

Translation as anti-propaganda weapon?

An exploratory analysis of #TheGreatTranslationMovement on Twitter

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June 19, 2022

@5th Annual Conference of Politics and Computational Social Science



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1. Background
2. Method
3. Preliminary results
4. Tentative conclusion & Future directions

Background

Background: China's Propaganda



Xi's "Telling China's Story Well":

- Toward “A trustworthy, lovely and respectful China”?



Source: Reuters

Background: China's Propaganda



PAID PROGRAM — WHAT'S THIS?

CHINAWATCH
CHINA DAILY 中国日报

All you need to know about China and the dynamics of Sino-US relations

Source: Wall Street Journal



Source: New York Times

Background: China's digital dissents?



- Subreddit: ChonglangTV & CLTV
- *Ronin, the Great Wave off Kanagawa, and Xenocentrism*



Source: Reddit@ChonglangTV(*banned*)



Background: #thegreattranslationmovement

THE GREAT TRANSLATION MOVEMENT

The Great Translation Movement 大翻译运动官方推号
@TGTM_Official

Fourth estate, wanderer, Chinese information, holds muck-rake in hand, wears crown from gutter. Not responsible for original content, peace and love. squeak~

Joined March 2022

67 Following 164.5K Followers



Background: #thegreattranslationmovement



The Great Translation Movement 大翻译运动... @TGTM_Offi... · 19h ...

What a tragedy: an infant died because of China's Inhumane zero covid policy. What's even worse is that we would not know this if the mother didn't speak out now (one year after)

#TheGreatTranslationMovement

#大翻译运动

#大翻譯運動



冀头鹰视频

· 6月14日 14:43 来自 微博iPhone版

【新闻标题】因发热被拒方舱后死亡#【母亲自曝1年前送医被拒婴儿饿死，孩子却因发热被送往方舱医院后死亡】近日，河北石家庄一名母亲@冀头鹰视频 在社交媒体发声称，2021年5月26日凌晨，自己出生的孩子因肠梗阻被收入河北医科大学第二附属医院（以下简称二院）治疗。因有发热症状，急诊室建议从入院方舱医院，进入入院病房后，医生并未按照新生儿肠梗阻的治疗指南进行治疗，而是告知需等白班医生上班后再进行。

7时50分左右，婴儿口鼻涌出便便排出体外状态，方舱医院不具备抢救条件，医护人员以没有体温报告为由，拒绝将孩子转入PICU（儿科重症监护室）进行抢救。至11时51分左右，肠梗阻已经出现，经医护人员紧急处置，婴儿转入PICU，经过19小时的抢救无效后，宣布死亡。#婴儿发热等情况下要报告无法进PICU而亡#

2022年5月18日，石家庄市医学会召开医疗事故鉴定会，鉴定结果为一级甲等医疗事故，第二院承担次要责任。#谣·视界 @冀头鹰视频 @冀头鹰视频的微博视频 @石家庄@石家庄_微视~



45607

24773

489905

14th June, 14:43 – from Weibo

#An Infant with Intestinal obstruction was sent to China's Covid Camp because of fever and then died# Recently, in China's Hebei province, one mother (@冀头鹰视频) exposed on one China's social media. On 28th May 2021 mid night, her new-born baby was sent to the Second Hospital of Hebei Medical University because of intestinal obstruction. Because the baby had fever (possible Covid symptom), the emergency centre refused to treat the baby. The baby was then sent to Covid Camp instead. After submitting to the Covid Camp, doctors have not taken any action to treat intestinal obstruction and asked the mother to wait till the doctors of the morning shift.

At around 07:50am, baby's body is shutting down with feces pouring out of nose and mouth. Doctors refused to send the baby to PICU (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit) because the baby did not have PCR test report.

Till around 11:51am, the baby had PCR test result and finally submitted to PICU. After 19-hours intensive rescue, the baby died.

On 18th May 2022, the city's Medical Malpractice Identification Committee identified this incident as the severity 1 medical accident. (But) the Second Hospital of Hebei Medical University takes secondary responsibility.

Note that this news report does not tell us who or which organisation takes the primary responsibility.



Background: #thegreattranslationmovement



The Great Translation Movement 大翻译运动官方推号
@TGTM_Official

...

What you see below is not a game screen, a normal day in the United States

For the CCP, belittling its enemies is the best way to make progress for itself.

#TheGreatTranslationMovement

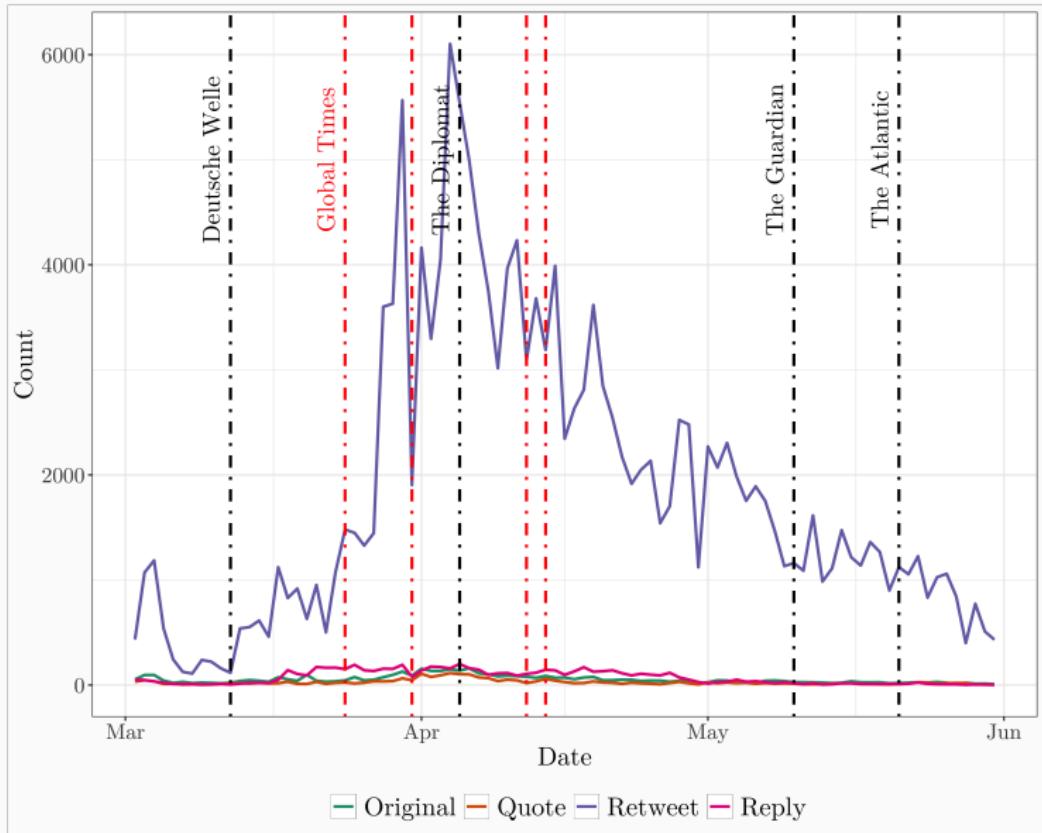
#大翻译运动

#大翻譯運動



11:00 PM · Jun 12, 2022 · TweetDeck

Background: #thegreattranslationmovement





- The Diplomat: A decentralized social media campaign challenges CCP propaganda by revealing its dark narratives to a global audience.
- Global times:
 - GT Investigates: Behind the online translation campaign are a few Chinese-speaking badfaith actors fed by antagonistic Western media (Mar 24)
 - 'Great Translation Movement' a despicable anti-China smear campaign (Mar 31)
 - How China can counter translation bias? (Apr 12)
 - Twisted in translation: Western media, social groups set up language barriers by intentionally misreading, misinterpreting Chinese materials (Apr 14)

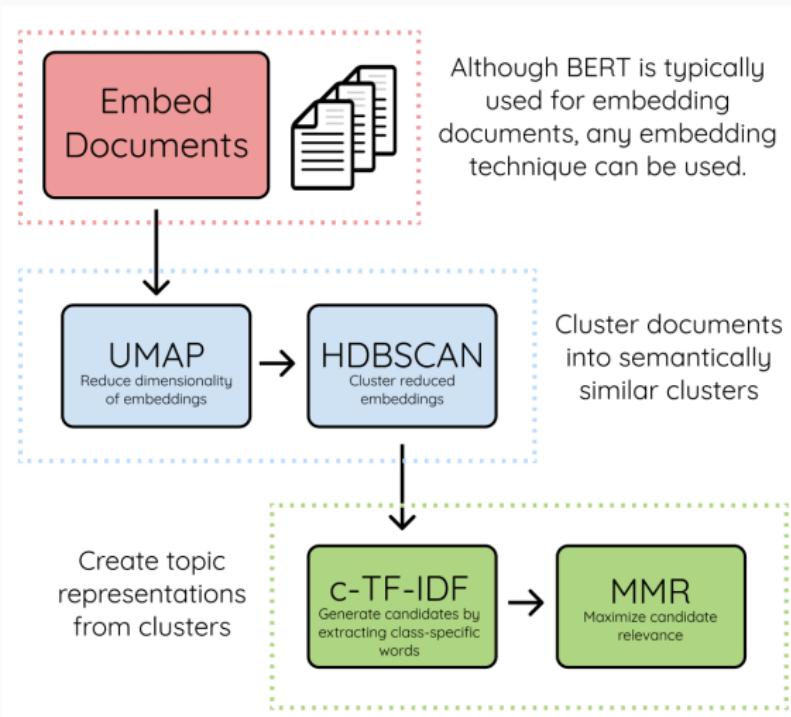
Method



1. Unsupervised machine learning on the *posts*

- BERTopic (Grootendorst, 2022)
- "all-mpnet-base-v2"

Method: BERTopic



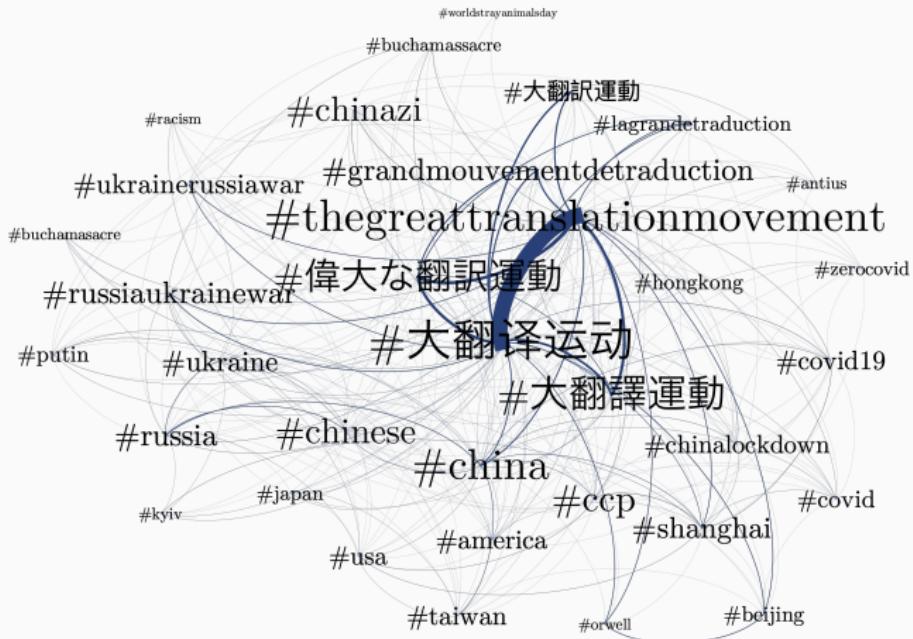
Source: Grootendorst (2022)



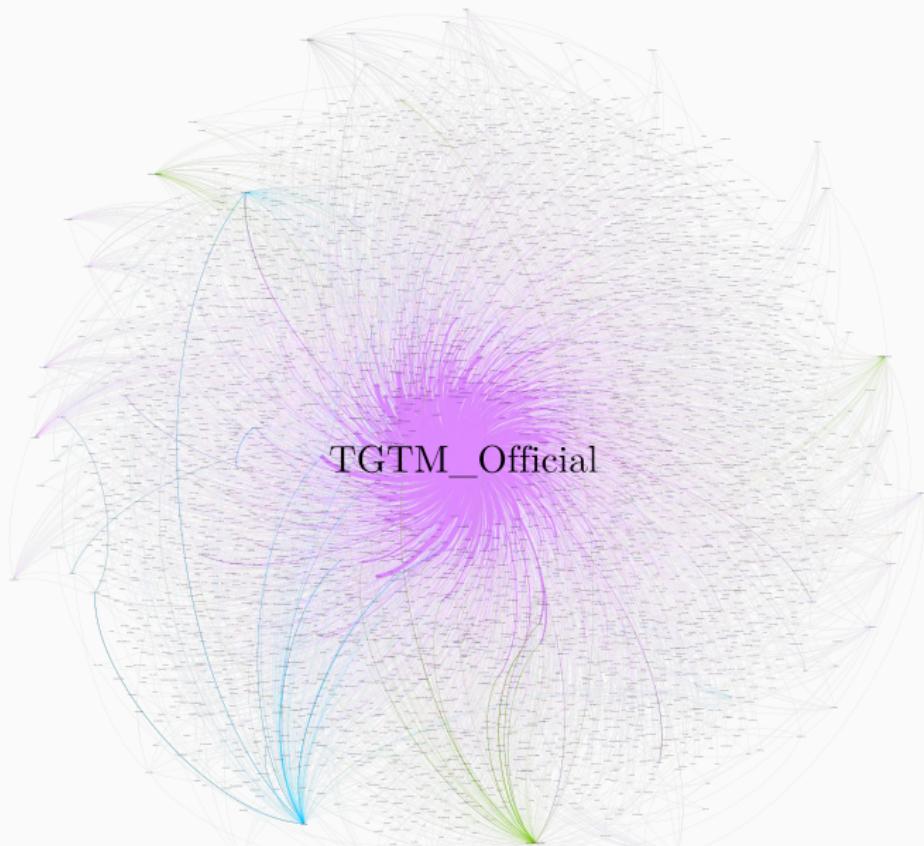
1. Unsupervised machine learning on the *posts*
 - BERTopic (Grootendorst, 2022)
 - "all-mpnet-base-v2"
2. Supervised machine learning on the *comments*
 - BERTsent (Lamsal, 2022)
 - bertweet-based (Nguyen et al., 2020): SemEval 2017 corpus (39k plus tweets) + 850M English Tweets (cased) + additional 23M COVID-19 English Tweets (cased)
 - RoBERTa pre-training procedure
3. Dataset
 - 181,870 tweets (multilingual) with thegreattranslationmovement
 - 50,256 replies/comments under @TGTM_Official
 - March 2nd – May 31st, 2022
 - bots are removed (> 0.6)

Preliminary results

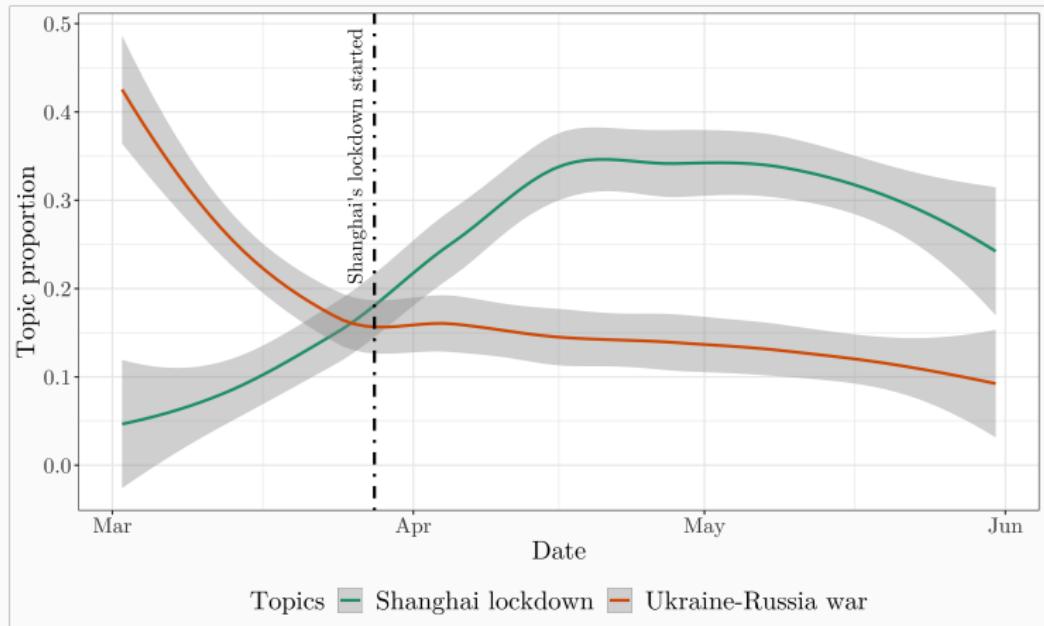
Preliminary results: overall trend



Preliminary results: overall trend



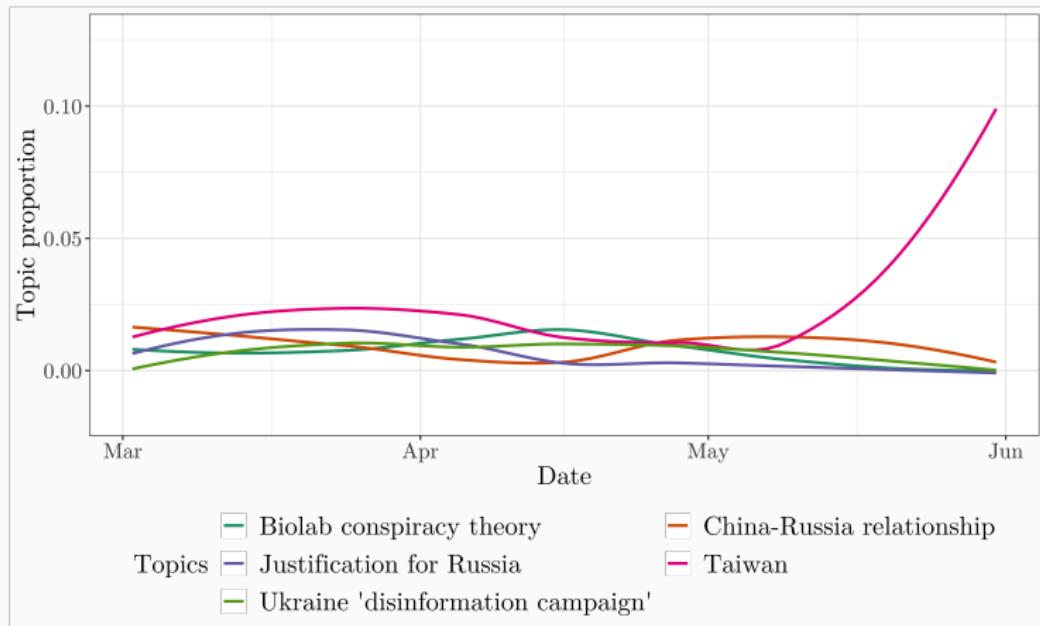
Preliminary results: general topics

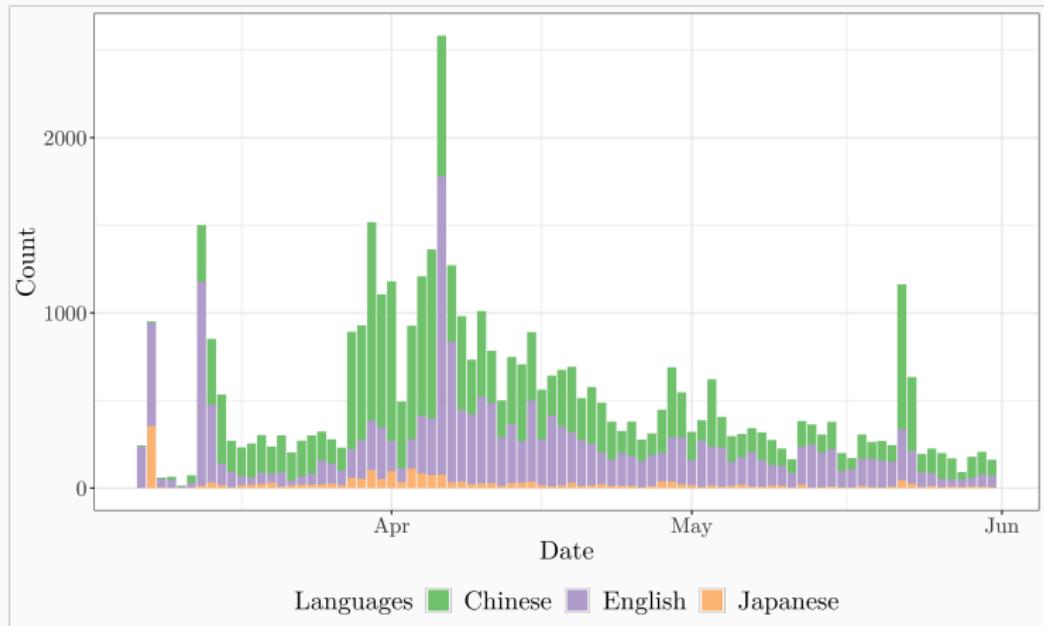




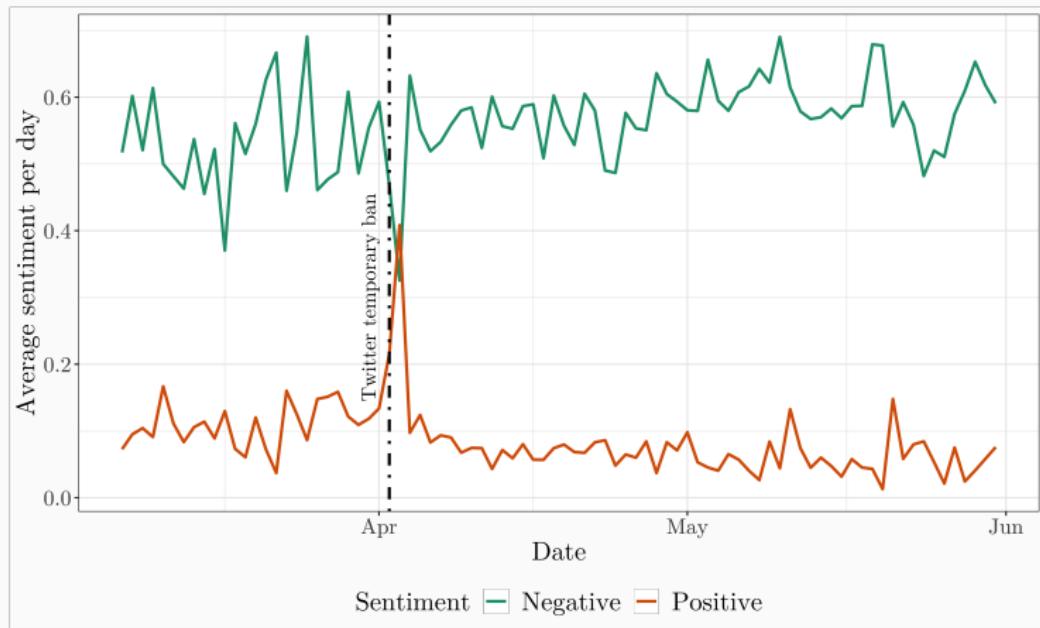
- Ukraine-Russia war
 - Praising Putin: "If Putin loses his job after the defeat perhaps he should consider coming to China to debut as an idol."
 - Supporting Russia: "China Weibo comments cheering at Russia plans to seize assets of western companies that pull out."
 - Demeaning Ukrainians: "Chinese CCTV is trying to smear all Ukrainians who participated in the demonstrations and defending their homeland as taking part in the action for profit."
 - Against Ukraine: "After iOS app @DocumentsApp rolled out a new logo showing support for Ukraine, Chinese iPhone users, presumably the well-educated middle class of China, flooded the review section with pro-Russia hate speech."
- Shanghai lockdown
 - Abuse of power/authority: "Power addicted man forces persons who sneaked out to buy food under lockdown to admit their fault publicly through video recording."
 - Tragedies: "China's sudden no-notice COVID19 lockdown measurement forces these people to choose between home and bread. China state media emphasised on zero-covid policy earlier today."

Preliminary results: general topics





Preliminary results: @TGTM_Official



Tentative conclusion & Future directions



TENTATIVE CONCLUSION:

- Main topics: Ukraine-Russia war then switch to Shanghai lockdown
- The booming variety of other topics
- Counter-propaganda? Limited influence at this moment
- The language used might make it hard(er) for NLP tasks

FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- More data in a longer time frame
- More features/attributes
 - OCR?
- Multilingual textual data
- Multimodal classification
 - Stance
 - Content
 - Strategy

QUESTIONS & SUGGESTION?

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-  Grootendorst, M. (2022). Bertopic: Neural topic modeling with a class-based tf-idf procedure. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2203.05794*.
-  Lamsal, R. (2022). Bertsent: A finetuned bert based sentiment classifier for english language tweets.
<https://huggingface.co/rabindralamsal/BERTsent>
-  Nguyen, D. Q., Vu, T., & Nguyen, A. T. (2020). Bertweet: A pre-trained language model for english tweets. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2005.10200*.