

Institutional Identity Practices on Twitter

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate how a rector of a public university in Turkey, as an academic manager, displayed and managed an institutional identity through using Twitter. The theoretical framework of the study was based on Interaction Process Analysis and Positioning Theory. The tweets by a former rector of a public university, posted during his period of office, were examined in terms of communication preferences based on social-interactive domains, as defined by Bales, and types of self in relation to pronoun use. A qualitative analysis of the tweets showed a preference for task oriented/instrumental social interaction rather than socioemotional, with more frequent uses of the “inclusive we” personal pronoun. The goal of tweeting was to give information about university events, clarify certain discussions, direct students toward the responsible parties regarding their problem, and evaluate certain situations. The analysis revealed that the preference for using Twitter in a task related manner to share information and offer solutions increased over the years of service. Further, over the years, the former rector started to tweet more actively and displayed more socioemotionally based reactions toward his public. In terms of the nature of self and other positioning displayed in this sample of tweets, pronoun-use analysis revealed that the former rector positioned himself as a member of a community, indicated by the more frequent uses of 'we' in task related utterances, as well as negative socioemotional reactions. These results were evaluated in terms of cultural characteristics displayed in language use and leadership.

Keywords: Interaction Process Analysis, positionings, identity practice, Twitter

Twitter'da Kurumsal Kimlik Pratikleri

ÖZ

Bu araştırmanın amacı, akademik yönetici olarak bir devlet üniversitesi rektörünün kurumsal kimliğini Twitter kullanımı ile nasıl ortaya koyduğu ve yönettiğidir. Seçilen devlet üniversitesinin eski rektörünün görev süresi sırasında gönderdiği tweetler, Bales'in tanımladığı çerçevedeki sosyal-etkileşimsel alanlardaki iletişim tercihleri kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Twitter mesajlarının nitel ve nicel içerik analizleri bu mesajlarda sosyo-emosyonel etkileşim amacından çok görev-yönelimli etkileşim amaçlarının sergilenmesinin tercih edildiğini göstermiştir. Twitter'ın kullanılma amacının üniversite hakkında bilgi vermek, çeşitli tartışmalara açıklık getirmek, öğrencileri ilettikleri problemlerle ilgili kişilere yönlendirmek ve belli durumları değerlendirmek olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda Twitter'ı görev-yönelimli kullanma ve çözümler önerme biçiminde kullanımın, rektörün görev yaptığı yıllar süresince arttığı tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca görev yılları süresince Twitter'ın daha aktif kullanıldığı ve sosyo-emosyonel içerikli mesajların oranının da arttığı gözlenmiştir. Kendini ve karşıdaki kişiyi konumlandırmalar açısından bakıldığında ise, mesajlardaki kişi zamiri kullanımının daha çok birinci çoğul şahıs zamiri olan “biz” şeklinde gerçekleştirildiği ve bu anlamda da kurumsal kimlik inşasında rektörün kendini topluluğun bir üyesi olarak hem görev-yönelimli hem de sosyo-emosyonel gönderilerinde konumlandığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu sonuçlar, dil kullanımı bağlamında görülen kültürel özellikler ve liderlik anlayışı bağlamında tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Etkileşim Süreç Analizi, konumlandırmalar, kimlik pratikleri, Twitter

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Using online social-networking platforms in institutional contexts, as well as personal contexts, has become a pervasive phenomenon. Twitter has been reported to be one of the most frequently used social-networking platforms by institutions of higher education (Barnes & Lescault, 2013; Kimmons, Veletsianos, & Woodward, 2017). Institutional image in educational sector started to become an important issue and therefore many universities including public universities are seeking ways to hold an online presence with a positive desirable institutional image (Erdal, Gücüyener, & Erdal, 2013). Moreover, the effects of social networks such as Twitter on scholars' identity construction have yet to be studied (Stewart, 2016). This case study is a content analysis of Twitter posts of a university rector, with the aim of investigating how identity practices are performed and managed in online communication by using an analytical framework consisting of Bales' categories (1950) describing processes of information along with Mühlhäusler and Harré's (1990) approach to pronoun use and identity in line with positioning theory. In this study, the level of analysis was based on pragmatic and discursive use of speech acts, positionings and personal pronouns where a social psychological approach was adopted solely and exclusively.

Construction of Identity via Language

Ochs (1993, p. 288) proposed that social identity "including social statuses, roles, positions, relationships and other relevant identities are constructed by performing certain social acts and taking stances verbally". Identity practices can be traced within institutional talk which is constituted when performing identities (eg. student-teacher, customer-vendor, etc.) are oriented to while conversing for a certain purpose (eg. information sharing, negotiation in relation to a task concerning the institution, etc.) and it can be differentiated from everyday talk since actors carry out the conversation making their identity practices salient in talk (Heritage, 2005). Following Ochs's (1993) argument that social identities are constructed within language in this study, we define identity practice as constructed through language.

With language people hear themselves in an objective way as if someone else is hearing them (Mead, 1934, p.133), therefore language use can be seen as a social act which can navigate positions of the speakers. In order to examine performance and management of identity practices via language use two approaches are used in this study.

Bales' Interaction Process Analysis. Bales' (1950) interaction process analysis (IPA) is a method for studying communication processes between members of a group "according to its purported goal, ranging from instrumental inquiries about a task at hand (i.e., task communication) to expressions of social information and emotions (i.e., socioemotional communication)" (Lin & Peña, 2011, p. 18). IPA, involves a coding frame of communication acts consisting of 12 categories (see Table 1) (Nam, Lyons, Hwang, & Kim, 2009). Bales' IPA, concerning how people interact and communicate in small groups, has proven to be the most durable model in this area of research (Fahy, 2005). The type and frequency of 12 categories of behaviors in IPA reveals a role dimension (being task oriented/instrumental versus socioemotionally oriented) reflecting "a person's interpersonal behavior in an encounter" (Stiles, 1980, p. 360). This analysis, provides a useful tool for examining interpersonal communication in offline and online contexts (Walther, 1992) and has been used to investigate both face-to-face communication in formal and informal group settings (e.g. Bales, 1950; Burke, 1974; Hawkins & Power, 1999; Maloney-Krichmar & Preece, 2005) and computer-mediated interaction in several online contexts (Lin & Peña, 2011; Peña & Hancock, 2006; Reid & Reid, 2005).

Task oriented communication and socioemotional oriented communication lead to different connection styles with the audience. For instance, task related communication is employed more than socioemotional communication by television networks' Twitter posts and this tendency can be interpreted as reflecting television networks' attempts to 'optimize their self-presentation and develop more positive relationships with viewers (Lin & Peña, 2011, p. 24). Moreover, different motivations for the groups leads to different orientation in communication, for example when focusing on group achievement a leader uses task oriented communication and when focusing on cohesiveness of the group a leader uses socioemotional oriented communication (Bales, 1950).

Table 1. Bales' (1950) IPA observation system categories and related speech acts

IPA orientations	message Categories	Speech acts
1. Task oriented Instrumental	/Ask for opinion Ask for suggestion Ask for information Gives opinion Gives suggestion Gives information	Ask for other's evaluation, analysis, feelings Ask others for directions, potential actions Ask other for information, clarification, confirmation, repetition Evaluate, analyze, express feelings wish Give directions, denote autonomy for other Give information, repeat, clarify, confirm
2. Positive socioemotional	Shows solidarity Shows tension release Agree	Raise other's status, help, reward Joke, laugh, show satisfaction Passively accept, understand, concur, comply
3. Negative socioemotional	Disagree Shows tension Shows antagonism	Passively reject, imply formality, withhold help Ask for help, withdraw help if out of field Deflate other's status, defend self, assert

An important example of a study using Bales' IPA is Fahy's (2005) study which classified online messages posted by the instructor and the students in the context of a 13-week online distance-delivered graduate course using IPA. This study found that the group communication was mostly controlled and led by the instructor, which is an implication of a performance of an identity as an instructor. There are some studies focusing on online communication of universities in Turkey, for example, Köseoğlu and Köker (2014) used Kent and Taylor's (1988) dialogic principles for mediated public relations to examine the use of Twitter by the top-five Turkish universities. They found that these universities established a one-way dialogue, positioning themselves asymmetrically in their interaction with their public. In this study, however, we would like to analyze how a person leading the institution, in this case the rector of a university, handles such a dialogue. Therefore, we preferred to choose a method, which allows to investigate interpersonal communication between individuals. Bales' interaction process analysis fits with our purpose in that sense. Although Bales' IPA model was developed for small-group interaction, it can also be used as a tool to analyze communication between an organization and its publics on social media platforms since these platforms provide more interpersonal communications characteristics (Zhang, Tao, & Kim, 2014, p. 234). So, we have used Bales' IPA method to analyze a university's former rector's tweets as the organization leader in this case, to see how he was involved in online interaction whether with an emphasis on task or on socioemotional processes.

Thus, by utilizing IPA to find out the former rector's preferred role behavior while communicating as the president of a university. Considering the features of communication styles, we expect that constructing the identity of a university's rector as the leader of a group could be maintained by more positive socioemotional communicative reactions rather than negative ones, and the communicative acts of a university rector, being at the higher end of the institutional hierarchy, could reflect such a pattern of leadership and prevalence of task related acts.

Use of pronouns. Identity construction through language use is also studied by focusing on linguistic tools. For example, personality traits are found to be related to the use of linguistic forms, such as personal pronouns, negations, words implying assent, and positive emotion used in tweets (Qiu, Lin, Ramsay, & Yang, 2012). Moreover, identity is suggested to be enacted discursively based on uses of different personal pronouns and proposed two arguments: 1) Grammatical rules determine how using personal pronouns refers to specific social-relations' knowledge, which in turn, enable the correct use of these words; and 2) One's "inner self" is not an entity but a construct that is produced and represented by grammatical forms, such as personal pronouns (Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990, p. 5).

The use of "I" indicate whom is to be held morally responsible for the utterance's illocutionary force and its perlocutionary effects (Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990, p. 92), while the use of "we" indexes "I + someone else" (Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990, p. 171), that is a group of people including the speaker of

that utterance. The use of first-person plurals (“we” and “us”) enable people to render their utterances as reflections of their identity performance (Drew & Sorjonen, 1997). However, there is a distinction between the “inclusive we”, where the hearer is included in the indexed group of people, and the “exclusive we”, where the hearer is not included in the group of people referred to (Leech & Svartvik, 1978 as cited in Mühlhäusler & Harré, 1990).

In the present study, we focus on the use of first-person singular and plural personal pronouns, that is, “I” and “we” and by analyzing uses of personal pronouns, we analyze how the rector positioned himself amongst other parties involved in university's management.

Twitter as text. Users of a certain web sites messaging each other or post public texts online synchronously or non-synchronously is defined as computer-mediated communication (CMC; Walther, 1992). CMC is a form of social interaction (Lamerichs & te Molder, 2003), and it is quite possible to evaluate online communication as discursive text which is a source for analyzing institutional identity (Gilpin, 2011). As a form of CMC, Twitter is a great platform where tweets are posted synchronously and the communication between actors is readily available online to analyze identity construction. Moreover, users of Twitter are quite influential therefore many executives from various sectors focus on Twitter communication in order to maintain institutional relationship networks (Gilpin, 2011). Therefore, it is not surprising to see Twitter is being used to foster communication and network in education sector and even used as a tool for teaching purposes (Faculty Focus, 2009 as cited in Gerstein, 2011). It is revealed that scholars use Twitter for various purposes, including communication, sharing information and resources, with various audiences, including friends, colleagues, students (Veletsianos, 2011). Moreover, form and content of the Twitter posts of scholars’ (eg. opinion about hot issues or experience related to dissertation process) is found to differ according to scholars’ role in the institution (eg. professor or teaching assistant) (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2016). In terms of identity construction and manifestation, Twitter can be a fruitful source for researchers who is seeking to analyze scholars’ communication styles.

Therefore, considering identity construction is a public agreement between a person who performs the identity and the audience who accepts that performance (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008) and Twitter, is “an excellent place to study the expression of social identity” (Tamburrini, Cinnirella, Jansen, & Bryden 2015, p. 84), in this study, we investigated how the identity performance of a university president was enacted through Twitter. Because communication through Twitter is mainly text based, the analysis of how an identity practice is constructed necessitates a deeper examination of linguistic forms in relation to communication functions.

The Aim of the Study

The main research question of the study was to describe how a university rector performed his institutional identity via Twitter in relation to IPA based communication behaviors revealed in his tweets as well as how linguistic form choices in these tweets such as personal pronouns altered or shaped the communication acts displayed. The goals of the present study are:

1. Which type of communicative acts defined by IPA were expressed in tweets?
2. Does the use of interactional acts defined by IPA differ across the service years?
3. What kind of self and other positioning acts by use of personal pronouns emerge in tweets classified as task oriented/instrumental?
4. What kind of self and other positioning acts by use of personal pronouns emerge in tweets classified as socioemotional oriented?

METHOD

Data

The data in this study consist of tweets and retweets of one of the former rectors of a public university during his period of office. Examining one rector and his communication with students and staff is a form of case study. A case study aims to define variables and structures in a given situation by analyzing a single case (Starman, 2013). Moreover, such study offers an explanation regarding the matter in great depths, and complexity and takes uniqueness of the case into consideration by examining various angles of the matter in real life (Simons, 2009). However, data of this study consists of more than 2000 tweets including mentions therefore it should be viewed as a conversation and the

analysis conducted should be viewed as a conversation analysis which aims to identify various manifestations of institutional identity performance.

2,697 tweets included in the analysis were all tweets and mentions posted over several months of 2011 (January–June and September–December), during the spring term of 2012 (February, March, April), the spring term of 2013 (April, May, June), and the fall term of 2014 (September–December). The data were collected via html scrapping and were analyzed using content analysis. The tweets of this particular person were chosen for this study due to two reasons. Firstly, he had been one of the university rectors in Turkey who was very active on Twitter where institutional communication culture is not generally interactional (Köseoğlu & Köker, 2014). His active use of Twitter even made it to the news because of his humorous tweets to his students. Secondly, he uses his personal account for interaction with university actors (mainly students and staff) which creates an opportunity for us to investigate how he attempts to maintain hierarchical relations with students and staff reflecting how he constructs his identity practices in a less formal platform. Case studies are very fruitful in order to produce context dependent information (Starman, 2013) therefore focusing on one case would enable researchers to reveal various communication styles of a rector in institutional context.

In this study, although the rector was tweeting from his personal account rather than using the university's account, he used his Twitter account to present his ideas about the university and its actors publicly; to discuss the specific problems of the university with the students and staff as well as to report what has been done during his administration period as well as to share his opinions and experiences about other issues. By only including his tweets concerning the issues about university management, the final sample of this study only consisted of tweets where the identity practices were rendered relevant.

Data Analysis

Firstly, all the tweets posted during the years 2011–2014 were classified into two categories in terms of having personal contents versus institutional contents. Tweets with personal contents were defined as mentioning family members, travelling experiences, critiques of sports games, and TV shows etc. while tweets related to his institutional role were tweets exchanged with students and staff, tweets about university's other actors, regarding questions about university's curriculum and education. From a total of 2,697 tweets, only 827 had institutional content and were thus included in the analysis. This final sample of tweets was analyzed using NVivo 11.

While analyzing the tweets, IPA observation categories (see Table 1) were used as given codes, which include three main message orientations with 12 subcategories in total (Bales, 1950; Lin & Peña, 2011; Peña & Hancock, 2006). Each communication act in a tweet was coded into one of the 12 categories of IPA. If a tweet in the sample did not fit into any of these subcategories, it was discarded.

As for analyzing personal pronouns, Turkish is a language that permits omitting the use of pronouns through subject-pronoun dropping, so accordingly in this study, not only overt uses of “I” and “we” were coded but the uses of these specific pronouns displayed by verb-inflections were also coded. The uses of the first-person-singular pronoun “I” and the first-person-plural pronoun “we” are defined as discursive tools (Tamburrini et al., 2015) reflecting the self and other positioning, as well as power claims constructed by the university rector, specifically allocating and/or withholding the rights of power and responsibility. Some of the tweets in the sample included several verbs with different pronoun-related inflections, so in such cases the tweets were included in both categories.

Procedure

With the verbal consent of the former rector, all tweets and retweets from his account within the 2011-2014 period were downloaded via html scrapping. These tweets were sorted according to the months they were posted in and were selected in order to be analyzed. We picked 3-4 months from each year from his period of office, 2011-2014 to cover the fall or the spring terms each year; the whole 2011 school year was selected since the number of tweets was observed to be relatively low that year.

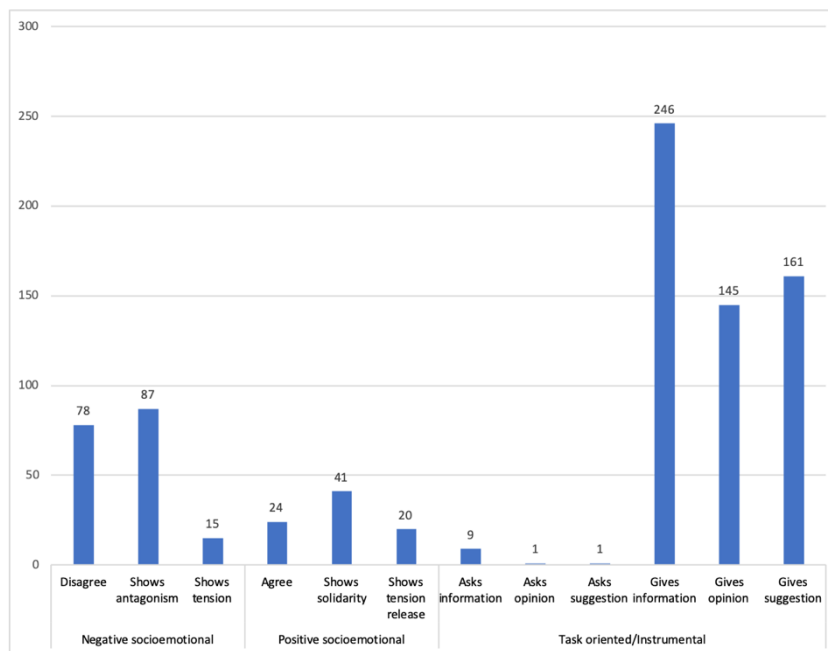
The communicational content of all tweets chosen for analysis was coded by two authors separately, and then the resulting codings were compared and discussed to reach consensus.

RESULTS

The results of the analysis revealed that a preference for communicating task related contents was present in the tweets. In that sense, an identity of a leader who was there to determine problems and providing solutions rather than showing support and maintaining a good relationship with other actors was constructed. In line with this identity performance, he posted more negative socioemotional tweets implicating a disregard towards constructing a positive self-presentation by exhibiting positive emotional responses.

However, it was found that all three IPA message orientations were used (see Figure 1); the tweets involved both communicative processes, with positive and negative socioemotional social interactions, as well as task related ones.

Figure 1. Numbers of tweets coded across speech acts related to IPA Categories



Most of the tweets was task oriented/instrumental (562 tweets; 68% of all tweets), followed by ones with negative socioemotional content (180 tweets; 22% of all tweets) and ones with positive socioemotional content (85 tweets; 10% of all tweets). This finding was not entirely in line with our expectations; we expected that there would be more positive socioemotionally oriented tweets than those that were negative socioemotionally oriented.

Among all the IPA categories, “giving information” in task related interactions was found to be the most used category, followed by “giving suggestion(s)” and “giving opinion(s)”.

Within task oriented/instrumental messages, most of the tweets were used to give information, with only one tweet being used to “ask for opinion(s)” and “ask for suggestion(s)”. Overall, it can be said that the microblogging characteristic of Twitter was used to offer solutions and answers (whether his tweet offered a suggestion, some information, or an opinion). Twitter in this context was not used for “requesting” anything from the receiving parties in institutional matters, which could have indicated a tendency of communication reflecting reciprocity.

Within the negative socioemotional oriented messages, most of the tweets were used to indicate antagonism followed by disagreement, while within the positive socioemotional oriented messages, most of the tweets were used to show solidarity.

In order to determine whether Twitter use differed over service time, a cross-tabulation of IPA message orientations based on the year of posting was made. Socioemotional oriented messages (positive and negative) and task oriented/instrumental messages are indeed significantly differed over time ($\chi^2(3, 640) = 24.17, p = .00$). As can be seen in Figure 2, Twitter was used for social interaction with a task orientation over the years and, accordingly, more information, opinions, and suggestions were offered especially in 2013 and 2014 (even though the data included tweets posted every month of the

school year 2011 but only three months from 2013 and four months from 2014). Moreover, as the period of office continued, contents reflecting more socioemotionally based interaction was posted.

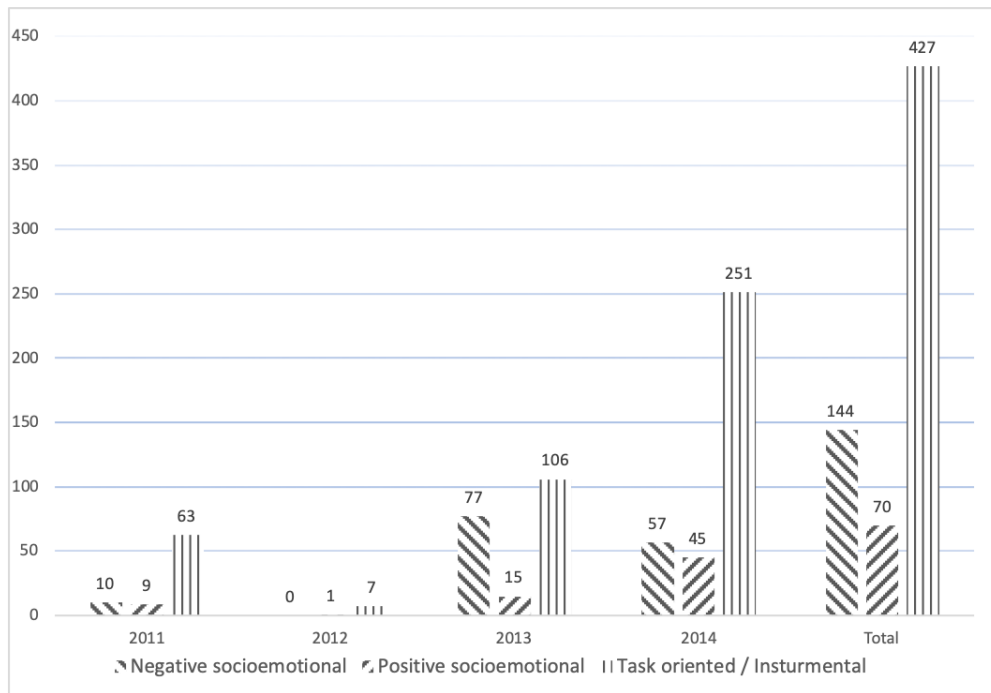


Figure 2. Distribution of IPA message orientation in the tweets across years (2011-2014).

The results of the analysis of pronoun use in this sample of tweets revealed that the pronoun “we” more than the pronoun “I” (see Figure 3) was used in task oriented/instrumental (61%) and negative socioemotional oriented (57%) interactions, while the pronoun “I” was found to used more frequently in tweets with positive socioemotional content (59%).

When we analyzed the tweets within the task oriented/instrumental category, where the pronoun “we” was used to see whether the distribution of inclusive versus exclusive uses differed, we found that in 48% of those tweets “we” was used to mean inclusion. The frequency of use of inclusive 'we' within negative socioemotional tweets was 27%, and 78% within positive socioemotional ones.

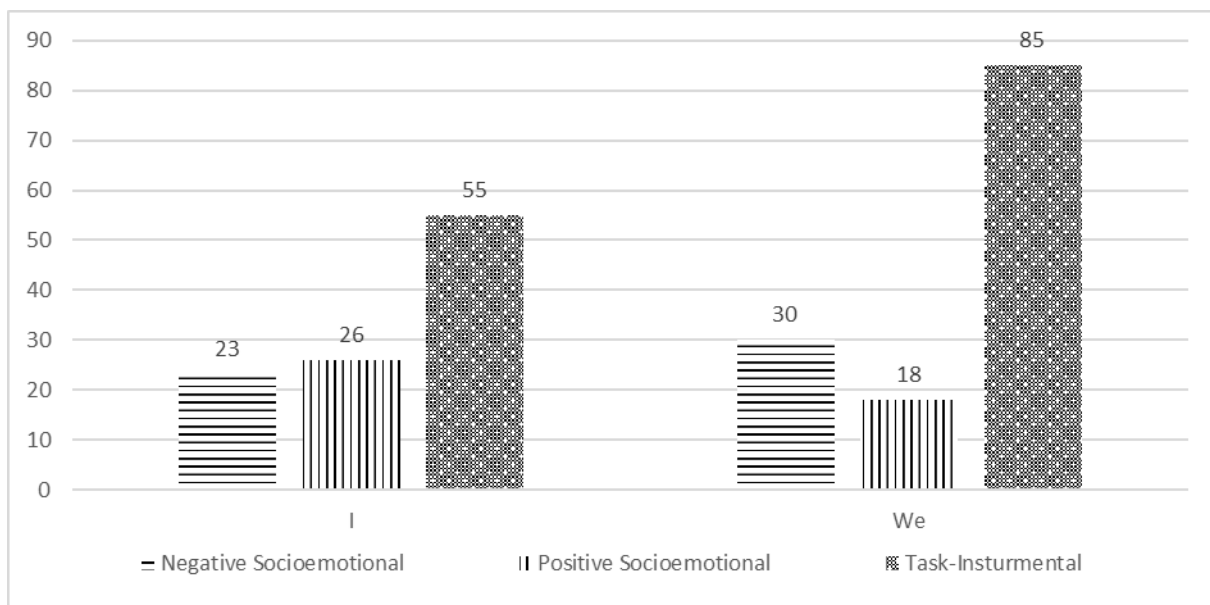


Figure 3. The distribution of the use of personal pronouns across IPA categories.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to examine how a public university rector, performed the identity practices of being a university rector during his period of office by focusing on the communicative acts

and the positioning he attempted and performed with his public within a context of online communication via Twitter. However, since this is a case study, results of the study are not aimed for generalization rather they should be evaluated as an example for developing stronger institutional communication.

The first aim of the present study was to determine, based on IPA categories, the preference of communicative processes displayed in tweets. Most of the tweets involved task related communicative acts in response to students' questions rather than positive or negative socioemotional posts. Rector's goal for tweeting was mostly to give information about university events, clarify certain discussions, direct students toward the responsible parties regarding their problem, and evaluate certain situations. These findings are consistent with our expectations and previous studies which revealed that most of college and university rectors used Twitter to interact with their students to answer their questions and give feedback (Barnes & Lescault, 2013; Borysenko, 2014) with the goal of addressing students' issues and recruitment which strengthens the giver-receiver nature of the hierarchical communication between a university rector and students rather than equal parties sharing ideas and feelings. Although we carried out a case study, this preference for using Twitter to share and publicize information was found to be common in institutional university communications, as well (Kimmons et al., 2017; Palmer, 2013; Yolcu, 2013). However, academics' presence on Twitter are beneficial for students in terms of introducing meaningful and relevant communication in their fields in an informal setting (Veletsianos, 2011). Moreover, as mentioned above, task related communication is more suitable when focus is group's achievements and socioemotional related communication is more suited for creating a cohesive group (Bales, 1950). In other words, by using more socioemotional related communication, scholars - especially leaders- might open the way for a more cohesive community. Therefore, results might show us the importance of using CMC for more than task related purposes.

The second aim of the study was to determine whether the communicative acts expressed in the tweets differed over the years 2011–2014. The analysis revealed that the preference for using Twitter in a task related manner to share information and offer solutions increased. Furthermore, over the years, the former rector started to tweet more actively and displayed more socioemotionally based reactions toward his public. As mentioned above, using online communication might prove beneficial in terms of creating communication. Therefore, it is not surprising rector preferred to use more socioemotional content over the years.

In terms of the nature of self and other positioning displayed in this sample of tweets, pronoun-use analysis revealed that the former rector positioned himself as a member of a community, indicated by the more frequent uses of "we" in task related utterances, as well as in negative socioemotional reactions. Thus, in line with Drew and Sorjonen's (1997) suggestion, we argue that the former rector preferred to emphasize and reflect his identity of a university rector rather than his identity as an academic or a person. Not surprisingly, the use of the pronoun "I" was more common in tweets displaying positive social and emotional reactions, pointing to claiming moral responsibility for caring about harmony and reducing tension in social interactions to enable him to construct and present a positive self-image as a leader.

When the use of the pronoun "we" was further analyzed by taking inclusive versus exclusive types of uses into account, it was found that, in task related posts, the use of "exclusive we" was more frequent. So, by using the pronoun "we" (and "us") in such cases, he distanced himself and other members (such as deans, librarians, professors, etc.) from his public consisting of students, and he implied that the students were not included in this group (Leech & Svartvik, 1978). Academics who have administrative roles may find themselves in situations where their academic identities, which holds values such as "autonomy", and managerial identities, which is driven by values like "economic rationality", challenge each other and they may choose to set their academic selves aside and align with the institution's rules and regulations (Winter, 2009, p. 122-123). Thereby, he positioned himself as authority, emphasizing asymmetrical power relations between the administration he led and the students who demanded information and solutions. Such a positioning is in line with what is defined as managerial leadership (Yielder & Codling, 2004) or organizational leadership (Washington, Boal, & Davis, 2008). Yielder and Codling (2004, p. 320) argued that "managerial leadership positions in academic institutions reflect organizational hierarchy" therefore, the person at the top, the rector of a university in our study, is "in authority... linked with power and influence".

Regarding the socioemotional aspect of identity construction, uses of inclusive–exclusive “we” ratios were 57% and 43%, respectively, within negative socioemotional oriented tweets. However, this might be due to the fact that 87% of the tweets coded in this IPA category were replies to students complaining or critiquing. Therefore, the high frequency of negative socioemotional reactions could be explained as acts of defending his position by adopting an authoritative voice and style emphasizing himself as “we-the administration”. The former rector aligning himself with the administration in negative context and the doing the opposite in positive context may be a cultural reflex since members of high-context cultures like Turkey, when it comes to conflict resolution, may readily avoid confrontation (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987).

These findings reveal an identity practices performance that proves to be consistent with ideal leadership behaviors in Turkey. Paşa, Kabasakal and Bodur (2001, p. 584) concluded that there is “a mixed leadership style” in Turkey in which the leaders are expected to be “action-oriented and assertive in line with hierarchical-autocratic style of leadership” and to be individuals who are “decisive, ambitious, assertive... somewhat aggressive but controlled at the same time”.

This study is one of the few social psychological studies in Turkey regarding Twitter use. While many of them focus on descriptive aspects of Twitter use such as the number of tweets and retweets (Köseoğlu & Köker, 2014; Yolcu, 2013), this study conducts an analysis on interaction between individuals which is also an important input in terms of cultural perspective. However, there were some limitations of our study. Firstly, as mentioned above, the students’ tweets were not included in this analysis, making it impossible to examine the dialogical nature of tweeting in this case. Moreover, the number of tweets included in our study was rather limited. Future studies might be carried out to examine the construction of the identity practices of academic managers in relation to communication processes in other social-media platforms, as well as considering the use of linguistic forms other than pronouns since IPA model was found to be limited in terms of examining the content of communicative acts (Savolainen, 2015, p. 1204).

In conclusion, this study contributes to the knowledge regarding the construction of identity practices in online interactions by presenting a case study from a nonwestern culture and provides a framework to examine how language is used within this identity construction process focusing on use of pronouns and positionings.

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