmission;

350 tweets have been found



Finding. II. The timid polyphony in China's monophonic voice on diplomatic Twitter

5 typologies of Chinese diplomatic discourses on Twitter:

5) Informal and polite exchanges and interactions with foreign politicians and counterparts in order to express on behalf of China's government to value their work and their ideas

233 tweets have been detected



Conclusion : Yes, China's diplomatic Twitter have polyphony, but...

China's diplomatic Twitter use polyphonic language terms to demonstrate monophonic orientation and diplomatic goal in communication practice.

The Polyphony of China's diplomatic tweets is a non-spontaneous, mainly realized by “retweet” multiple voices : timid polyphony.

- All discourses tweeted have polyphonic typologies which serve to the positive showcase of China in different aspects
- The “retweet” also allows China to use subtle strategies to build a social media relationship with Canada and the EU while also enabling exquisite self-promotion to let others tell China's good and China's story.
- Chinese diplomats tried to welcome the use of polyphony, but they faced the contradiction of China's “information censorship”, so that the polyphony has been limited.

Thank you !