

Strategic Issue Emphasis?

Comparing easy-read and regular manifestos using NLP

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COMPTExT 2023

\People with disabilities have a right, that every information is provided to them as understandable as possible"
(German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs)

Comparison: Regular vs. Easy Read

"To underpin this national renewal, we will invest £100 billion in additional infrastructure spending – on roads, rail and other responsible, productive investment which will repair and refurbish the fabric of our country and generate greater growth in the long run." (2019 Conservatives)

Comparison: Regular vs. Easy Read

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Figure 1: Excerpt from the 2019 Conservative's Easy Read Manifestos

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Figure 1: Excerpt from the 2019 Conservative's Easy Read Manifestos

Theory

Existing Research (Linguistic)

Shows Positional Differences & Lack of Clarity in Translations

Considers Them Unintentional

(e.g. Krähenbühl, 2018; Jekat et al., 2017; Bock, 2015)

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! Incentive to Strategically (De-)Emphasize Different Topics

Parties strategically emphasize topics relating to marginalized groups and welfare and the fabric of society in ERMs.

Parties strategically de-emphasize topics relating to the economy and foreign relations.

Figure 2: Differences in Relative Issue Salience

But how did we get here?

Process

Division of easy-read manifestos in sentences

Manual coding according to MARPOR policy domains

Fine-tuning of classification models

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Challenges with Easy Read Language

Shorter sentences (often not full quasi-sentences)

Political domain of sentences often only understandable in context

Less unique words ('refugees', 'workers', 'criminals' 'humans')

Model re-tuning

Different Transformer Architectures

- | BERT, RoBERTa, DistilBERT, Electra

Different Training-Data

- | MARPOR quasi-sentences did not work
- | Annotated easy-read sentences
- | Adding sentences before and after to add context made it worse
- | Collapsing annotations from multiple coders

Different categorisations

- | 7 policy domains
- | 4 categories according to expectations

Model accuracy for selected models

	Naive			DistilBERT	DistilBERT
	Bayes	BERT	RoBERTa	(7 Cats)	(4 Cats)
Accuracy	0187	0469	0475	0487	0601
No Info Rate	0389	0320	0301	0291	0420
Kappa	0062	0342	0362	0367	0421
Non-Issue	0545	0580	0501	0564	0558
Groups	0213	0172	0178	0258	0704
Economy	0041	0442	0491	0423	0510
Democracy	0078	0348	0432	0393	0458
Welfare	0083	0591	0625	0606	
Ext. Rel.	0058	0545	0516	0578	
Society	0050	0173	0092	0248	

For categories, F1 scores are reported. The scores reported for the 4 categorical DistilBERT model refer to the categories the respective category falls into.

Category volume for selected models

Figure 3: Differences in Relative Frequency by Domain

Where are we going from here?

Classify which sentences are possible to classify by topic

Collapse sentences based on classifiability

Applying classification only on classifiable sentences

Change annotation rules

Whatever you suggest ...

Expand analysis to German State Elections

Conclusions

Content

Evidence for strategic emphasis of Welfare, Education etc.

No evidence for strategic de-emphasis of Economy & Foreign Relations

Evidence for 'random' de-emphasis of Political System and Fabric of Society category

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Modelling

Easy Read Language is different

Using 7 categories is noisy

We need better handcoded data and better classifiers

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