

Sydney Corpus Lab Showcase/Workshop: Discover the Power of Computer-Based Text Analysis

Metaphors and Narratives of Climate Change

Elena Semino (Lancaster, UK) and Alice Deignan (University of Leeds)

Climate change is one of the world's most urgent issues. Young people, in particular, are likely to be affected in their lifetimes, and will also influence future developments through their lifestyle choices and decisions as citizens. As with other scientific topics, however, knowledge about climate change is mediated through discourse. In this paper, we consider the use of metaphors and narratives to represent climate change in texts for and by members of different discourse communities: scientists, school teachers and secondary school students. We present the results of a comparative analysis of three corpora, consisting of: (1) Academic articles about climate science (approximately 500,000 words); (2) Educational materials for secondary school students in the UK (approximately 250,000 words); (3) Interviews with secondary school students in the North of England (approximately 90,000 words). The three corpora were compared using a combination of corpus linguistic techniques, including the analysis of word frequency lists, key semantic domains and collocational patterns. We will focus particularly on the findings that relate to how the students' use of metaphors and narratives for climate change contrasts with the metaphors and narratives used in the other two corpora.

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A Genre Analysis of Discourses Surrounding Venereal Disease in Seventeenth-Century England

Tony McEnery (presenting) and Helen Baker (Lancaster, UK)

Sufferers of venereal disease in seventeenth-century England faced an array of difficulties. Not only must they cope with the painful and often worsening symptoms of syphilis, gonorrhoea or whichever type of sexually transmitted illness they had contracted, they were also obliged to hide these symptoms to avoid being marked and condemned as a carrier of such a disease. This talk is about perceptions of the disease and the types of texts which referred to it.

Using the term *pox* as a starting point, we gather together a selection of suitable search queries - terms of interest which were used to refer to venereal disease in early modern England - and describe how this list was compiled step-by-step. We demonstrate the challenges inherent in achieving a comprehensive list of names due to the necessary inclusion of many near-synonyms and spelling variants of each term. A large proportion of these terms were constructed by the insertion of a nationality adjective in front of the noun *pox* or *disease*, e.g. *Italian pox*, *American disease*, with *French pox* being the most commonly used alternative to *the pox*. Accordingly we investigate to what extent English writers associated venereal disease with different nations.

Following on from that, in order to uncover the kinds of written works in which references to venereal disease appear, we undertake a genre analysis. Such a genre-based approach has only recently become possible due to the addition of a categorisation genre framework for titles within the EEBO corpus. The talk will present the findings of that analysis and reflect on the possible reasons for the changing pattern of reference to venereal disease by genre over the century.

References

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Looking For Love – Gender, Sexuality and Language in Lonely Hearts Columns

Paul Baker (Lancaster, UK)

This talk describes three studies that have analysed and compared corpora of personal adverts with the goal of gaining insights into the relationship between gender, sexuality and desire. Specifically, I ask: what do personal adverts tell us about gendered expectations and values, what are seen as good and bad ways of being a man or woman and how do these values change according to context? The first study examines British gay men's personal adverts comparing data from 1973, 1982, 1991 and 2000, the second compares heterosexual men's adverts from Australia, India and Singapore while the final study looks at gay and heterosexual women from the US. The studies use a variety of corpus methods including keywords, semantic tagging, frequency counts and concordancing in order to identify linguistic patterns which are interpreted through an understanding of societal context.

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Obesity in the News: A corpus-based comparison of Tabloids and Broadsheets in the UK

Gavin Brookes (Lancaster, UK)

This talk reports early findings from the *Representations of Obesity in the News* project at Lancaster University. Obesity is a medical term used to describe the condition in which a person is very overweight and has a large amount of body fat. In the United Kingdom (UK) – the context for this study – a person can be diagnosed as being obese if they have a Body Mass Index (BMI) score of 30 or more (National Health Service, 2018). Obesity is regarded as a major health concern in the UK, where it is presently estimated that around 60% of adult men and 50% of women are either overweight or obese (Office for National Statistics, 2017). This prevalence is predicted to increase in the future, with projections suggesting that as many as 74% of men and 64% of women living in the UK could be either overweight or obese by 2030 (World Health Organisation, 2015). This rising prevalence has been linked to the increasing rates of several life-shortening conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer (National Health Service, 2018). Given its increasing prevalence and perceived health consequences, obesity constitutes a persistently newsworthy topic in the UK as in other countries. Existing research into this media coverage has demonstrated the tendency for it to be deeply stigmatizing for people affected by obesity, who are represented as failing to discipline, regulate and contain their bodies (Bonfiglioli, et al., 2007; Boyce, 2007; Boero, 2013) – transgressions which can in turn lead to social marginalisation and evoke derision, repulsion and even disgust from others (Lupton, 2018).

The research reported in this talk is based on a purpose-built corpus of articles about obesity published across eleven UK national tabloid and broadsheet newspapers over a ten-year period spanning 2008 to 2017 (inclusive). This amounts to 43,884 articles (36,203,844 words). Taking a keywords approach, this talk will compare the ways in which the topic of obesity is framed by tabloids and broadsheets. The analysis shows that while the tabloids represent obesity as a disease that exists inside individuals, the broadsheets tend to frame it as a social problem. A corollary of these framings is that, for the tabloids, responsibility for preventing and ‘curing’ obesity rests with the individuals affected by it, meanwhile for the broadsheets the lion’s share of responsibility for obesity rests with government and food industries. These framings are then interpreted (i) in relation to the wider society in which they have been produced and consumed and (ii) in terms of their implications for promoting contented bodily attitudes and encouraging so-called ‘healthy’ behaviours in members of the public.

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The UK 'at Risk'. A Corpus Approach to Social Change 1785-2009.

Jens O Zinn (School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne)

Language and the social realm are overlapping domains which mutually influence or even constitute each other. Therefore the analysis of language is a promising enterprise for the exploration of social phenomena. This presentation reports from research which used The Times corpus at the Corpus Approaches to Social Science research centre (CASS) at Lancaster University which contains all articles published in The Times from 1785 to 2009. The study used corpus linguistic tools for the analysis of the growing pervasiveness of 'at risk'-constructs. It combines quantitative collocation analysis with qualitative analysis of concordances to identify the social forces which shape the usage of 'at risk'-language. The study shows that fundamental structural, cultural and institutional changes which also influence the production of news coverage as well as a number of risks have driven the use of 'at risk'-language in The Times. The spread of 'at risk' might be an expression of a new social consciousness gaining ground from the 1970s onwards.

For publications and other activities linked to this project compare:

<http://cass.lancs.ac.uk/cass-projects/understanding-the-discourse-semantic-shift-towards-risk-a-corpus-sociology/>

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Discourses of 'Teacher Quality' in the Australian Print Media 2014-2017: A Corpus-Assisted Analysis

Nicole Mockler (School of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney)

Discourses of 'teacher quality' have been on the rise in the Australian print media since the 1990s. This paper uses a corpus-assisted analysis to explore recent deployments of 'teacher quality' and 'teaching quality' in the Australian print media, drawing on 432 articles collected from the twelve Australian national and capital city daily newspapers over the four-year period from January 2014 to December 2017. The analysis highlights that 'teacher quality' and 'teaching quality' are deployed differently in respect to school teachers and teachers in higher/vocational education contexts, and examines the nature of these differences. It demonstrates that the print media plays a key role in shaping and/or reflecting the links between discourses of teacher quality and notions of standards and accountability in education; and also in reflecting the highly politicised and political nature of teacher quality discussions and debates in Australia at this time.

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Dead of a Lesser God: Victims' Voice and Representation in the Colombian Press

Alexandra García (The University of Sydney)

The 50 year+ Colombian conflict reached its most violent peak during the turn of the century (1998-2006), which coincided with peace talks with the major agents of violence: Marxist guerrillas (FARC) and right-wing paramilitaries (AUC). Previous research on the representation of crimes by each group has clearly demonstrated a pattern of highlighting guerrilla violence while concealing paramilitary responsibility in crimes against humanity (García 2013, 2017). These findings shed light on social phenomena such as the popular rejection towards the peace process with Farc and indifference towards the agreement signed with the paramilitaries.

In this paper, I focus on the representation of the victims of each group in a 300.000+ word corpus of newspaper reports of fatal violence from the four major Colombian newspapers from the time period indicated above. The analysis combines concepts, tools and techniques from Systemic Functional Linguistics (participant roles, appraisal), Corpus Linguistic (word lists, concordancing, key words), and Discourse News Values Analysis (Bednarek & Caple, 2017) (personalisation and negativity) to contrast the different construal of the victims. The results clearly indicate not only a significantly higher word count for guerrilla victims' statements, but also a higher likelihood of eliciting solidarity towards this group through the use of given names, the highlighting of family ties and the description emotional responses, among other personalising techniques. On the other hand, the humanity of paramilitary victims is backgrounded by not only the much lower frequency of this type of content but also the frequent referral to them as merely a number (e.g. 7 killed in ...) or with generic terms (e.g. the dead, the victims).

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AntConc Workshop

Laurence Anthony (Waseda University, Japan)

This workshop will offer a practical guide to applying corpus methods across a broad range of arts and humanities disciplines through the multiplatform, freeware AntConc corpus toolkit. AntConc is one of the most widely used corpus tools in the field of corpus linguistics, being designed for both research and teaching purposes. In the workshop, participants will learn how to use AntConc's main features and apply the software in both English and non-English related research topics.