

Elon Musk in Social Media: Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of the Magnate on X

Kryštof Pernický

Bachelor's Thesis
2025



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně

Fakulta humanitních studií

Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Akademický rok: 2024/2025

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení:	Kryštof Pernický
Osobní číslo:	H21824
Studijní program:	B0231P090005 Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi
Forma studia:	Prezenční
Téma práce:	Elon Musk na sociálních sítích: Kritická diskurzivní analýza reprezentace magnáta na X

Zásady pro vypracování

Shromáždění a studium odborné literatury
Vytvoření korpusu
Formulace cílů práce a specifikace analýzy
Analýza shromážděných materiálů dle definovaných kritérií
Shrnutí výsledků analýzy a formulace závěrů

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**
Jazyk zpracování: **Angličtina**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

Fairclough, Norman. 2013. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Routledge.
Machin, David, and Andrea Mayr. 2012. *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
Statham, Simon. 2022. *Critical Discourse Analysis: A Practical Introduction to Power in Language*. London: Routledge
Van Dijk, Teun. 2008. *Discourse and Power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Wodak, Ruth, and Michael Meyer, eds. 2009. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Svitlana Shurma, M.A., Ph.D.**
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **2. ledna 2025**
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **6. května 2025**

L.S.

Mgr. Libor Marek, Ph.D.
děkan

doc. Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.
ředitel ústavu

Ve Zlíně dne 24. února 2025

PROHLÁŠENÍ AUTORA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Beru na vědomí, že

- odevzdáním bakalářské práce souhlasím se zveřejněním své práce podle zákona č. 111/1998 Sb., v platném znění bez ohledu na výsledek obhajoby;
- bakalářská práce bude uložena v elektronické podobě v univerzitním informačním systému a bude dostupná k nahlédnutí;
- jedno vyhotovení bakalářské práce v listinné podobě bude ponecháno Univerzitě Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně k uložení;
- na moji bakalářskou práci se plně vztahuje zákon č. 121/2000 Sb. o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon) ve znění pozdějších právních předpisů, zejm. § 35 odst. 3;
- podle § 60 odst. 1 autorského zákona má Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně právo na uzavření licenční smlouvy o užití školního díla v rozsahu § 12 odst. 4 autorského zákona;
- podle § 60 odst. 2 a 3 mohu užít své dílo – bakalářskou práci – nebo poskytnout licenci k jejímu využití jen s předchozím písemným souhlasem Univerzity Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně, která je oprávněna v takovém případě ode mne požadovat přiměřený příspěvek na úhradu nákladů, které byly Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně na vytvoření díla vynaloženy (až do jejich skutečné výše);
- pokud bylo k vypracování bakalářské práce využito softwaru poskytnutého Univerzitou Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně nebo jinými subjekty pouze ke studijním a výzkumným účelům (tj. k nekomerčnímu využití), nelze výsledky bakalářské práce využít ke komerčním účelům;
- pokud je výstupem bakalářské práce jakýkoliv softwarový produkt, považují se za součást práce rovněž i zdrojové kódy, popř. soubory, ze kterých se projekt skládá; neodevzdání této součásti může být důvodem k neobhájení práce.

Prohlašuji, že

- jsem na bakalářské práci pracoval(a) samostatně a použitou literaturu jsem řádně citoval(a); v případě publikace výsledků budu uveden(a) jako spoluautor;
- odevzdaná verze bakalářské práce a verze elektronická nahraná do IS/STAG jsou obsahově totožné.

Ve Zlíně, dne

.....
podpis autora

ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá reprezentací Elona Muska na sociální síti X (dříve Twitter) z perspektivy kritické diskurzivní analýzy. Cílem této práce je zjistit, jak byl Elon Musk na platformě reprezentován a jak se tato reprezentace měnila v obdobích před akvizicí, během akvizice a po akvizici, a to na základě příspěvků s vysokým dosahem (měřeno počtem lajků). Kritická diskurzivní analýza byla provedena podle modelu Normana Fairclougha na celkem 75 příspěvcích z platformy X (25 z každého období). Výsledky ukázaly, že reprezentace Elona Muska je převážně negativní a nejčastěji se zaměřuje na jeho bohatství, obchodní praktiky a zneužívání postavení a moci.

Klíčová slova: kritická diskurzivní analýza, Elon Musk, sociální média, twitter, X

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with the representation of Elon Musk on the social network X (formerly Twitter) from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. The aim of this thesis is to determine how Elon Musk was represented on the platform and how this representation changed in the periods before the acquisition, during the acquisition, and after the acquisition, based on posts with high reach (measured by the number of likes). A critical discourse analysis was carried out according to Norman Fairclough's model on a total of 75 posts from X (25 from each period). The results showed that the representation of Elon Musk is predominantly negative and most frequently focuses on his wealth, business practices, and abuse of position and power.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Elon Musk, social media, twitter, X

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Shurma for her support, patience and guidance during the completion of my bachelor thesis.

I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	11
I THEORETICAL PART	13
1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	14
1.1 LANGUAGE, TEXT AND DISCOURSE	14
1.1.1 Language	14
1.1.2 Text	15
1.1.3 Discourse.....	15
1.2 IDEOLOGY	15
1.2.1 Ideological Square.....	15
1.3 POWER	16
1.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES IN CDA	17
1.4.1 Socio-Cognitive Approach (Van Dijk)	17
1.4.2 Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak).....	18
1.4.3 Three-dimensional approach (Fairclough).....	19
2 SOCIAL MEDIA.....	20
2.1 TWITTER (X)	20
3 ELON MUSK, TWITTER AND SOCIAL MEDIA.....	22
3.1.1 The Acquisition.....	22
3.1.2 From Bussiness to Politics	23
3.1.3 Sentiment shift towards Elon Musk on social media	23
II ANALYTICAL PART	24
4 MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	25
4.1 OVERALL SENTIMENT IN POSTS ABOUT ELON MUSK	26
4.2 USER ENGAGEMENT	26
5 THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL ANALYSIS	28
5.1 DESCRIPTION.....	28
5.1.1 <i>Labelling</i>	28
5.1.2 <i>Overwording</i>	29
5.1.3 Grammar: Pronouns, and Modality.....	30
5.1.4 <i>Use of Pronouns</i>	30
5.1.5 <i>Modality</i>	31
5.1.6 Rhetorical Devices	32
5.1.7 <i>Metaphors</i>	32
5.1.8 <i>Irony and Sarcasm</i>	32
5.2 INTERPRETATION (DISCOURSE PRACTICE)	33
5.2.1 Interdiscursivity.....	33
5.2.2 Cultural and historical references.....	34
5.2.3 Presupposition and Member Resources	36
5.3 EXPLANATION STAGE: SOCIAL CONTEXT AND IDEOLOGY IN DISCOURSE	38
5.3.1 Critique of Capitalism and Economic Inequality.....	38
5.3.2 Power, Domination, and Democratic Concerns.....	38
5.3.3 Challenging Hegemonic Ideals	39

5.3.4 Discursive Shifts Toward Social Change	39
CONCLUSION.....	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43
LIST OF FIGURES	48
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	49
APPENDIX - POSTS	50

INTRODUCTION

In today's media landscape, social-networking sites are key arenas where public figures are celebrated, criticised, and defined. X (formerly Twitter) stands out because its real-time feed and character length limit favour brief, eye-catching messages that can spread worldwide in seconds.

Elon Musk illustrates this dynamic. As the chief executive of several technology companies and, since October 2022, the owner of X, he both shapes and is shaped by the platform's discourse. More than 200 million followers ensure that every post sparks widespread engagement. Although recent sentiment studies note a rise in negative reactions after his bid for Twitter (Schmidt et al., 2023; Bonilla et al., 2023), those studies pay little attention to the language choices that generate such reactions.

Addressing that gap, the thesis analyses how X users talk about Musk in the past 5 years. A corpus of 75 high-engagement posts each with at least 40,000 likes and evenly divided among the pre-acquisition, acquisition and post-acquisition periods serves as the dataset. Guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis, the thesis describes linguistic features, interprets the production and interpretation processes, and explains how recurring patterns reflect broader social tensions. Particular attention is given to lexical choice, grammatical patterning, and rhetorical strategies users employ talking about the tycoon, tracking how these elements construct and contest Musk's public image over time.

The thesis is organised in two parts. The theoretical section describes concepts from critical discourse analysis, reviews current scholarship on social-media communication, and places Musk's involvement with X in socio-economic context. The analytical section outlines data collection explains the methodological framework and presents the findings.

The findings show that posts about Elon Musk on X consistently portray him as a symbol of broader issues around wealth, power, and democracy. Users apply negative labels, emphasize his immense wealth through money-related vocabulary, and use rhetorical strategies such as irony, sarcasm, metaphor, and cultural references. These linguistic patterns are not coincidental but reflect deeper social concerns. Throughout the three periods, Musk's representation remains predominantly critical, though specific focuses shift in response to events surrounding the acquisition. Overall, the discourse about Musk reveals how users

critique larger issues of economic inequality, private influence over communication platforms, and the erosion democracy.

I THEORETICAL PART

1 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) is an approach to studying language that focuses on how power, ideology, and inequality are manifested in discourse by analyzing how these elements are reflected in both spoken and written texts, as well as in visual communication (Statham 2022, 10; Wodak and Meyer 2009, 3). The origins of CDA lie in critical linguistics (CL), which began to emerge at the end of the 1970s (Machin and Mayr 2012, 2). While CL and CDA are often used to mean the same thing, the more recent term critical discourse studies (CDS) is preferred nowadays (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 1). CDA builds on the foundation of critical linguistics, which demonstrated that grammar and semantics are not neutral, but carry ideological functions in how texts represent people and events (Statham 2022, 11). Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun van Dijk are often mentioned as the founders of CDA (Machin and Mayr 2012, 4). Below I will focus on terms central to CDA such as discourse, ideology and power.

1.1 Language, text and discourse

To define discourse, it is first necessary to establish a definition of language and text.

1.1.1 Language

One of the most influential figures in linguistics, Ferdinand De Saussure, defines language as “a system of signs that express ideas” (De Saussure 1959, 16). De Saussure (1959, 13) introduces the term “parole” to denote speaking, which encompasses the practical use of language. However, De Saussure (1959, 14) considers language use to be a purely personal expression. Contrary to De Saussure’s notion of language as something individual, Norman Fairclough approaches “language use as social practice” (Fairclough 2013, 92). A *social practice*, in the context of CDA, refers to how language use, whether spoken or written, both influences and is influenced by the social context in which it occurs. Language is influenced by society, yet it also plays a role in shaping society (Fairclough 2013, 92). Through language, knowledge is developed, the identities of people are established and connections between people and groups are shaped. Language can therefore help maintain the existing social order or contribute to its change (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 258). For example, the perception of Elon Musk is shaped by language use and its surrounding context, which can either reinforce his public image or undermine it.

1.1.2 Text

Text is the concrete outcome of a discourse and typically captures an instance of communication in linguistic form. This could be a written document, an audio recording, or even a multimedia piece with images or music (e.g., Tweet/Post) (Bloor and Bloor 2013, 7).

1.1.3 Discourse

Discourse goes beyond the idea of a text by including the full communicative process. It includes not only the use and interpretation of language but also the influence of social and cultural contexts. It reflects how abstract language systems, such as grammar and meaning, are applied in real-world situations (Bloor and Bloor 2013, 7; Simpson et al. 2019, 5). Discourses function as frameworks of knowledge that allow for the representation of aspects of reality and those representations are grounded mainly in people's actions and practices (Van Leeuwen 2005, 95; Van Leeuwen 2008, 4). Because reality can be understood in various ways, different discourses may exist, each providing a distinct way of making sense of the same aspect of reality (Van Leeuwen 2005, 95). As different discourses construct reality in distinct ways, they can express opposing viewpoints and lead to polarization which connects to the concept of ideology and ideological square.

1.2 Ideology

Van Dijk (2012, 5) defines ideologies as “the fundamental beliefs of a group and its members.” These shared beliefs influence how group members perceive reality and serve as the foundation for their social practices (Van Dijk 2012, 6). Among these practices, language use and discourse are particularly significant, as they not only reflect the ideologies of a group but also contribute to how ideologies are acquired, learned, or modified (Van Dijk 2012, 6). Rather than individual opinions, ideologies consist of beliefs shared among a particular group which are connected to who they are as a group, their social position, objectives and connections to other communities (Van Dijk 2012, 8).

1.2.1 Ideological Square

The *ideological square* is one of the frameworks for identifying ideologies in discourse. Ideologies shape group identities by influencing how people define themselves and others. A key aspect of this is the “Us vs. Them” distinction, where one group emphasizes their own

strengths while portraying the other group in a negative light (Van Dijk 2012, 32-33). This framework operates on four key principles (Van Dijk 2012, 34):

- Highlight the good qualities of our group.
- Highlight the bad qualities of the other group.
- Downplay the bad qualities of our group.
- Downplay the good qualities of the other group.

The Ideological Square allows to analyze discourse at multiple levels, including semantic and lexical structures. By using opposing strategies—highlighting or downplaying certain aspects—discourse can vary in form, from explicit statements to subtle cues like euphemisms or exaggerations (Van Dijk 2012, 34).

1.3 Power

Van Dijk (2008, 9) sees power as the ability of one group to control another. If this control serves the interests of the dominant group while harming the subordinate group, it qualifies as power abuse. CDA focuses on this negative aspect of power, referred to as domination that creates inequality, injustice in form of illegitimate uses of power (Van Dijk 2008, 18). For power to be exercised, it must be supported by resources that give individuals or groups an advantage. These resources such as wealth, status, and authority are highly valued in society but not available to everyone. When power is backed by these resources, it functions as a form of social control (e.g. shaping public opinion through mass media ownership) (Van Dijk 2008, 29-30).

Fairclough (2015, 73) differentiates between *power in* discourse, which appears in actual interactions, and *power behind* discourse, which involves the systems and structures that shape those interactions. Power in discourse allows people in power to control content, roles, and relationships of the powerless during communication (Fairclough 2015, 75–76). In mass media, such as television, this power becomes *hidden*. The discourse is one-directional, with producers speaking to a passive, generalized audience. Since they cannot adapt to individuals, media producers construct messages aimed at an idealized subject position that real audiences must interpret from (Fairclough 2015, 78). This leads to power behind discourse, which refers to how the structure of discourse itself is held together by unseen power forces (Fairclough 2015, 83). Fairclough (2015, 88) illustrates the concept of power behind discourse in medical settings, where doctors appear to control the interaction,

but their communication is shaped by institutional rules dictated from hidden forces above. KhosraviNik (2014, 287–288) contrasts this with digital media (e.g., Twitter), where users take on active roles. Though institutional power may remain, participatory platforms give rise to stronger power in discourse from below.

1.4 Methodological Approaches in CDA

In the field of CDA, there is no single unified approach, theory, or methodology. Instead, CDA encompasses a variety of approaches, often rooted in distinct theoretical foundations and aimed at different research goals (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 5). However, what unifies these approaches is their focus on uncovering ideologies and power through analysis of written or spoken texts (Wodak and Meyer 2015, 4).

1.4.1 Socio-Cognitive Approach (Van Dijk)

Van Dijk (2015, 64) views the socio-cognitive approach (SCA) as a framework that places cognition as the main link between discourse and society. Cognition consists of cognitive structures such as mental models and social cognition, which provide the internal resources individuals use to interpret, produce, and engage with discourse (Van Dijk 2015, 66).

According to Van Dijk (2014, 21), knowledge is both socially and individually constructed. It develops within epistemic communities, which determine what is regarded as valid belief based on historical, cultural, and situational standards. He defines epistemic communities as “collectivities of social actors sharing the same knowledge” (Van Dijk 2014, 147), emphasizing their role in shaping what members consider to be legitimate or credible.

He distinguishes between social knowledge, referring to beliefs collectively accepted within a community, and personal knowledge, which is shaped by individual experience but evaluated according to those same communal standards (Van Dijk 2014, 22). Discourse depends on both forms of knowledge, as it is produced and understood through shared frameworks and requires substantial amounts of socially shared information to function effectively (Van Dijk 2015, 68).

1.4.2 Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak)

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) was originally applied to political discourse for analyzing how language works in political contexts (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 26). DHA looks at discourses in diachrony with the aim of including as much background knowledge as possible about past events and the broader social and political contexts in which the discourse takes place (Wodak 2001, 65).

While DHA draws inspiration from critical theory, it places less emphasis on abstract, overarching frameworks. Instead, its main focus lies in historical analysis, where context is primarily understood as historical (Wodak and Meyer 2009, 26).

This focus on context is broken down into four levels (Wodak 2001, 65):

- Immediate context: the direct linguistic and textual surroundings of a given discourse.
- Intertextual and interdiscursive context: connections and overlaps among different utterances, textual forms, and types of discourses.
- Situational context: external social factors and institutional circumstances specific to the discourse event.
- Sociohistorical context: the wider historical and sociopolitical conditions framing and influencing discursive practices.

The historical context is always considered an essential part of the interpretation process in DHA, and it is integrated into the overall analysis of texts and discourses (Wodak 2001,70)

1.4.3 Three-dimensional approach (Fairclough)

Fairclough (2013, 94) uses a three-dimensional model for analysing discourse from a critical perspective. The central part of his model is the discursive event, a concrete utterance. Each event contains three distinct layers (see Fig. 1):

1. The first layer is purely textual and focuses on the textual content of the particular event.
2. The second layer concerns *discourse practice*, encompassing how the text is created and understood.
3. The last layer considers the event as an element of social practice.

Discourse practice creates a connection between text and social practice, as it not only reflects but also shapes the social context. The processes of creating and interpreting texts influence social practices, while simultaneously, social practices guide how texts are created and understood. The production process affects the form and content of the text, while the interpretative process relies on specific cues within the text to construct meaning (Fairclough 2013, 94-96).

Each layer is interconnected with the three stages of CDA. Specifically, the textual component corresponds to the *description stage*, which involves analyzing the linguistic aspects of texts. The discourse practice component is linked to the *interpretation stage*, focusing on the creation and interpretation of texts. Finally, the social practice component correlates with the *explanation stage*, which examines the broader social context and its influence on the discourse and vice versa (Fairclough 2013, 132).

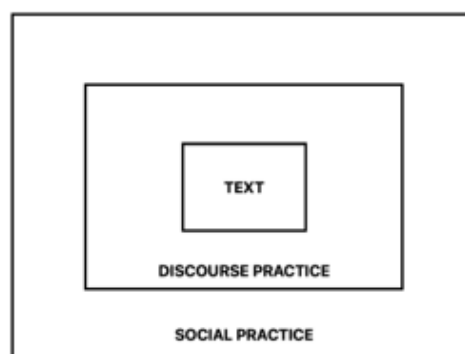


Figure 1: The three-dimensional model (Fairclough 1992, 73).

2 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are online platforms and applications designed to foster communication and engagement between users (Spilioti 2018, 310). Users who engage in these interactions do so through computer-mediated communication (CMC), which involves communication via networked devices (Spilioti 2018, 311). Platforms that facilitate such interactions are referred to as social networking sites (SNS) (KhosraviNik 2023, 2). These include widely recognized platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter).

While social media thrives on user interaction, it is rooted in a broader shift in online engagement often described as Web 2.0. Compared to the earlier static, consumption-based model (Web 1.0), Web 2.0 is a more dynamic, participatory space where users create, share, and modify content (Page et al. 2014, 8). This transformation in online communication has also blurred the boundaries between content producers and consumers, dismantling the hierarchical control over how information is disseminated and represented. Unlike traditional mass media, where messages flowed in a single direction from a few sources to a broad audience, the new social media communicative paradigm shaped by Web 2.0 enables more decentralized exchange. This shift fosters fluid, unpredictable patterns of discourse, where users actively shape narratives rather than passively consuming content (KhosraviNik 2023, 2).

2.1 Twitter (X)

Twitter is a microblogging social network, launched in 2006, that allows people to create short text updates called tweets (Squires 2016, 239). Microblogging platforms like Twitter (now X) are a type of social media characterized by their post length restrictions, allowing users to share brief updates with an online audience (Zappavigna 2014, 139).

In 2025, regular users of X are limited to 280 characters per post (X n.d.). Beyond simply posting, X like other social media platforms relies on a range of digital practices that shape user interaction and discourse. Engagement on these platforms extends beyond written language to include multimodal elements and platform-specific behaviors, such as likes, shares, and hashtags, which contribute to meaning-making and community-building (Esposito and KhosraviNik 2023, 2).

A post on X consists of two main components: *data* and *metadata*. Data refers to the actual content of the post, including text, images, videos, and any other shared media. Metadata, on the other hand, provides contextual information about the post, such as the time

and date of publication, the username of the poster, the number of likes, shares, and comments, as well as engagement metrics that influence its visibility (Page et al. 2014, 34). On X, in particular, user interaction is primarily facilitated through liking, reposting, and commenting, which serve as key mechanisms for discourse participation and visibility.

On X, the number of likes and reposts a post receives is a key measure of its reach and potential virality. The platform's reposting feature allows content to spread rapidly, sometimes beyond the control of its original author. In addition to user engagement, the linguistic features of a post also play a significant role in how often it is shared. Emotionally charged content, particularly messages that evoke anxiety or anger, tends to be shared more (Saquete et al. 2022 1-2)

This connection between emotion and virality has been further supported by research on political communication on Twitter (see Pivecka et al. 2022). A study analyzing tweets found that tweets which evoked high-arousal emotions such as anger, anxiety, or awe had a significantly higher probability of being retweeted. In fact, messages characterized by high emotional arousal were shared 17% more often than those with low arousal (Pivecka et al. 2022, 4).

3 ELON MUSK, TWITTER AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Elon Musk, one of the richest individuals in the world, has become one of the most influential and controversial figures on social media—particularly on X, which he owns. As of March 2025, he has reached over 200 million followers, making him the most followed user on the platform.

Elon Musk's relationship with Twitter (X) traces back to December 2017, when Musk expressed casual affection for the platform, tweeting simply: "I love Twitter." Within that same tweet, a user commented, "You should buy it then," to which Musk responded, "How much is it?" This playful exchange was an early speculative indication of Musk's possible interest in Twitter (Mankarious et al. 2022; Elon Musk 2017). Musk also maintained a close relationship with Twitter's former CEO, Jack Dorsey. At one event, Dorsey humorously asked Musk via a real-time video call: "If you were running Twitter, what would you do?" and additionally remarked, "By the way, do you want to run Twitter?" (Locke 2020; Mary Jordan 2020).

3.1.1 The Acquisition

Musk's official involvement with Twitter began in April 2022, when he became a board member after acquiring a 9.2% stake in the company, closely following his public criticism of Twitter's commitment to free speech principles and democracy (Huddleston 2022; Elon Musk 2022a). Shortly after that, on April 14, Musk made an offer to buy Twitter, emphasizing the importance of free speech as a foundational reason for his interest (Roumeliotis et.al, 2022). At the end of April, Twitter accepted his offer of 44 billion dollars for the platform (Brown 2022). However, this deal took a turn in May when Musk announced that the acquisition was briefly paused until he received confirmation that less than 5% of accounts consist of non-real users (BBC, 2022a). The situation further deteriorated in July when Musk sought to terminate the deal, citing insufficient information provided by Twitter regarding non-real accounts (BBC, 2022b). A few days later, in response to Musk's move, Twitter filed a lawsuit against him to enforce the original agreement and compel him to complete the acquisition (Conger and Hirsch 2022a). Eventually in October, instead of breaking the deal, Musk made the same offer of 44 billion dollars to Twitter again (Conger, et al. 2022). The longlasting deal was finally completed at the end of October with Musk tweeting "the bird is freed" afterwards (Conger and Hirsch 2022b; Elon Musk 2022b).

3.1.2 From Business to Politics

Since his initial engagement, Musk's presence on the platform grew notably. Compared to his peers in the technology industry—such as Apple CEO Tim Cook and Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos—Musk became one of the most prolific users of Twitter (Austin and Bansal, 2018). However, Musk's Twitter feed evolved over time, transitioning from predominantly business-focused content to increasingly controversial topics including politics and societal issues. The *Wall Street Journal* analysis of Musk's tweets from 2019 to 2024 highlights this shift, observing a marked increase in his engagement with politically charged themes (Fuller et al. 2024). Further emphasizing this evolution, an analysis by *The Economist* covering Musk's tweets from 2013 to 2024 revealed a decrease in business-related posts (from approximately 30–50% in 2016 to just about 11% by 2024), coinciding with a notable rise in political content (from around 4% to 13%) (The Economist, 2024).

3.1.3 Sentiment shift towards Elon Musk on social media

A study (Schmidt et al. 2023, 5-6) focusing specifically on Twitter indicates a clear decline in positive sentiment and a notable increase in negative sentiment towards Elon Musk surrounding his acquisition of the platform. Prior to the acquisition, tweets related to Musk or Twitter were relatively balanced in terms of sentiment, with slightly more positive tweets. However, from the date of the acquisition on October 27, 2022, there was a significant shift, resulting in consistently higher numbers of negative tweets compared to positive ones, reflecting heightened public criticism and debate regarding Musk's changes to Twitter's management and policies.

Another study (Bonilla et al., 2023) analyzes sentiment on Reddit from 2008 to 2022 and focuses on how major events in Elon Musk's public and professional life affected his perception online. The analysis reveals that each year saw a higher number of negative than positive comments, with a particularly noticeable rise in negative sentiment starting in 2018. This trend continued and escalated during Musk's acquisition of Twitter in 2022, which sparked a wide range of public reactions. While some Reddit users framed the purchase as a sign of Musk's boldness and influence, others expressed concerns about the growing power he held over digital communication spaces (Bonilla et al., 2023, 5).

II ANALYTICAL PART

4 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter outlines the methodology employed for the practical analysis and explains the process of selecting the dataset. The analytical part is based mainly on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, structured into the stages of description, interpretation, and explanation. In the description stage, the textual features of the selected posts about Elon Musk are examined, focusing on vocabulary choices (labelling), grammatical patterns (pronouns and modality), and rhetorical devices such as metaphors, irony, and sarcasm. The interpretation stage analyzes how the posts are produced and interpreted by users through interdiscursivity, cultural and historical references, presupposition, and member resources to uncover underlying assumptions and knowledge structures. In the explanation stage, the findings are connected to broader social and ideological contexts, identifying dominant ideological struggles such as critiques of capitalism and inequality, concerns about democratic erosion, and challenges to hegemonic discourses. Because the posts analyzed were posted within the historical timeframe corresponding to three periods related to X, the analysis also incorporates Wodak's diachronic approach to trace shifts in meaning over time. In addition, Van Dijk's concept of socially shared knowledge from the socio-cognitive approach supports the interpretation stage, as shared cognitive resources guide how readers make sense of the posts.

The dataset comprises 75 posts collected from the platform X using the platform's advanced search function. To ensure both relevance and visibility, each selected post received a minimum of 40,000 likes. Furthermore, each post was required to contain at least one of the following keywords: Elon, Musk, or @elonmusk.

The posts were collected based on their virality over three distinct periods:

- Pre-Acquisition Period (January 1, 2010 – April 14, 2022)
- Acquisition Period (April 14, 2022 – October 27, 2022)
- Post-Acquisition Period (October 28, 2022 – February 28, 2025)

Within each period 25 viral posts were selected. Before applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model, an overview of the dataset is provided to highlight general patterns in engagement and sentiment across the selected posts. These initial observations serve to contextualize the posts and offer insight into how users on X react to and discuss Elon Musk.

Identifying these patterns helps establish a broader understanding of the discourse, which is then examined in greater depth through above mentioned stages of the CDA model.

4.1 Overall sentiment in posts about Elon Musk

The overall sentiment toward Elon Musk in the analyzed sample of 75 posts is predominantly negative. This finding aligns with previous research on public sentiment toward Musk on social media platforms (Schmidt et al. 2023; Bonilla et al. 2023). Among the collected posts, 81% expressed a negative sentiment, 12% were neutral, and only 7% conveyed a positive sentiment. Sentiment was assessed manually by reading each post and classifying it based on its dominant tone. Posts that criticized Musk, used sarcasm, or framed him negatively were considered negative. Posts that presented information without strong judgment were considered neutral. Posts that expressed admiration, praise, or support were considered positive. The distribution of sentiment across the dataset is illustrated in the Figure 2.

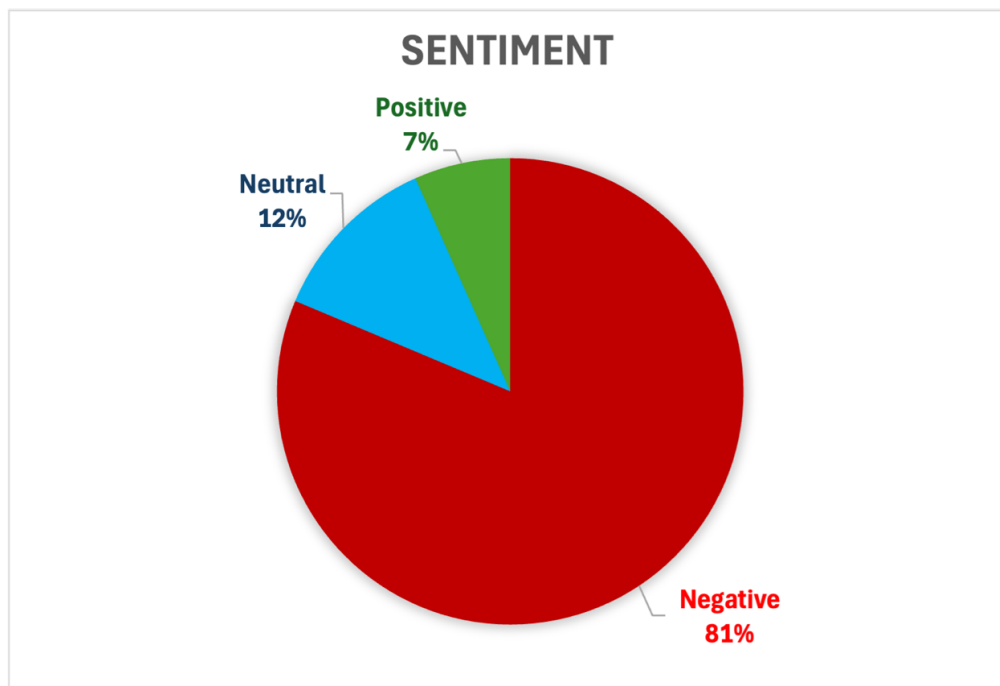


Figure 2: Sentiment towards Elon Musk in posts

4.2 User engagement

User engagement was measured in terms of the mean and median number of comments, reposts, and likes across three periods: pre-acquisition, acquisition, and post-acquisition. During the acquisition phase, the highest levels of engagement were recorded, with a mean

of 7,828 comments, 34,960 reposts, and 225,280 likes. In comparison, the pre-acquisition period showed lower averages—2,564 comments, 18,516 reposts, and 131,160 likes. Post-acquisition posts had a mean of 7,643 comments, 25,400 reposts, and 212,500 likes. Across all periods, the overall averages were 6,012 comments, 26,292 reposts, and 189,813 likes. Although each post had to have at least 40,000 likes to be included, the final dataset contains many posts with much higher numbers, showing even greater reach and popularity across the platform. Figure 3 provides an overview of how interaction levels varied over time.

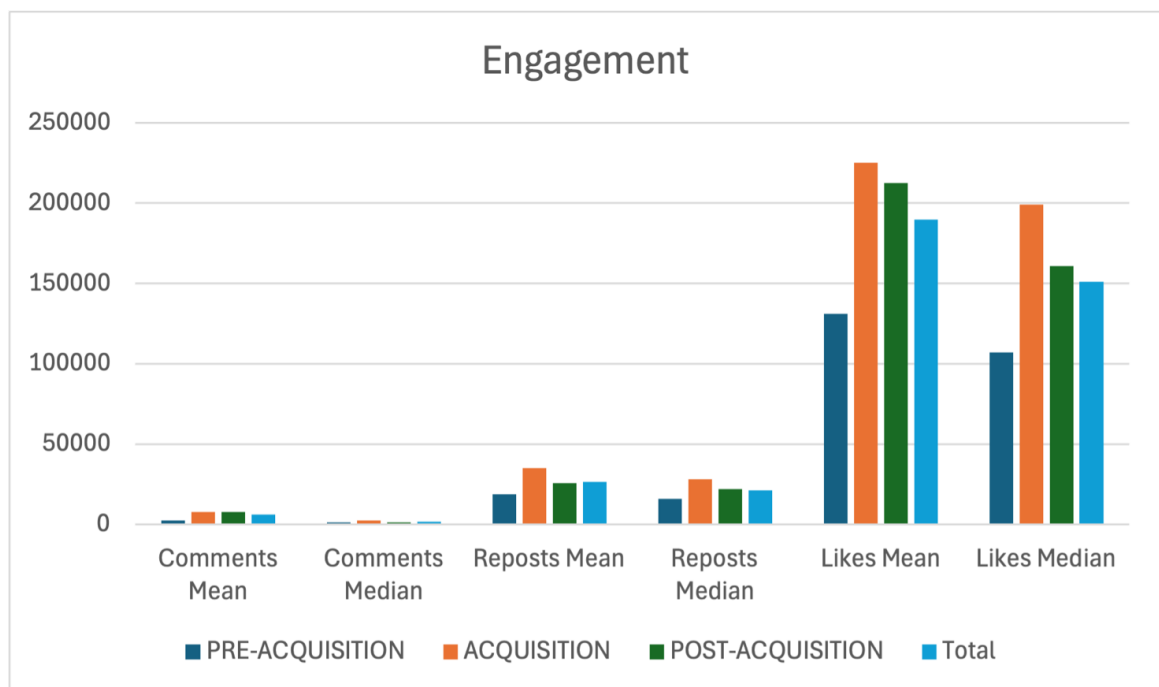


Figure 3: Metadata of the posts

5 THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL ANALYSIS

5.1 Description

The first stage of the analysis focuses on the linguistic features of the selected posts across all three periods. By examining elements such as lexical choices, grammar, and rhetorical devices, the analysis reveals how Elon Musk is represented and how language contributes to broader ideological and social perspectives of the X users.

5.1.1 Labelling

Labelling in the posts involves using nouns and noun phrases to frame Elon Musk negatively and highlight perceived flaws in his character and actions. Labels, such as “dumb guy’s idea of a smart guy,” “fucking moron,” “narcissistic assholes,” “seriously rich assholes,” “miserable little man,” “putin-loving dipshit,” and “American gestalpo,” reveals strong negative attitude toward Elon Musk in the analysed posts. Emotionally charged and evaluative language is used to frame him in a strongly negative light (11 out of 75 posts). Labels with taboo words mock or challenge Musk’s competence, intellect, morality and power.

Prior to the acquisition, users mocked Musk in several ways. They said he was “a dumb guy’s idea of a smart guy” [7] and called him “a fucking moron” and “literally a figurehead,” meaning he takes credit for Tesla’s work without doing the engineering [13]. Another post labels him a “union-busting, abusive employer” because of fights with workers [16]. Musk and other billionaires are also called “narcissistic assholes” for spending billions on space instead of helping people on Earth [17]. Only one post is positive, praising him as one of the “greatest entrepreneurs” [14].

Throughout the acquisition phase, the money-centred takeover sharpens the insults. Musk and other billionaires are labelled “seriously rich assholes” while their wealth is contrasted with global problems [46]. Another post reduces him to a single role, “capitalist,” adding that such capitalists “end up aligning with fascists to maintain their wealth and limit the power of the working classes” [47].

After the acquisition, criticism centres on Musk’s political interventions and the changes he makes to X’s policies and features. In one post a user calls him a “miserable little man” for removing simple platform features [57]. Labels related to his political intervention escalate: users label him as “terrible president” [73], “putin-loving dipshit” [74], and

“American gestalpo [75],” likening his influence to authoritarian repression. Overall, the labels follow Musk’s changing public image: before the takeover they mock his intellect and business behaviour, during the deal they hit his money and power, after the deal they target his influence in politics. This mirrors the move from business talk to political talk in Musk’s own posts reported by the Wall Street Journal and The Economist (section 3.1.2).

5.1.2 *Overwording*

Overwording describes the use of too many closely related terms, indicating a subject that is the focus of ideological struggle (Fairclough 1989, 115). Overwording is prominent across all three periods, especially related to money and financial practices. Words specifically related to money and economic practices include: “billion” (28), “billionaire/s” (9), “rich” (10), “money” (12), “tax/taxes” (15), “wealth” (14). These terms appear a total of 88 times across the analyzed posts, and 37 out of the 75 posts contain at least one of these money-related terms, highlighting a significant focus on financial aspects in discourse surrounding Elon Musk.

In the pre-acquisition period, users employ money-related language to criticise Musk’s business actions: “Elon Musk furloughed thousands of factory workers and ordered pay cuts... Billionaires aren't the answer.” [4] and “He grew up rich and got richer by taking government money.” [23]. Posts then highlight the surge in his personal fortune: “Wealth of Elon Musk on March 18, 2020: \$24.5 billion ... Our job: Raise the minimum wage to at least \$15, tax the rich & create an economy for all,” and [10], “He is worth \$200 billion.” [12], and “\$253 billion — that's not normal.” [20]. Finally, one post presents a positive view: “The greatest entrepreneurs aren't driven by money; it's a byproduct of success.” [14]. Together these examples show that talk about money is the first place people argue over how to see Musk.

During the acquisition period, users tie money-related vocabulary to Musk’s Twitter bid to his broken \$6 billion pledge to end hunger: “Remember when the head of the UN World Food Program laid out a plan... and then he never gave them a cent but wants to spend \$43 billion to buy Twitter.” [27] and “Elon Musk told the United Nations he would give them \$6 billion... Now he’s buying Twitter for \$45 billion.” [34].

The familiar wealth chart places Musk beside Bezos and Zuckerberg: “Wealth of Elon Musk 2012: \$2 billion ... Three words: tax the rich.” [28], while posts [48] and [49]

criticise his increase in wealth. These examples shift the money debate from counting his wealth to judging how he he spends it.

In the post-acquisition period, money talk mostly disappears. Only two posts bring back the wealth chart that sets Musk beside Jeff Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg and contrasts their huge fortunes with the frozen minimum wage: “Wealth of Elon Musk 2012: \$2 billion 2023: \$248.9 billion ... Three words: tax the rich.” [62] and “Wealth of Elon Musk 2012: \$2 billion 2024: \$204.5 billion ... Three words: tax the rich.” [68].

Across all three periods, the users change the focus on Musk and money-related issues, but the message is the same: billionaires keep getting richer, wages stay flat, and the rich should be taxed.

5.1.3 Grammar: Pronouns, and Modality

Grammatical structures play a significant role in shaping how agency, responsibility, and group identity are represented in discourse. Relevant aspects observed in the dataset are pronoun usage and modality.

5.1.4 Use of Pronouns

The pronouns “we,” and “our” serve as a clear marker of group identity and are used to create opposing groups. They appear in 13 of the 75 posts, separating ordinary users (“we”) from Elon Musk and other billionaires.

Before the purchase of Twitter was announced, authors used inclusive pronouns to invite shared reflection and to argue for economic fairness: see posts [2], [10], [12], [19]. For example, post [2], “we REALLY need to understand that,” calls on readers to reassess Musk’s character, further strengthening a sense of community and shared concern among users. post [10] repeats the call, “Our job: raise the minimum wage and tax the rich.” Post [19] states, “We’ve been paying our taxes this whole time, bro,” aligning the speaker with the general public and contrasting their obligations with Musk’s perceived tax avoidance.

During the takeover, the focus shifts from critique to mobilisation: see posts [28], [37], [41], [42], [44]. Post [37] insists, “We need a wealth tax,” linking shared identity to a policy demand. post [41] calls for collective resistance: “instead of leaving Twitter we should all block Elon Musk.” Post [43] warns that billionaire control of “our most vital

platforms” endangers democratic debate, while post [44] illustrates exclusion with “We’re blocked by Elon Musk.”

After the deal, inclusive pronouns reappear in updated wealth charts “Our job: raise the minimum wage and tax the rich” [62], [68] and in post [72], which questions whether we still live in a democracy or have entered oligarchy. Across all periods, these pronouns unite people and call for the collective action against the billionaires (Musk, Zuckerberg, Bezos).

5.1.5 Modality

Modality, which marks certainty, necessity, or obligation, shapes how the posts criticise Elon Musk. Modality allows users to frame their messages by expressing probabilities, obligations, or inclinations (Statham 2022, 57). A key distinction is between *epistemic modality*, concerned with the likelihood of events, and *deontic modality*, focused on duties and necessities (Fairclough 2003, 219). In the dataset, 25 out of 75 posts contain modal verbs such as “can,” “could,” “should,” “need to,” “must,” or “would.” Of these, 5 posts rely only on deontic modality (clear obligation or necessity), 17 posts use only epistemic or (ability or possibility), and 3 posts combine both kinds.

Deontic forms give direct orders or moral imperatives. For example, post [21] states, “perhaps he should pay his fair share of taxes,” while post [2] urges, “we REALLY need to understand that,” stressing collective duty. Mixed posts merge the two meanings. Post [33] first points to Musk’s ability, “He can damn well afford to pay,” then issues a duty, “We need to...” Post [46] predicts an outcome, “tax would slap Elon...,” before declaring that the rich “need to pay their fair share.”

Epistemic modals highlight possibility or capacity. Post [17] notes that billionaires “could tackle child hunger, climate change...,” underscoring a responsibility they ignore. Post [15] imagines, “Nikola Tesla would’ve hated Elon Musk,” while post [9] argues Musk “would be worth nothing without \$4.9 billion in corporate welfare,” framing critique through hypothetical scenarios.

These posts together use modality to link Musk’s financial ability to moral obligation. Deontic forms stress what he should do, like paying taxes, while epistemic forms highlight what he could achieve or imagine as alternative outcomes. Together, they frame Musk’s actions as a failure to meet ethical and civic responsibilities.

5.1.6 Rhetorical Devices

A variety of rhetorical devices are employed across the posts to create persuasive, impactful, and often emotionally resonant messages. These include metaphors, irony and sarcasm which serve to strengthen the speaker's position and influence audience perception. Irony occurs when the intended meaning is the opposite of the literal expression, while sarcasm is just a type of irony aiming to mock a certain person (Filik et al. 2019, 122). A metaphor, in contrast, allows one concept to be understood through another (Simpson et al. 2019, 45).

5.1.7 *Metaphors*

Metaphors are a common device used to frame Musk in culturally recognizable ways. Posts like [2] and [8] compare him to fictional characters—Tony Stark and Lex Luthor—which not only create vivid images but also position Musk within moral and ideological narratives. While Tony Stark represents innovation and heroism, Lex Luthor symbolizes greed and villainy. The shift from one figure to the other marks a decline in public admiration and reflects broader disillusionment. Similarly, post [7] uses a metaphor to critique Musk's perceived intellect, stating he is "a dumb guy's idea of a smart guy," implying that his genius is merely performative and appealing only to those lacking critical understanding that Musk.

5.1.8 *Irony and Sarcasm*

Irony and sarcasm are traced in 5 out of 75 posts. Irony, where the intended meaning is the opposite of the literal wording, appears in posts that subtly mock Musk's extreme wealth. For instance, post [11] states, "Elon Musk is now worth \$208 billion. You want to know how he did it? He skipped 34.67 billion lattes," exaggerating the idea of wealth accumulation to highlight its absurdity. Similarly, post [12] asks, "how do we sell him," treating Musk's personal worth as a commodified object and creating a contrast between literal phrasing and critical intent. Post [18] notes, "Elon Musk made \$36 billion yesterday. That's more than most people make in a month," understating a vast disparity to achieve an ironic effect. Sarcasm, defined as irony specifically aimed at mocking a person, is evident in posts like [31] and [55]. Post [31] states, "Musk spending \$43 billion to stop getting bullied on Twitter when he could've simply been less annoying is insane," ridiculing Musk's motives rather than using opposite meaning. In post [55], the phrase "what a humble genius he is" sarcastically mocks Musk's contradictory platform decisions. Across these posts, irony highlights structural inequalities, while sarcasm directly targets Musk's behavior and persona.

5.2 Interpretation (Discourse Practice)

Building upon the language features identified in the description stage, this section turns to the second stage of the model: discourse practice. This stage focuses on how the posts are produced, and interpreted, not in isolation, but within the broader social and cultural context of online discourse. Drawing on concepts such as *interdiscursivity*, *allusions*, *presupposition*, and *member resources*, this analysis explores how meanings are constructed and understood by users on X, and what background knowledge and ideological positions are necessary for such interpretations to be made.

On X, posts are created by a wide range of people, from regular users to public figures. Many posts come from everyday users, but some are written by well-known people with big audiences, including politicians like Bernie Sanders [9], [10], [73] and Elizabeth Warren [37], both U.S. Senators, as well as Tim Walz [73], the Governor of Minnesota. There are also celebrities like Stephen King [59], [74], a bestselling author, MrBeast [1], the most subscriber YouTuber and well-known philanthropist, Michael McKean [24], an actor and comedian, and Mary L. Trump [17], the niece of the President Donald Trump. Another prominent voice in the dataset is Robert Reich [4], [21], [43], [48], who served as U.S. Secretary of Labor. These users bring personal experience, opinions, or public influence into their posts, which makes their content more impactful. Most posts are quick reactions to current events or trending topics and are shaped by the platform's style—short messages and content that spreads fast.

5.2.1 Interdiscursivity

Fairclough (2013, 95) views interdiscursivity as the blending of different genres and discourses within texts, creating their characteristic heterogeneity. Among the discourses which construct the overall discourse around Musk, fictional, scientific-historical, economic, political and environmental discourses are most prominent. For example, fictional discourse and shared knowledge about the pop-cultural icons Tony Stark and Lex Luthor allow users to frame the discourse about Musk either as a hero or a villain [2] [8]. Such blends are easily recognizable, enabling audiences to interpret Musk's real-world persona in a simplified way.

Scientific and historical discourses include references to Nikola Tesla, a historical and scientific figure, and to Musk's family wealth rooted in apartheid-era South

Africa [3] [16] [25]. For example, post [3] notes that Musk “inherited money from his father's apartheid emerald mine,” a detail often used to challenge his self-made image.

In posts [15], [22], and [24], users claim that “Nikola Tesla would've hated Elon Musk,” using Tesla's legacy to criticize Musk's branding of himself as a modern innovator. These comparisons serve both ethical and historical functions, challenging Musk's persona by contrasting it with a more respected scientific figure.

Blending of economic, political and environmental discourses reveals ideological beliefs and value systems among the users and furthers interpretation of Musk's persona in the context of the ideologies of liberalism, socialism, and ecologism. References to space exploration and billionaire space tourism are used, for example, to criticize not only Musk, but other billionaires. For instance, post [17] “Branson, Musk, and Bezos who could tackle child hunger, climate change, racial injustice, health care, the rise of fascism etc and still be richer than 99.9999 % of us choose to be narcissistic assholes and shoot their money into space. That about right?” explicitly references “climate change,” highlighting environmental irresponsibility by criticizing billionaires' preference for personal projects over addressing urgent global environmental issues. Environmental discourse is also prominent in post [42], which contrasts Musk's \$44 billion Twitter purchase with Biden's proposed climate budget, and post [45], which critiques Musk's nine-minute private-jet flight against common recycling expectations.

These critiques of economic inequality and environmental irresponsibility often overlap with concerns about democratic erosion and corporate power. For example, post [37] warns that Musk's acquisition of X is “dangerous for our democracy.” Several posts, such as [43] and [72] reinterpret Musk's persona through his place in the social order, by alluding to oligarchy as the form of government: “When multi-billionaires take control of our most vital platforms for communication, it's not a win for free speech. It's a win for oligarchy.” [43]. Together, the posts paint Musk as a threat to the existing economic, environmental, and political order in the United States.

5.2.2 Cultural and historical references

Cultural and historical references are prominent in posts across all periods. Intertextuality—the way one text draws on another—is most visibly realised through direct or indirect

quotation (Gee 2014, 171). Intertextuality has close connection to allusion, a subtler strategy that depends on shared background knowledge between writer and reader and typically hints at familiar people or events from the past (Abrams and Harpham 2009, 11–12). This allusive form of intertextuality recurs throughout all three periods examined.

In the context of X, users reference to public events involving Elon Musk, which include references to his environmental initiatives through the TeamTrees campaign [1], the Cybertruck window shattering incident [30], his unfulfilled pledge to donate \$6 billion to combat world hunger [27], [34], [36], [50] his repeated efforts to rebrand businesses under the letter X such as PayPal and later Twitter [63–66], and sarcastic commentaries on his management decisions [55]. These references demonstrate rich cultural knowledge and familiarity with the evolving discourse surrounding Musk's persona.

For instance, in post [1], MrBeast humorously exaggerates Musk's environmental contributions: "It is now illegal to not drive a Tesla, sorry but Elon planted a million trees...". Similarly, post [30] references Musk's Cybertruck demonstration: "elon musk said he would fix twitter. ok but he also said he made an unsmashable window and then smashed it immediately," connecting this event to his reputation for making unreliable promises. Posts [27], [34], [36], and [50] allude to Musk's widely publicized but unfulfilled pledge to fight world hunger. For example, post [27] recalls: "Remember when the head of the UN World Food Program laid out a plan to spend \$6 billion to combat hunger after Musk said he would give them the money if they came up with a plan? And then he never gave them a cent but wants to spend \$43 billion to buy Twitter." Similarly, posts [63–66] build on Musk's fascination with the letter X, as post [63] states: "In 2000, Elon Musk tried to rebrand PayPal as X.com, but was forced out by the board and replaced as CEO by Peter Thiel. Now he's doing the same to Twitter." Post [55] also sarcastically critiques his reversals on platform policies: "elon got rid of the verification system, realized why it was there in the first place, brought it back. got rid of content moderation, realized it was necessary, brought it back. brought back kanye, realized why he was banned, re-banned him. what a humble genius he is." These references are powerful because they rely on shared background knowledge and collective cultural memory. By embedding these references, posts resonate with the audience, enhancing their effectiveness and contributing to their viral spread across the digital discourse.

5.2.3 Presupposition and Member Resources

Presuppositions are beliefs or ideas that a speaker or writer expects their audience to already accept without needing further explanation. They arise not from the text alone, but from the speaker's interpretation of the broader social background (Bloor and Bloor 2013, 22; Fairclough 1989, 152). Member resources (MR) refer to socially generated, shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and assumptions that individuals draw upon to interpret and produce texts. These resources exist cognitively within individuals but originate socially, shaped by social interactions. (Fairclough 1989, 24). On X, these concepts significantly influence audience interpretations of discourse about Elon Musk.

For instance, post [13] assumes the reader is familiar with the criticism that Musk does not engineer Tesla products himself. It calls him “a fucking moron” and “literally a figurehead.” This draws on the widespread social knowledge that Musk, although often portrayed as a tech innovator, is criticized for primarily being a businessman and public face rather than an actual engineer involved in product design. Post [25] presupposes knowledge of Musk’s family wealth and history with Tesla’s ownership, expecting the reader to connect these facts to a critique of meritocracy. Specifically, it assumes awareness that Musk’s family owned an emerald mine during apartheid-era South Africa and that Musk did not found Tesla but instead joined and eventually displaced the original founders. Post [5], which says simply “F*ck Elon Musk,” offers no context or explanation—implying that the sentiment requires none. It assumes a shared understanding among readers of Musk’s controversies and negative public perception, functioning as an expression of in-group solidarity.

Presuppositions become effective when interpreted through member resources. Posts [17], [28], [39], and [42] assume audiences accept the critique that billionaires, including Musk, have the resources to solve major global issues but choose not to. For instance, post [17] bluntly summarizes: “Branson, Musk, and Bezos who could tackle child hunger, climate change, racial injustice, health care, the rise of fascism etc and still be richer than 99.9999% of us choose to be narcissistic assholes and shoot their money into space.” This draws on the shared belief that extreme wealth could be used to address social injustices, but is instead squandered on personal projects.

Similarly, post [4] assumes the reader knows about Musk's behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic, using that shared knowledge to frame him as reckless. Post [9] draws from political and economic debates around government subsidies and “corporate socialism,” relying on the audience to recognize the critique of hypocrisy. Post [67] questions why Musk didn’t create his own app instead of “ruining a well-known and widely used app.” This assumes the reader agrees that Twitter was previously successful and that Musk’s involvement has been detrimental.

These posts don’t need to explain everything directly because they rely on what the audience already knows or believes. Instead of presenting new information, they draw on shared knowledge, opinions, or experiences to make their points more effective. That’s where presupposition and member resources come in. These tools connect to interdiscursivity and allusions by linking individual posts to wider social event and beliefs. As shown in the description stage, language is used to build a certain image of Elon Musk. In this interpretation stage, the meaning behind posts often depends on what people already think or assume. This leads into the explanation stage, where these patterns are understood as part of bigger social and ideological struggles especially around issues like power, influence, inequality, and public accountability.

5.3 Explanation Stage: Social Context and Ideology in Discourse

In the explanation stage, discourse is interpreted within its broader social context, revealing how it reflects, sustains, or challenges existing social structures, power dynamics, and ideological positions. Analyzing the selected posts about Elon Musk provides insights into the societal tensions and ideological conflicts that characterize contemporary discourse about wealth, power, and democracy.

5.3.1 Critique of Capitalism and Economic Inequality

First, the discursive representation of Elon Musk in the selected posts frequently criticizes his extreme wealth accumulation, positioning him as a problematic figure within larger ideological debates about capitalism and economic inequality. Posts repeatedly highlight his billionaire status, often accompanied by demands such as “tax the rich,” pointing out to societal dissatisfaction with wealth distribution and the capitalist structures that allow these differences between people. For instance, post [28] states explicitly: “Wealth of Elon Musk 2012: \$2,000,000,000, 2022: \$273,600,000,000... Three words: tax the rich.” The phrase “three words: tax the rich” appears repeatedly across several posts (e.g., posts [28], [62], [68]), with post [10] specifically adding “create an economy for all,” directly addressing economic inequality, underscoring the consistency and intensity of this sentiment within public discourse. Post [20] reinforces this critique by emphasizing the abnormal extent of Musk's wealth, stating, “Do you have any idea how much money \$253 billion really is?...That's not normal,” highlighting how such extreme wealth accumulation is viewed as fundamentally problematic and abnormal. Similarly, post [10] emphasizes stagnant wages contrasted with Musk's rising wealth: “Wealth of Elon Musk on March 18, 2020: \$24.5 billion Wealth of Elon Musk on January 9, 2021: \$209 billion... Raise the minimum wage to at least \$15, tax the rich & create an economy for all.” Together, these examples demonstrate that the critique of Musk operates not only as personal disapproval but as a broader rejection of systemic inequalities that he is seen to embody, linking individual representation to wider ideological struggles over wealth and social justice.

5.3.2 Power, Domination, and Democratic Concerns

Second, posts reflect concerns about power and domination, specifically critiquing Musk's actions as indicative of broader systemic power imbalances. Posts accusing Musk of “union-busting” [16], exploiting government subsidies “corporate socialism” [9], and influencing

media ownership [43] underscore the perception of Musk as an individual whose power transcends economic boundaries into social and political spheres. Posts [47] and [72] further reflect this concern, with [47] highlighting Musk's alignment with fascist tendencies to preserve wealth and power: "Elon Musk is really doing an incredible job educating the public about how capitalists end up aligning with fascists to maintain their wealth and limit the power of the working classes." Similarly, post [72] expresses concerns about authoritarianism: "Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, is threatening to unseat elected officials if they do not follow his orders to shut down the government during the holidays." Additionally, post [37] expresses anxiety over democratic erosion, asserting: "Billionaires like Elon Musk play by a different set of rules than everyone else, accumulating power for their own gain." These posts show Musk as more than just a rich individual, presenting him as a symbol of the growing concentration of economic and political power, and reflecting concerns about threats to democracy

5.3.3 Challenging Hegemonic Ideals

Third, Musk's actions and public persona are discussed in ways that challenge USA hegemonic ideals and naturalized social practices. By frequently presenting Musk's wealth and influence as morally or ethically questionable, posts disrupt the naturalized discourse that equates financial success with merit or intelligence. Post [3] exemplifies this by pointing to Musk's inherited wealth: "Elon Musk inherited money from his father's apartheid emerald mine, that doesn't mean he's clever." Similarly, post [25] underscores the critique of Musk's authenticity and meritocracy: "Elon Musk is not a degreed engineer. His family owned an emerald mine in South Africa until Apartheid ended... He leveraged his PayPal lottery winnings in order to take over Tesla." Furthermore, post [23] questions Musk's genius, while post [13] undermines Musk's public image directly. This portrayal critically questions the social narratives legitimizing economic inequalities as naturally justified.

5.3.4 Discursive Shifts Toward Social Change

Finally, the widespread negative sentiment observed in the posts reflects a broader ideological shift, with public discourse becoming increasingly critical of dominant economic and political systems that prioritize corporate interests and elite wealth. For instance, post [42] critiques misplaced financial priorities, while post [17] highlights how billionaires prioritize their own interests over the welfare of ordinary citizens. Additionally, Musk's unfulfilled humanitarian promises, such as those referenced in post [34], appear to fuel

demands for fair taxation, as seen in post [33]. The persistent criticism and repeated calls for reforms in wealth distribution, taxation, democratic accountability, and environmental responsibility suggest that discourse on social media platforms like X plays a significant role in ongoing ideological struggles over wealth, democracy, and equality. Through these discursive elements, posts about Elon Musk not only reflect public sentiment toward an individual but also actively participate in shaping broader socio-political and ideological debates in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

This thesis examined how X users represent Elon Musk and how those representations changed before, during, and after his acquisition of the platform. Drawing on a corpus of 75 widely circulated posts and analysing them through Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the analysis has shown that language on X consistently positions Musk as a site of conflict over wealth, power, and democratic accountability.

In posts Musk is represented through negative labels (e.g., “dumb guy's idea of a smart guy,” “American gestapo”) and on recurrent money-related vocabulary (“billion,” “tax,” “rich”) to foreground inequality. Sarcasm, metaphor, and irony were also used, serving to undermine the tech-entrepreneur persona.

The analysis revealed how cultural or historical references and shared online knowledge shaped how readers understood the posts. Collective shared social knowledge enabled readers to quickly interpret these references based on familiar associations, without requiring detailed explanations. Allusions to comic-book villains, Tesla's brand history, or Musk's unfulfilled humanitarian pledges activated collective memories.

The linguistic choices above were linked to broader social tensions. The analysis identified four recurring ideological themes: criticism of extreme wealth accumulation, scepticism toward private control of public communication spaces, anxiety about the erosion of democratic norms, and challenges to hegemonic ideals. Together, these themes account for the surge of negative sentiment documented by previous quantitative studies (Schmidt et al. 2023; Bonilla et al. 2023), but they also illustrate how users contest Musk's power through language itself.

Overall, the thesis demonstrates that posts about Elon Musk are not isolated bursts of opinion; they form a discursive pattern in which commenters negotiate economic and democratic concerns.

While dataset was restricted to English-language posts with at least 40 000 likes, which privileges voices already amplified by X's algorithm and excludes less visible or non-English perspectives, Future work could expand the language range, incorporate multimodal elements such as images or memes, or compare Musk's representation across different platforms to test whether the patterns observed here generalise beyond X.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Austin, Scott, and Samarth Bansal. 2018. "4,925 Tweets: Elon Musk's Twitter Habit, Dissected." *Wall Street Journal*. <https://graphics.wsj.com/elon-musk-twitter-habit-analysis/>.
- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. 2009. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 9th ed. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- BBC. 2022a. "Elon Musk Puts Twitter Deal on Hold over Fake Account Details." *BBC News*, May 13. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61433724>.
- BBC. 2022b. "Elon Musk Pulls Out of \$44bn Deal to Buy Twitter." *BBC News*, July 9. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-62102821>.
- Bloor, Meriel, and Thomas Bloor. 2013. *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Bonilla, Daniel Maya, Samuel Iradukunda, and Pamela Thomas. 2023. "Sentiment Analysis of Public Perception Towards Elon Musk on Reddit (2008–2022)." *The Cardinal Edge* 1 (3): 1-5. <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/tce/vol1/iss3/7>.
- Brown, Abram. 2022. "Twitter Accepts Elon Musk's \$44 Billion Deal." *Forbes*, April 25. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/abrambrown/2022/04/25/twitter-elon-musk-takeover-bid-deal-43-billion-54-20/>.
- Conger, Kate, and Lauren Hirsch. 2022a. "Twitter Sues Musk After He Tries Backing Out of \$44 Billion Deal." *New York Times*, July 12. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/12/technology/twitter-lawsuit-musk-acquisition.html>.
- Conger, Kate, and Lauren Hirsch. 2022b. "Elon Musk Completes \$44 Billion Deal to Own Twitter." *New York Times*, October 27. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/27/technology/elon-musk-twitter-deal-complete.html>.
- Conger, Kate, Lauren Hirsch, and Andrew Ross Sorkin. 2022. "Elon Musk Suggests Buying Twitter at His Original Price." *New York Times*, October 4. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/04/technology/elon-musk-twitter-deal.html>.

- De Saussure, Ferdinand. 1959. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library.
- Elon Musk (@elonmusk). 2017. "I love Twitter." X, December 21.
<https://x.com/elonmusk/status/943901463998169088>.
- Elon Musk (@elonmusk). 2022a. "Given That Twitter Serves as the De Facto Public Town Square, Failing to Adhere to Free Speech Principles Fundamentally Undermines Democracy. What Should Be Done?" X, March 26.
<https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1507777261654605828>.
- Elon Musk (@elonmusk). 2022b. "The Bird Is Freed." X, October 28.
<https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1585841080431321088>.
- Esposito, Eleonora, and Majid KhosraviNik. 2023. *Discourse in the Digital Age*. New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1989. *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2003. *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2013. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2015. *Language and Power*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, Norman, and Ruth Wodak. 1997. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In *Discourse as Social Interaction*, edited by Teun A. Van Dijk, 258–284. London: SAGE.
- Filik, Ruth, Alexandra Turcan, Christina Ralph-Nearman, and Alain Pitiot. 2019. "What Is the Difference between Irony and Sarcasm? An fMRI Study." *Cortex* 115: 112–122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2019.01.025>.
- Fuller, Andrea, John West, Alexa Corse, and Kara Dapena. 2024. "How the Journal Analyzed Elon Musk's Posts on X." *Wall Street Journal*. August 25.
<https://www.wsj.com/tech/elon-musk-politics-analysis-06a5b9e4>.
- Gee, James Paul. 2014. *How to Do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

- Huddleston, Tom, Jr. 2022. "Here's How Much Power Elon Musk Actually Has at Twitter Now — and What He Might Do With It." *CNBC*, April 5.
<https://www.cnbc.com/2022/04/05/elon-musks-9percent-stake-in-twitter-and-board-seat-heres-what-it-means.html>.
- Locke, Taylor. 2020. "Jack Dorsey Asked Elon Musk How He Would Run Twitter—Here's What Musk Said." *CNBC*, January 17.
<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/17/elon-musk-tells-jack-dorsey-how-he-would-run-twitter.html>.
- KhosraviNik, Majid. 2014. "Critical Discourse Analysis, Power, and New Media Discourse." In *Why Discourse Matters: Negotiating Identity in the Mediatized World*, edited by Monika Weronika Kopytowska and Yusuf Kalyango Jr., 287–306. New York: Peter Lang.
- KhosraviNik, Majid. 2023. *Social Media and Society: Integrating the Digital with the Social in Digital Discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Mankarious, Sarah-Grace, Marco Chacón, Clare Duffy, and Catherine Thorbecke. 2022. "Here's What Elon Musk Has Tweeted over the Years ... About Twitter." *CNN*, April 29. <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2022/04/business/elon-musk-tweets-twitter/index.html>.
- Machin, David, and Andrea Mayr. 2012. *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Mary Jordan (@_maryjordan). 2020. "What @elonmusk Thinks Twitter Could Be Doing Better. #OneTeam" X, January 16.
https://x.com/_maryjordan/status/1217939464825311232.
- Page, Ruth, David Barton, Johann W. Unger, and Michele Zappavigna. 2014. *Researching Language and Social Media: A Student Guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Pivecka, Niklas, Roja Alexandra Ratzinger, and Arnd Florack. 2022. "Emotions and Virality: Social Transmission of Political Messages on Twitter." *Frontiers in Psychology* 13: 931921. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.931921>.
- Roumeliotis, Greg, Uday Sampath Kumar, and Chavi Mehta. 2022. "Musk Makes \$43 Billion Offer for Twitter to Build 'Arena for Free Speech.'" *Reuters*, April 15.

<https://www.reuters.com/technology/elon-musk-offers-buy-twitter-5420-per-share-2022-04-14/>.

Saquete, Estela, Jose Zubcoff, Yoan Gutiérrez, Patricio Martínez-Barco, and Javi Fernández. 2022. “Why Are Some Social-Media Contents More Popular than Others? Opinion and Association Rules Mining Applied to Virality Patterns Discovery.” *Expert Systems with Applications* 197: 116676.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2022.116676>.

Schmidt, Sebastian, Christina Zorenböhmer, Dorian Arifi, and Bernd Resch. 2023. “Polarity-Based Sentiment Analysis of Georeferenced Tweets Related to the 2022 Twitter Acquisition.” *Information* 14 (2): 1-11.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/info14020071>.

Simpson, Paul, Andrea Mayr, and Simon Statham. 2019. *Language and Power: A Resource Book for Students*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Spilioti, Tereza. 2018. “The Language of Social Media.” In *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Studies*, edited by Philip Seargeant, Ann Hewings, and Stephen Pihlaja, 310–323. London and New York: Routledge.

Statham, Simon. 2022. *Critical Discourse Analysis: A Practical Introduction to Power in Language*. London: Routledge.

Squires, Lauren. 2016. “Twitter: Design Discourse and the Implications of Public Text.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Digital Communication*, edited by Alexandra Georgakopoulou and Tereza Spilioti, 239–55. New York: Routledge.

The Economist. 2024. “Elon Musk’s Transformation, in His Own Words.” November 21, 2024. <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2024/11/21/elon-musks-transformation-in-his-own-words>.

Van Dijk, Teun. 2008. *Discourse and Power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Dijk, Teun. 2012. *Ideology and Discourse: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Barcelona: Pompeu Fabra University.

Van Dijk, Teun A. 2014. *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Van Dijk, Teun. 2015. "Critical Discourse Studies: A Sociocognitive Approach." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 63–85. London: SAGE.
- Van Leeuwen, Theo. 2005. *Introducing Social Semiotics*. London: Routledge.
- Van Leeuwen, Theo. 2008. *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wodak, Ruth. 2001. "The Discourse-Historical Approach." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 63–93. London: SAGE.
- Wodak, Ruth, and Michael Meyer, eds. 2009. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE.
- Wodak, Ruth, and Michael Meyer. 2015. *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*. London: SAGE.
- X. n.d. "Types of Posts." *X Help Center*. Accessed March 29, 2025.
<https://help.x.com/en/using-x/types-of-posts>.
- Zappavigna, Michelle. 2014. "CoffeeTweets: Bonding around the Bean on Twitter." In *The Language of Social Media: Identity and Community on the Internet*, edited by Philip Seargeant and Caroline Tagg, 139–60. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The three-dimensional model (Fairclough 1992, 73).....19

Figure 2: Sentiment towards Elon Musk in posts 26

Figure 3: Metadata of the posts.....27

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CDS	Critical discourse studies
CL	Critical linguistics
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
DHA	Discourse-historical approach
MR	member resources
SCA	Socio-cognitive approach
SNS	Social networking sites

APPENDIX - POSTS

Corpus of the selected posts:

- [1] MrBeast (@MrBeast). “It is now illegal to not drive a Tesla, sorry but Elon planted a million trees so all other cars are now obsolete.” X, October 29, 2019.
<https://x.com/MrBeast/status/1189299535140605960>.
- [2] Matthew Calcara (@MattCalcara). “Elon Musk is not Tony Stark. Elon Musk is Lex Luthor. And we REALLY need to understand that.” X, November 27, 2019.
<https://x.com/MattCalcara/status/1199540961430458368>.
- [3] keewa 🇳🇬 (@keewa). “Remind: Elon Musk inherited money from his father's apartheid emerald mine, that doesn't mean he's clever.” X, May 9, 2020.
<https://x.com/keewa/status/1259102659027632129>.
- [4] Robert Reich (@RBReich). “Elon Musk furloughed thousands of factory workers and ordered pay cuts. Meanwhile, he stands to take home a \$700M bonus. Now, he's threatening to close his Fremont facility and take away people's jobs unless he's allowed to risk their health. Billionaires aren't the answer.” X, May 10, 2020.
<https://x.com/RBReich/status/1259577620913627137>.
- [5] Lorena Gonzalez (@LorenaSGonzalez). “F*ck Elon Musk.” X, May 10, 2020.
<https://x.com/LorenaSGonzalez/status/1259287879177531392>.
- [6] Ken Klippenstein (@kenklippenstein). “Starting to realize that Elon Musk is a megachurch pastor for atheists.” X, July 3, 2020.
<https://x.com/kenklippenstein/status/1278923187393376257>.
- [7] soul nate (@MNateShyamalan). “elon musk is a dumb guy's idea of a smart guy X, July 6, 2020.” <https://x.com/MNateShyamalan/status/1279999657360441344>
- [8] Armani (@historyofarmani). “Elon Musk went from Tony Stark to Lex Luthor so fast.” X, July 25, 2020.
<https://x.com/historyofarmani/status/1287008799686098945>.
- [9] Bernie Sanders (@BernieSanders). “Every time Elon Musk pokes fun at government assistance for the 99%, remember that he would be worth nothing without \$4.9 billion in corporate welfare. Oh, Elon just l-o-v-e-s corporate

socialism for himself, rugged capitalism for everyone else.” X, August 8, 2020.
<https://x.com/BernieSanders/status/1291877623946149889>.

- [10] Bernie Sanders (@BernieSanders). “Wealth of Elon Musk on March 18, 2020: \$24.5 billion Wealth of Elon Musk on January 9, 2021: \$209 billion U.S. minimum wage in 2009: \$7.25 an hour U.S. minimum wage in 2021: \$7.25 an hour Our job: Raise the minimum wage to at least \$15, tax the rich & create an economy for all.” X, January 10, 2021.
<https://x.com/SenSanders/status/1348253256330276867>.
- [11] Stephen Punwasi (@StephenPunwasi). “Elon Musk is now worth \$208 billion. You want to know how he did it? He skipped 34.67 billion lattes. It's that easy.” X, January 10, 2021.
<https://x.com/StephenPunwasi/status/1348329165502746626>.
- [12] Slate (@PlaseBeGneiss). “elon musk is worth \$200 billion so how do we sell him.” X, January 11, 2021.
<https://x.com/PleaseBeGneiss/status/1348690132681986048>.
- [13] Suki’s Mom ▼ gazafunds.com (@zukosmadre). “Hello I am coming to the TL today to say Elon Musk is a fucking moron and he does not do any of the engineering or scientific work for Tesla, he is quite literally a figurehead.” X, January 21, 2021. <https://x.com/zukosmadre/status/1351331114506399744>.
- [14] John Pompliano (@JohnPompliano). “Elon Musk made \$180M when PayPal was acquired in 2002. He put \$100M in SpaceX, \$70M in Tesla, and \$10M in Solar City. He borrowed money for rent. Now, he's worth \$190 billion. The greatest entrepreneurs aren't driven by money; it's a byproduct of success.” X, February 18, 2021. <https://x.com/JohnPompliano/status/1362444780156956679>.
- [15] Jackee (@takeiteasyjack). “rip nikola tesla he would’ve hated elon musk.” X, March 23, 2021. <https://x.com/takeiteasyjack/status/1374442664959959050>.
- [16] they/them might be giants ♿ (@babadookspinoza). “People only hate Elon Musk because he comes from an emerald mining fortune made in apartheid South Africa, he buys ideas and pretends he’s an inventor, he’s a union-busting and abusive employer, he’s hoarding \$175.6 billion in stolen wages during a pandemic,

he encouraged a coup.” X, April 25, 2021.

<https://x.com/babadookspinoza/status/1386399855048753152>.

- [17] Mary L Trump (@MaryLTrump). “How’s this headline: Branson, Musk, and Bezos who could tackle child hunger, climate change, racial injustice, health care, the rise of fascism etc and still be richer than 99.9999% of us choose to be narcissistic assholes and shoot their money into space. That about right?” X, July 11, 2021. <https://x.com/MaryLTrump/status/1414254171340124163>.
- [18] james eagan (@james_eagan). “Elon Musk made \$36 billion yesterday. That's more than most people make in a month.” X, October 26, 2021. https://x.com/james_eagan/status/1453048984562384896.
- [19] Jason Kander (@JasonKander). “Elon Musk: Beware! If they can tax a billionaire like me, they can tax you regular people too! Regular People: We've been paying our taxes this whole time, bro.” X, October 27, 2021. <https://x.com/JasonKander/status/1453163434183438344>.
- [20] HAYDAR (@chronicalihere). “Stop humanizing billionaires. Elon Musk isn't just some average guy. Do you have any idea how much money \$253 billion really is? If someone were to earn \$200,000 every single day since Jesus was born, they still wouldn't have as much money as he does right now. That's not normal.” X, October 28, 2021. <https://x.com/chronicalihere/status/1453798244585197570>.
- [21] Robert Reich (@RBReich). “If Elon Musk is so concerned about the deficit, perhaps he should pay his fair share of taxes.” X, December 7, 2021. <https://x.com/RBReich/status/1468320264278536193>.
- [22] PastorBen (@BenjaminPDixon). “Nikola Tesla would absolutely hate Elon Musk.” X, December 23, 2021. <https://x.com/BenjaminPDixon/status/1474053701438517252>.
- [23] Read Starting Somewhere (@JPHilllllll). “Elon Musk is the perfect billionaire. He grew up rich, got richer by taking government money, and convinced people he’s a genius when he can’t even make a car that doesn’t kill people.” X, February 11, 2022. <https://x.com/JPHilllllll/status/1492219313633255434>.

- [24] Michael McKean (@MJMcKean). "I don't even think Nikola Tesla would have liked Elon Musk." X, March 26, 2022.
<https://x.com/MJMcKean/status/1507829266074910723>.
- [25] Christopher David (@Tazerface16). "Most folks don't know this, but Elon Musk is not a degreed engineer. His family own an emerald mine in South Africa until Apartheid ended. Hey leveraged his PayPal lottery winnings in order to take over Tesla, a company that he did not found. He pushed out the original owners." X, April 10, 2022. <https://x.com/Tazerface16/status/1512955812586479632>.
- [26] Cernovich (@Cernovich). "Elon Musk is like the first guy who got rich and then did cool stuff with his money." X, April 14, 2022.
<https://x.com/Cernovich/status/1514667627699789824>.
- [27] Read Starting Somewhere (@JPHilllllll). "Remember when the head of the UN World Food Program laid out a plan to spend \$6 billion to combat hunger after Musk said he would give them the money if they came up with a plan? And then he never gave them a cent but wants to spend \$43 billion to buy Twitter." X, April 14, 2022. <https://x.com/JPHilllllll/status/1514594480996982788>.
- [28] Andrea Junker (@Strandjunker). "Wealth of Elon Musk 2012: \$2,000,000,000 2022: \$273,600,000,000 Wealth of Jeff Bezos 2012: \$18,400,000,000 2022: \$181,300,000,000 Wealth of Mark Zuckerberg 2012: \$17,500,000,000 2022: \$76,800,000,000 U.S. Minimum Wage 2012: \$7.25 2022: \$7.25 Three words: tax the rich." X, April 14, 2022.
<https://x.com/Strandjunker/status/1514600683797839873>.
- [29] Peter Kalmus (@ClimateHuman). "Shouldn't over 1,000 scientists risking arrest to save the planet be a bigger news story than Elon Musk trying to buy Twitter?" X, April 15, 2022.
<https://x.com/ClimateHuman/status/1514748250703638530>.
- [30] soul nate (@MNateShyamalan). "elon musk said he would fix twitter."ok but he also said he made an unsmashable window and then smashed it immediately." X, April 15, 2022.
<https://x.com/MNateShyamalan/status/1515001792211431429>.

- [31] prance (@bocxtop) “elon musk spending \$43 billion to stop getting bullied on twitter when he could’ve simply been less annoying is insane.” X, April 25, 2022. <https://x.com/bocxtop/status/1518600359534469122>
- [32] kira 🍆 (@kirawontmiss). “elon musk really bought twitter for \$45 billion when i got that shit for free on the app store.” X, April 25, 2022. <https://x.com/kirawontmiss/status/1518633352319967232>.
- [33] Congresswoman Marie Newman (@RepMarieNewman). “Elon Musk paid \$0 in federal taxes in 2018. If he can afford Twitter, he can damn well afford to pay his fair share in taxes. We need a Billionaire Tax NOW.” X, April 25, 2022. <https://x.com/RepMarieNewman/status/1518646196952350726>.
- [34] No Lie with Brian Tyler Cohen (@NoLieWithBTC). “Elon Musk told the United Nations he would give them \$6 billion to end world hunger if they showed him a detailed plan of how they would use the money. They called his bluff and gave him their plan— and then they never got the money. Now he’s buying Twitter for \$45 billion.” X, April 25, 2022. <https://x.com/NoLieWithBTC/status/1518658761979842560>.
- [35] Read Starting Somewhere (@JPHilllllll). “One example that really summarizes Elon Musk is when he said he'd fix all the lead pipes in Flint and just donated water filters to 12 schools instead.” X, April 25, 2022. <https://x.com/JPHilllllll/status/1518658931878502400>.
- [36] river buddy butcher 🍷 (@rivbutcher). “Remember like two weeks ago when Elon was like “tell me how to end world hunger and I’ll do it” and then he bought twitter for \$44 billion instead.” X, April 25, 2022. <https://x.com/rivbutcher/status/1518678344304275457>.
- [37] Elizabeth Warren (@SenWarren). “This deal is dangerous for our democracy. Billionaires like Elon Musk play by a different set of rules than everyone else, accumulating power for their own gain. We need a wealth tax and strong rules to hold Big Tech accountable.” X, April 25, 2022. <https://x.com/SenWarren/status/1518702084048179200>.
- [38] Rachel (@rachelrowell). “If Elon Musk wants to spend 44 billion on Twitter, that’s up to him. If you want him to spend his 44 billion on something else,

go make 44 billion yourself and spend it on that thing.” X, April 26, 2022.

<https://x.com/rachelrowell/status/1518763881056849925>.

- [39] Robert Zubrin (@robert_zubrin). “Elon Musk just gave \$44 billion dollars to the former owners of Twitter that they can now use to end hunger, disease, poverty, war, and injustice. Which they will do first?” X, April 26, 2022.

https://x.com/robert_zubrin/status/1518747613058662401.

- [40] Andrew Lawrence (@andrewlawrence). “Elon Musk could have put that \$44billion towards tackling world poverty, instead he's used it to send millions of woke Liberal narcissists into a spiral of depression, and honestly I think it's money well spent.” X, April 26, 2022.

<https://x.com/andrewlawrence/status/1518838751593705475>.

- [41] misty 🍉 (@clumsyalu). “instead of leaving twitter we should all block elon musk.” X, April 26, 2022.

<https://x.com/clumsyalu/status/1518972922462932993>.

- [42] Stephen Semler (@stephensemmler). “The amount Elon Musk just paid for Twitter (\$44 billion) is nearly equal to Biden’s proposed climate budget (\$44.9 billion), in case anyone's wondering how seriously we’re taking the climate crisis.” X, April 26, 2022. <https://x.com/stephensemmler/status/1518972397277396992>.

- [43] Robert Reich (@RBReich). “Zuckerberg owns Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Jeff Bezos owns the Washington Post. Elon Musk owns Twitter. When multi-billionaires take control of our most vital platforms for communication, it’s not a win for free speech. It’s a win for oligarchy.” X, April 26, 2022.

<https://x.com/RBReich/status/1519012937704394752>.

- [44] Public Citizen (@Public_Citizen). “FYI: We’re blocked by Elon Musk. So much for being “committed” to free speech.” X, April 26, 2022.

https://x.com/Public_Citizen/status/1519064518441246725.

- [45] Andrew Gentry (@andrewgentry_). “Elon Musk's private jet just went on a nine minute flight but you better not put the wrong type of plastic in your recycling.” X, May 7, 2022. https://x.com/andrewgentry_/status/1522723199993233408.

- [46] Jo (@JoJoFromJerz). “FUCK YES! Biden's proposed billionaire tax would slap Elon Musk with a tax bill of up to \$50 billion dollars, at least 20% of his

income including unrealized capital gains. Who else thinks seriously rich assholes need to pay their fair share?" X, May 9, 2022.

<https://x.com/JoJoFromJerz/status/1523704966434758658>.

- [47] Max (@maxberger). "Elon Musk is really doing an incredible job educating the public about how capitalists end up aligning with fascists to maintain their wealth and limit the power of the working classes." X, May 21, 2022.

<https://x.com/maxberger/status/1527772289533501440>

- [48] Robert Reich (@RBReich). "While Elon Musk lays off 10 percent of Tesla employees, he's set to take home \$23 billion bonus. Yes, \$23 billion. The economy is somehow always great for billionaires, bad for workers." X, June 5, 2022.

<https://x.com/RBReich/status/1533496300393619458>

- [49] Jack Cocchiarella (@JDCocchiarella). "If Elon Musk can afford to pay \$1 BILLION to NOT buy Twitter, he can afford to pay his fair share of taxes." X, July 9, 2022. <https://x.com/JDCocchiarella/status/1545532921108434947>.

- [50] Read Starting Somewhere (@JPHilllllll). "You might think that Elon Musk backing out of a \$44 billion Twitter deal is bad, but it's nothing compared to when he backed out of his \$6 billion promise to the UN to help solve world hunger." X July 9, 2022. <https://x.com/JPHilllllll/status/1545542834064957440>.

- [51] Buy Mass Effect The Board Game! (@ithayla). "elon did not 'buy Twitter' he impulsively made a ludicrously overpriced offer on Twitter signed a contract that put him on the hook for that exact amount tried to back out but was sued BY TWITTER to complete the buyout at the ridiculous price and is now in a deal where-." X, November 1, 2022.

<https://x.com/ithayla/status/1587362567030120448>.

- [52] Jesse von Doom (@jessevondoom). "I was skeptical before, but after seeing his management skills in action I think letting Elon Musk oversee the migration of Earth's wealthiest people to Mars is a great idea." X, November 14, 2022.

<https://x.com/jessevondoom/status/1592262105503502336>.

- [53] Zack Bornstein (@ZackBornStein). "pre-elon twitter: pls free me from this hellsite post-elon twitter: Everyday with you all has been a gift. I owe my career, my friendships, and my marriage to this community. I've fostered compassion and

activism each and everyday with you all, fighting the good fight (1/40).” X, November 18, 2022. <https://x.com/ZackBornstein/status/1593492354387714049>.

[54] Matt Wallace (@MattWallace888). “Elon Musk has been able to successfully run Twitter for days now with only 50 employees. What the heck were those other 7,950 people even doing? 🤔.” X, November 19, 2022. <https://x.com/MattWallace888/status/1593941774933798912>.

[55] matt (@mattxiv). “elon got rid of the verification system, realized why it was there in the first place, brought it back. got rid of content moderation, realized it was necessary, brought it back. brought back kanye, realized why he was banned, re-banned him. what a humble genius he is.” X, December 2, 2022. <https://x.com/mattxiv/status/1598734359036661777>.

[56] Read Starting Somewhere (@JPHilllllll). “How did I miss this. Elon Musk getting called a liar by his own website just doesn’t get old.” X, January 24, 2023. <https://x.com/JPHilllllll/status/1618011147395026944>.

[57] ezra 🐸 (@goblintoat). “TWITTER GOT RID OF BIRTHDAY BALLOONS ?!?(?! elon is such a miserable little man he cannot bear the idea of anyone experiencing happiness.” X, February 2, 2023. <https://x.com/goblintoat/status/1621186205541961728>.

[58] Patrick S. Tomlinson (@stealthygeek). “Let me see if I have this straight. Elon Musk fires a dude who's owed \$100 million if he gets fired. In the process of firing him, Elon revealed and insulted the man's private medical condition, exposing Twitter to a simply massive lawsuit. And people still think he's a genius.” X, March 7, 2023. <https://x.com/stealthygeek/status/1633231011348717568>.

[59] Stephen King (@StephenKing). “I think Mr. Musk should give my blue check to charity. I recommend the Prytula Foundation, which provides lifesaving services in Ukraine. It's only \$8, so perhaps Mr. Musk could add a bit more.” X, April 22, 2023. <https://x.com/StephenKing/status/1649771678220574722>.

[60] Patrick S. Tomlinson (@stealthygeek). “Before Elon, Twitter was unmatched for major breaking news by any outlet on Earth. Updates from locals were up to the second. Journalists and policy experts were verified and their insights were boosted by the algorithm to maximize their audience. Network news

chased Twitter 1/.” X, June 24, 2023.

<https://x.com/stealthygeek/status/1672635755234050049>.

- [61] chrissy (@chrissychlapp). “why the fuck would u limit the amount of posts people SEE?? oh my god elon you ruin EVERYTHING.” X, July 1, 2023.

<https://x.com/chrissychlapp/status/1675238295452762112>.

- [62] Andrea Junker (@Strandjunker). “Wealth of Elon Musk 2012:

\$2,000,000,000 2023: \$248,900,000,000 Wealth of Jeff Bezos 2012:

\$18,400,000,000 2023: \$153,100,000,000 Wealth of Mark Zuckerberg 2012:

\$17,500,000,000 2023: \$104,900,000,000 Federal Minimum Wage 2012: \$7.25

2023: \$7.25 Three words: tax the rich.” X, July 7, 2023.

<https://x.com/Strandjunker/status/1677384529689088000>.

- [63] Paris Marx (@parismarx). “In 2000, Elon Musk tried to rebrand PayPal as

<http://X.com>, but was forced out by the board and replaced as CEO by Peter Thiel.

Now he’s doing the same to Twitter, but is surrounded by sycophants who can’t tell him it’s a bad idea. Read more: <https://disconnect.blog/p/elon-musk-wants-to-relive-his-start>.” X, July 23, 2023.

<https://x.com/parismarx/status/1683187321078792193>.

- [64] Wells (tweets suppressed) (@WellsLucasSanto). “For those out of the know,

Elon's been trying to make 'X' a thing for almost 25 years now. Starting with X .com in 1999, then SpaceX, then Tesla Model X, then naming his son X, then xAI announced this month, and now X Corp. He tried to get PayPal to be named X too.” X, July 24, 2023. <https://x.com/WellsLucasSanto/status/1683249560020217856>.

- [65] merle ♂ (@fujonyaa). “For those of you keeping count, this is the

FOURTH time Musk has tried to name something 'X'. First it was PayPal. Second was SpaceX. Third was his own goddamned child. And now this website.” X, July 24, 2023. <https://x.com/fujonyaa/status/1683430250917625856>.

- [66] Will LeGate (@williamlegate). “23 years ago, Elon Musk was fired from

PayPal after he tried, unsuccessfully, to rename the company X. PayPal even hired multiple focus groups, at Elon's demand, who determined the "X" name sounded too much like an adult website than a legitimate business.” X, July 25, 2023.

<https://x.com/williamlegate/status/1683872407864635393>.

- [illegible]

@elonmusk Fuck @elonmusk Fuck @elonmusk Fuck @elonmusk Fuck

@elonmusk Fuck @elonmusk Come and get me, American Gestalpo.” X, February 21, 2025. <https://x.com/mjfree/status/1892712836326887535>.