

## **“Has Europe Forgiven Us for Brexit?”: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Tweets about the Eurovision Song Contest**

### **Abstract [paper]:**

The Eurovision Song Contest, an international songwriting competition, has garnered international attraction as a cultural spectacle: its latest edition, held from May 10 until May 14, 2022, was followed by more than 161 million viewers worldwide (Eurovision Press Office 2022). The main aim of the contest is to find Europe’s most popular song: participants perform an original song and spectators vote for their favourite from home. The dynamics surrounding the contest, however, have changed a lot since its inception in 1956, when it was up to a series of professional panels appointed by each country to decide the winner of the contest. Nowadays, the popular voice is also very much taken into account, and viewers go well beyond their role as voters and engage with the contest through social media platforms where they can voice their feelings towards the contestants and their songs.

Of these platforms, Twitter stands out as one of the most relevant, since it provides users a space for communal, unmediated, and live communication (Highfield, Harrington, and Bruns 2013). Within the context of Eurovision, Twitter is now even considered an extension of the event, as there are official hashtags and accounts that publish comments in real time regarding what is being televised. Viewers express in 240 characters their own opinions and simultaneously engage with others’ comments about the performances they are watching via hashtags, which facilitates the flow of the discussion. From a linguistic perspective the analysis of these tweets is undoubtedly valuable: the platform is home to a wide range of users who constitute a very rich sample, and the amount of data that can be easily accessed is massive. In addition, as Twitter allows users to remain anonymous, their messages are often extremely polarized in terms of sentiment and intertwine references to political or socio-historical events with evaluations of the musical quality of the songs or the performance of the singers.

The present work, therefore, aims to analyse the language employed to talk about the United Kingdom’s representative at the Eurovision Song Contest, Sam Ryder (who finished in second position) on Twitter. In order to do so, tweets including the keyword “Sam Ryder” and the hashtags #Eurovision, #Eurovision2022, and #ESC2022 have been used. The tweets have been extracted using Twitter’s API platform, which allows the download of raw data. The methodology followed is based on two aspects: (a) a sentiment analysis of the tweets using *Lingmotif* (Moreno-Ortiz 2017) to explore their overall semantic orientation, and (b) a qualitative analysis using *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014) to examine how different types of reactions to this participant are manifested from a linguistic perspective. The main objective is to observe patterns of discourse and sentiment polarity regarding the Eurovision Song Contest and, more specifically, Sam Ryder. Our results show that positive and congratulatory messages predominate in the corpus, while negative references to political events such as *Brexit* can also be found.

(484 words)

### **References (maximum 150 words) (Chicago style)**

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**Keywords (maximum 5) (separated with semi-colons)**

Eurovision; Twitter; sentiment analysis