

'God', 'nation' and 'family' vote for the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff: a corpus-based approach to discourse

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“While politics is a world of words, it is also a world of poorly understood words, poorly remembered words, and poorly theorized words.” (Hart et al., 2013: 13)

Outline

- Motivation
- Objective
- Theoretical background
- Methodology: semiautomatic analysis → keywords; collocates
- Discussion
- Concluding remarks

Motivation

- **April 17th, 2016:** Brazil's Lower House of Congress votes the impeachment drive of President Dilma Rousseff:
 - ✓ 511 Deputies (out of 513);
 - ✓ open vote: 10-second time at the microphone;
 - ✓ over 5-hour-voting;
 - ✓ live broadcast by major Brazilian TV channels;
 - ✓ immediate reaction from the audience and (left-wing) media → triad 'God', 'family' and 'nation' associated with pro-impeachment votes:

Mememes

FOR THE RETURN OF DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS



**What pro-impeachment
Deputies's
speeches reveal
about our
democracy?**

O que os discursos dos deputados pró-impeachment revelam sobre a construção de nossa democracia?



Não podemos dizer que os minidiscursos dos deputados pró-impeachment surpreenderam no que diz respeito ao seu teor. Era de se esperar algo parecido, dado que o nosso Congresso Nacional, principalmente nossa Câmara dos Deputados, é um dos mais conservadores desde 1964. Tal fato já era sabido desde as eleições de 2014.

O show de horrores assistido por todo o país ontem – e aplaudido por milhões de pessoas – trouxe muito do imaginário conservador visto em 1964, mas não deixou de apresentar algumas novidades. Os discursos pró-impeachment, majoritariamente, pautaram-se na tríade família, Deus e nação, conceitos tão caros para os grupos conservadores. A votação pela

FAMILY, GOD, NATION →
conservative
groups

Fonte: Carta Capital (19/04/2016)



IMPEACHMENT DILMA ROUSSEFF >

Deus derruba a presidenta do Brasil

Deputados justificam seus votos em Deus, na moralidade e a família: o motivo real da votação é esquecido

God overthrows Brazil's president
Deputies justify their votes in God, morality and the family: the real motive behind the vote is forgotten



MENU



POLÍTICA

PROCESSO DE IMPEACHMENT DE DILMA

18/04/2016 18h32 - Atualizado em 18/04/2016 20h21

Deus, filhos... Veja os termos mais citados na votação do impeachment

Entre as palavras mais faladas estão 'voto', 'povo', 'presidente' e 'família'. 'Golpe' tem 96 citações durante a votação na Câmara.

Thiago Reis
Do G1, em São Paulo



Aim

- Investigate if the word choices associated with pro-impeachment votes by mass media and social networks' users also permeated counter-impeachment speeches.

Media discourse

- Evaluative tone (positive, negative, neutral) to objects or issues → effect on electoral mood (Hart et al., 2013);
- the nature of the power relations enacted in it is not clear → *hidden* relations of power (Fairclough, 1989);
- journalists can influence readers by producing their own discourses or helping to reshape existing ones (Baker, 2006).

Political discourse

“Language is necessary to any form of social activity, but politics is arguably the one that relies on language more than most to accomplish its goals.” (Romagnuolo, 2009: 1)

- language and politics: linked to a fundamental level → *“politics is very largely the use of language”* (Chilton, 2004: 14):
 - ✓ legitimisation: utterances imbued with evidence, authority, positive self-presentation;
 - vs.
 - ✓ delegitimation: ‘others’ presented negatively.

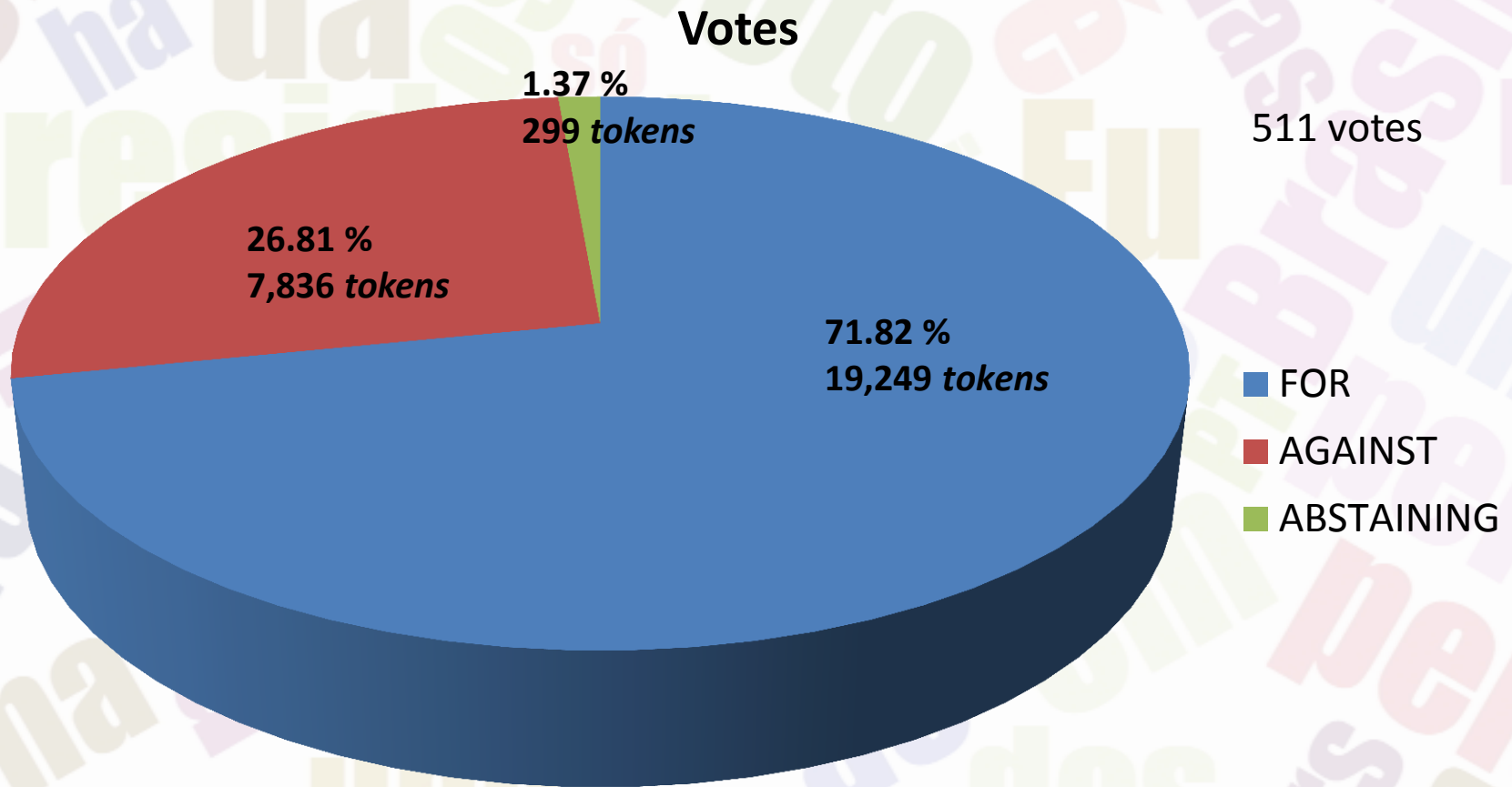
Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

- discourse analysis from a critical perspective
→ focus on power, ideology, domination
(Baker et al. 2008);
- criticisms: although based on actual texts, CDA
not always uses quantitative methods as a
starting point → cherry picking (Biber et al.
(1998).

Computer-assisted discourse studies

- Association has not resulted in a large number of research studies if compared to other fields (Partington, 2003);
- even scantier are studies from spoken corpora → transcripts are laborious (Partington, 2004);
- Advantages:
 - ✓ Enables empirical analyses of the actual patterns of use in a language – or genre;
 - ✓ analysis goes beyond subjectivity: hypotheses are tested and confirmed – or not;
 - ✓ helps reveal information which may be hidden even to the text producer.

Corpus: transcripts of the Deputies's speeches



1	Deputy	Party	State	Vote	Gender	Speech
2	Abel Mesquita Jr	DEM	RR	Sim	M	Roraima, verás que o filho teu não foge à luta!
3	Adail Carneiro	PP	CE	Sim	M	Eu gostaria, inicialmente, de pedir licença a to
4	Adalberto Cavalcanti	PTB	PE	Não	M	Sr. Presidente, em nome do meu querido Esta
5	Adelmo Carneiro Leão	PT	MG	Não	M	Votar em impeachment só é possível com cri
6	Adelson Barreto	PR	SE	Sim	M	Sr. Presidente, Srs. Deputados, Sras. Deputa
7	Adilton Sachetti	PSB	MT	Sim	M	Pelo Brasil, pelo nosso Estado de Mato Gross
8	Aelton Freitas	PR	MG	Não	M	Sr. Presidente, Srs. Deputados, eu quero tern
9	Afonso Florence	PT	BA	Não	M	Considerando que esse processo de impeach
10	Afonso Hamm	PP	RS	Sim	M	Em nome do povo gaúcho, povo do meu Esta
11	Afonso Motta	PDT	RS	Não	M	Pelo legado de Getúlio, Jango e Brizola, pela c
12	Aguinaldo Ribeiro	PP	PB	Sim	M	Sr. Presidente, hoje não é um dia de homenag
13	Alan Rick	PRB	AC	Sim	M	Sr. Presidente, quando fui eleito no meu Esta
14	Alberto Filho	PMDB	MA	Sim	M	Sr. Presidente, pela moralidade, pela democr
15	Alberto Fraga	DEM	DF	Sim	M	Sr. Presidente, se 342 votos eu tivesse, 342 v
16	Alceu Moreira	PMDB	RS	Sim	M	Pelo fim do populismo irresponsável e corrupt
17	Alessandro Molon	Rede	RJ	Não	M	Porque prometi defender a Constituição quan
18	Alex Canziani	PTB	PR	Sim	M	O futuro não é o mero encontro dos astros, o
19	Alex Manente	PPS	SP	Sim	M	Sr. Presidente, tenho a honra de iniciar a vota
20	Alexandre Baldy	PTN	GO	Sim	M	Sr. Presidente, neste momento histórico que v

Key-keywords: 'yes', 'no' and 'abstaining'

N	KW	Texts	%	Overall Freq.
1	voto	3	100	543
2	Presidente	3	100	494
3	eu	3	100	441
4	meu	3	100	435
5	Sr	3	100	384
6	Brasil	3	100	320
7	minha	3	100	312
8	contra	3	100	157
9	país	3	100	151
10	impeachment	3	100	131
11	respeito	3	100	109
12	todos	3	100	91
13	me	3	100	73
14	corrupção	3	100	66
15	partido	3	100	62
16	favor	3	100	38
17	porque	3	100	36
18	votar	3	100	36
19	vou	3	100	27
20	Bahia	3	100	24

Problem encountered

- 'Abstaining' subcorpus: too small to reveal patterns;
- keywords: no recurring associations (collocates);
- solution: focus on 'yes' and 'no' votes.

Key-keywords (WST 6.0): 'YES' and 'NO'

E	PAÍS [country]	CASA	SRAS
QUE	NOME	CORRUPÇÃO [corruption]	ESTA
VOTO	PELOS	DEFESA	SOU
PRESIDENTE	IMPEACHMENT	ESTÁ	DEPUTADO
EM	AQUI	BRASILEIROS	MINAS
EU	FAMÍLIA [family]	HOJE	BRASILEIRA
MEU	DEMOCRACIA	HOMENAGEM [homage]	MILHÕES
SIM	BRASILEIRO	PARTIDO	VIDA
PELO [for]	MEUS	DEUS	NOSSA [our]
SR	RESPEITO [respect]	ESPERANÇA [hope]	CUNHA
É	DILMA	CIDADE	FAVOR
PELA	NOSSO	SRS	NESTA
POR	GOLPE	ESTÃO	POLÍTICA
BRASIL	TODOS	FILHOS [sons]	VAI
MINHA	NÓS [we]	NESTE	EDUARDO
POVO	ESTE	RESPONSABILIDADE	GERAIS
AO	CONSTITUIÇÃO	CRIME	NAÇÃO [nation]
ESTADO	QUERO	DIZER	VOTAR
CONTRA	AOS	QUERIDA	DESTE
À	DEPUTADOS	RUAS	FEDERAL

Different word choice

Yes

bless, love, growth,
unemployed, economy,
employment, wife,
daughter(s), future, honor,
young, me, memory, change,
grandchildren, opportunity,
pride, PT [Workers' Party],
health, will, etc.

No

*Bolsa (Família)**, bastards,
comrades, courage, defend,
democratic, dictatorship,
rights, elected, fraud,
coupist, farce, hipocrisy,
illegitimate, injustice, freedom,
fight, traitor, landless etc.

*Social assistance program.

Discussion (Chilton, 2004)

legitimation

- Boasting about performance;
- positive self-representation;
- appeal to patriotism, brotherhood, the cause of the proletariat.

Defending the Constitution, against majority, is for those who have the courage

For the rural worker who received electricity in his home.

“Mr. President, how much honor has fate reserved for me: from my voice I can let out the cry of hope of millions of Brazilians.”



For Brazil, for my State and for the honor of my family,



- **Delegitimisation:** the opposing part is represented negatively → insult, accusation:

Thinking of the 10 million Brazilians who are unemployed.



And sleep with that, bastards!



- Repeated use of the first-person plural inclusive pronoun ‘*nós*’ [we] and possessive adjective ‘*nosso(a)*’ [our] → approximation with the interlocutor:

“[...] in favor of improving the economy of our country ...” 

“And coup, we can not vote for it.” 

- Invocation of credibility:

“For Brazil, for my State and for the honor of my family.” 

“For that worker who was able to have a formal work contract”



- Appeal to patriotism:

“It is in this direction, respectful to the people of São Paulo and for the sake of the Brazilian **Nation**, that I vote yes.”



“In defense of my Nation, the Northeast, Piauí, my city of Oeiras, but mainly for the fight against corruption represented by Eduardo Cunha and Michel Temer, I say no to this ridiculous corruption that shames my Country”.



- Evidence: the speaker provides statistical data that (supposedly) proves the information presented:

“I want to pay tribute here to the good Brazilians, those **millions** who went to the streets to demand changes ...”.

“... in respect of the **thousands and thousands** of Brazilians who voted for Dilma [...]”.

- Appeal to religion → collocates.

Collocation

“You shall know a word by the company it keeps” (Firth, J. R. 1957:11)

- Collocates do not occur in isolation → should be considered as part of a complex network which can reveal meaning (Brezina et al. 2015);

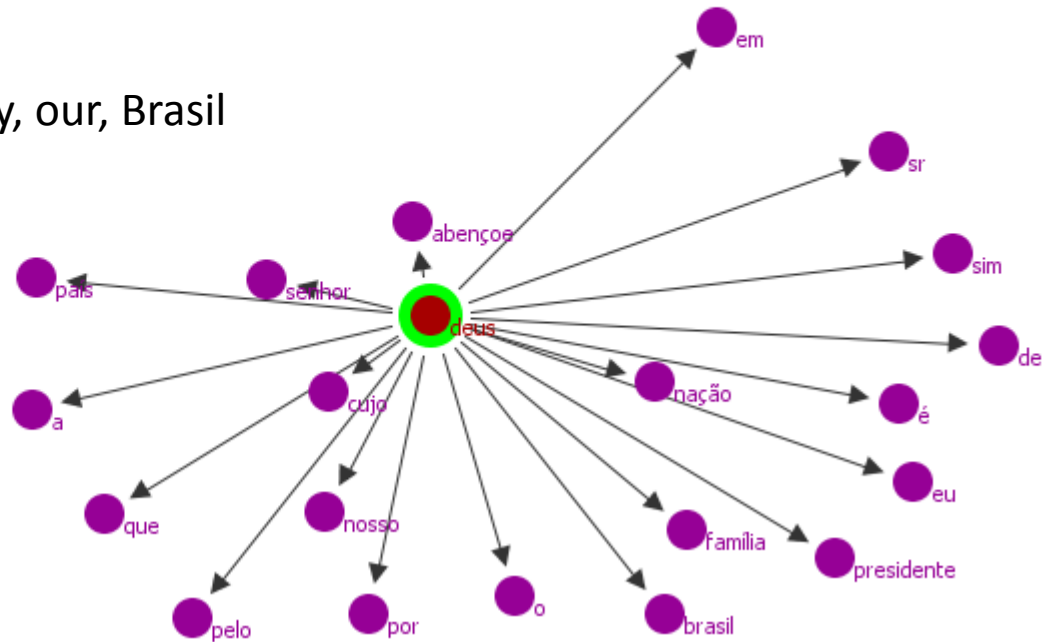
Collocates: 'Deus' [God]

SUBCORPUS 'YES'

Span: 4 <> 4
Types: 21 / 2817
Tokens: 19283
Stat: 03 - MI

Collocates: bless, Nation, family, our, Brasil

“May God have mercy on this nation. I vote yes.”
(Lower House President, Eduardo Cunha, whose term was revoked a few weeks later)



Collocates: 'Deus' [God]

Span: 4 <> 4
 Types: 1 / 1527
 Tokens: 7886
 Stat: 03 - MI

Subcorpus: 'NO'

Criticism to 'yes' speeches;
 interjection; invocation of divine
 help.



Type: deus, Corpus: Corpus 2_Não

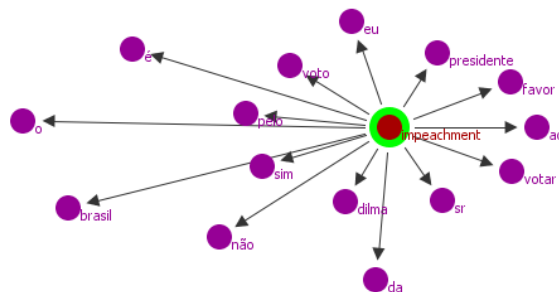
Showing 7 occurrences in window 4L, 4R.

L4	L3	L2	L1	Node	R1	R2	R3	R4
primeiro	eu	rogo	a	Deus	que	ilumine	os	caminhos
vezes	o	nome	de	Deus	ser	usado	em	vão
inclusive	o	nome	de	Deus	Não	aludem	ao	crime
não	ao	impeachment	Meu	Deus	Quanta	hipocrisia	Não	é
mandamentos	da	lei	de	Deus	Quero	dizer	também	colegas
eu	oro	para	que	Deus	abençoe	a	nossa	querida
Exa	quando	pediu	a	Deus	que	tenha	misericórdia	deste

Collocates 'impeachment': 1st level

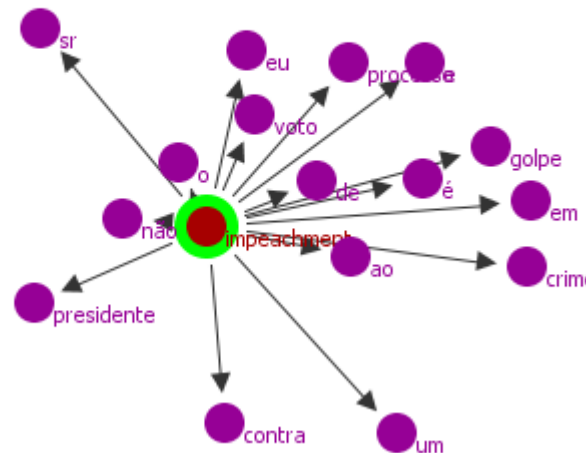
Span: 4 <> 4
 Types: 16 / 2817
 Tokens: 19283
 Stat: 03 - MI

YES



Span: 4 <> 4
 Types: 17 / 1527
 Tokens: 7886
 Stat: 01 - Freq

NO



YES: collocates 'impeachment'

sim
presidente
 sr
 voto
 pelo
 ao
 eu
 o
 da
 e
 é
 dilema
 do

que
 Brasil
 pela
em
 não
 meu
 a
favor
 de
 minha
 para
 votar

NO: collocates 'impeachment'

o
 não
 de
 voto
 ao
presidente
 eu
 é

processo
contra
 e
 sr
 golpe
em
 crime
 um

*Politics is a world of **poor** words.*

- Words related to ‘family’, ‘God’ and ‘nation’ reccur in pro- and counter-impeachment speeches, although not statistically in the same proportion:

'Compare'

N	Key word	freq. in WL_discurso_SIM	%	Texts	freq. in WL_discurso_NÃO	RC. %	Keyness
1	SIM	393	2,04	360	8	0,1	142,3
2	PELO	340	1,77	202	58	0,74	39,8
3	MEU	360	1,87	228	67	0,86	36,34
4	DO	524	2,72	249	117	1,49	35,88
5	BRASIL	272	1,41	199	46	0,59	32,04
6	MINHA	262	1,36	165	44	0,56	31,16
7	MEUS	101	0,52	76	6	0,08	27,29
8	FAMÍLIA	107	0,56	102	8	0,1	26,06
9	DE	635	3,3	269	178	2,27	19,83
10	ESTADO	137	0,71	112	22	0,28	16,99
11	SR	302	1,57	245	79	1,01	12,22
12	ESPERANÇA	52	0,27	51	4	0,05	11,92
13	PELOS	112	0,58	73	20	0,26	11,59
14	RIO	40	0,21	36	2	0,03	10,8
15	FUTURO	44	0,23	40	3	0,04	10,57
16	QUERIDA	43	0,22	41	3	0,04	10,19
17	ME	59	0,31	46	7	0,09	9,93
18	PAULO	37	0,19	34	2	0,03	9,63
19	PAI	22	0,11	21	0	7,61	
20	MOMENTO	40	0,21	36	4	0,05	7,5
21	PELA	257	1,34	147	73	0,93	7,2
22	ELEITORES	26	0,14	24	1	0,01	7,18
23	GOVERNO	46	0,24	37	6	0,08	6,84
24	DEUS	49	0,25	41	7	0,09	6,59
25	NOSSO	80	0,42	59	16	0,2	6,46

- Media is not neutral: publications tend to favor one side → right-wing or left-wing ideologies;
- the impeached President was representative of a left-wing party;
- results displeased publications which were against the process → criticisms to word choices by the pro-impeachment voters;
- although audience is not passive, journalists are able to influence readers.

Concluding remarks and future perspectives

- Media revealed data based on frequency → repetition of words;
- the triad 'nation', 'God' and 'family' recurs more often in the 'Yes' statements: the votes favorable to the process outnumber those against it in 2.68 times;
- it is also important to analyze the surroundings of words → collocates highlight the real 'differences' between the discourses;
- results show that political discourse follows a pattern;
- analysis is not totally objective: the analysis makes choices;
- the quantitative analysis, based on statistical data, combined with the manual, made possible by the ACD, helps reveal data that could be restricted only to the quantitative or (biased) interpretation of the analyst;
- comparison to another Brazilian impeachment process (right-wing): Fernando Collor (1992).

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Thank you!

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