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Identity, Language and Diversity

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The Discursive Representation of Globalised Organised Crime:
Crossing Borders of Languages and Cultures

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Representing the Camorra as a Global Criminal Entity: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This paper investigates the discursive construction of organised crime from a critical perspective, highlighting the semiotic resources employed in the media representation of one of the most powerful Italian crime syndicates today, the Neapolitan Camorra. The analysis draws on a corpus of international video documentaries describing the Camorra's criminal activities released after 2007, when a series of crucial events started to give this crime syndicate an unprecedented international visibility. The main research hypothesis of this study is that the process of construction of the Camorra as a criminal entity with a global reach is performed via multiple modes of meaningmaking in the audiovisual genre of expository documentaries. More specifically, discourse and visual semiotics in the video reportages under scrutiny are believed to play a constitutive role in that they shape the way this 'lesser-known' Italian mafia is perceived, understood and categorised beyond Italy's borders. The investigation focuses on the constructive strategies enacted to establish a certain identity for this crime group, and on the sociosemantic categories used to represent the social actors inhabiting the Camorra universe by looking at how criminals and their victims/public antagonists are linguistically and visually presented to a mass public.

Keywords

media discourse, critical discourse analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, social actors, globalised organised crime, the Neapolitan Camorra

The Multimodal Representation of Italian Anti-Mafia Discourse: Foregrounding Civil Resistance and Interlocution in Two Global English Video Reportages

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Abstract

This paper examines the multimodal representation of civil resistance against Italian mafia (Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta) in two English video reportages. More specifically, the analysis describes interlocutive relations between social actors displayed not only in the criminal, but also in the civil and media spheres, and allows for a multimodal description of cohesion on the macro level in these media formats. The theoretical focus is on the combination of the interpersonal metafunction in systemic-functional (multimodal) grammar and the cognitive notion of (intersubjective) viewpoint in cognitive grammar. The analysis of the video formats shows which activists are put onstage in different socio-economic settings (agriculture and education), and reveals the different extra- or intradiegetic perspectives taken by journalists in relation to civil and legal anti-mafia actors. The analysis discusses different (verbal and/or visual) techniques for relating individual viewpoints and inter-actor relations, as well as the active role of journalists in setting up cohesion between video sequences. As media discourse foregrounds anti-mafia activism and as it displays the embedded role of journalists in multimodal meaning-making, the conventional discursive representation of mafia is transformed: heroic images of mafiosi are (verbally and/or visually) backgrounded and the discursive emphasis is now on the transformation of civil society, where activists simultaneously tell and perform their breaking the law of silence. On a meta-level the paper opens up the theoretical project of (multimodal) Critical Discourse Analysis, bringing in an altered, Foucauldian concept of non-hegemonic power: the representation of mafia victims and social workers, no longer as undergoers of totalitarian criminal violence, but as active players peacefully and successfully opposing the mafia, is in line with the moral and empowering project of Foucault's hermeneutics of the subject.

Keywords

anti-mafia, video reportage, multimodality, critical discourse analysis, systemicfunctional and cognitive grammar, performance of resistance, social actors

De-Queering Proxemics in the Screen Adaptation of Camorra Male Dyads: A Multimodal Prosody Analysis

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Abstract

The recent TV screening of the Neapolitan camorra seems to be spreading a somewhat incorrect interpretation of 'queer masculinity' in dyadic nonverbal interactions occurring between televised camorra mobsters. Such faux constructions of camorristi might result from the fact that cross-cultural differences in non-verbal forms of communication, realised in subtitled texts, are a major constraint for audio-visual translators in their task of adapting a complex multimodal product into other cultures/languages. Despite the significant attention scholars have recently devoted to the effect of TV coverage on viewers, very little attention has been paid to the ways in which male social actors involved in the Neapolitan crime syndicate have been discursively re-semiotised in English-speaking contexts. When non-verbal communication crosses national, cultural and linguistic boundaries via subtitling, some context-bound references and differences on non-verbal behavioural dimensions may prevent the full appreciation of the source text. In particular, the manner in which personal space is interpreted crossculturally, remains an unreadable culture-bound factor for the target audiences. This study seeks to confirm previous anthropological and linguistic research on personal space, an interesting academic field that has remained somewhat silent for a long period, and incorporates some of its insights into the analysis of audiovisual translation. With this in mind, this paper provides a multimodal integrated investigation of the perception of the TV drama series Gomorrah (produced in Italy and subtitled in English) outside the boundaries of Italy, looking at data from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The study, which is a theoretical contribution to cross-cultural adaptation, employs "multimodal prosody" analysis in order to disambiguate the interpretation of camorristi proxemics and haptics as a queer representation.

Keywords

multimodal prosody, Gomorrah, queer representation, proxemics, audiovisual, translation, queer masculinity, queer camorrista

The (Re)Presentation of Organised Crime in Gomorrah – The Series: A Corpus-Based Approach to Cross-Cultural Identity Construction

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Abstract

The following contribution focuses on the identity characterisation of specific ‘voices’ in TV series using a corpus-based approach (Bednarek 2010, 2011) applied to the analysis of the characters of the Italian TV drama Gomorrah – The Series (Season 1). If “dialogue lines are explicitly designed to reveal characters” (Kozloff 2000: 44), analysing how they are cross-culturally translated into another language and reshaped in new formats can highlight given identity traits that producers want to underline about specific characters. In the case of Gomorrah, this is particularly interesting since the identities created for the TV series are intrinsically imbued with its local criminal organisation setting, and the processes of bringing the series across its local borders can reshape and enrich the way characters are presented in a new setting.

Based on a previous pilot study (Fruttaldo 2015), the following contribution adopts a corpus-based approach (Baker 2006, 2014; McEnery et al. 2006; McEnery/Hardie 2012) to analyse the voices of the clan Savastano in the TV series. This allowed for highlighting specific differences in the way Don Pietro, Donna Imma and Gennaro Savastano use their linguistic resources to build, convey and construe the identity of a Camorra boss. The lexicogrammatical status of each character, underlined carrying out a keyword analysis of the original subtitles of the TV series and compared to the keyword analysis of the English subtitles, helped trace the linguistic profile of these dominant personas, unveiling some peculiar characteristics of these characters, which seem to be enhanced in the translation process, highlighting some of their concerns or personality traits (Culpeper 2014), or reshaping their entire identity.

Keywords

identity construction, TV series, TV dialogue, Gomorrah, corpus-based, discourse analysis

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‘Woman Robbed and Punched on London Street’: Linguistic and Discursive Representation of Offender and Victim Social Actors in Crime News Headlines

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Abstract

As the media is the primary public source of information on a large variety of topics, so the patterns of media discourse play an outstanding role in shaping public opinion and strengthening society. Drawing from combined approaches to Critical Discourse Analysis and, in particular, the socio-semantic analytical model proposed in van Leeuwen’s (2008) framework, I utilise a randomised corpus of English-language crime news headlines to investigate the linguistic features relevant for the media representation of offenders and victims as social actors within the discursive construction of the social reality of crime alongside the impact the media has in the construction of public belief and attitude to crime and criminality. It is argued that social actors, their identities and relations are (re)shaped by the ideology the media supports in the specific discourse situation and legitimised social practices, with the media coverage of crime news sensitising and influencing the general public’s thought on the social and cultural phenomenon of criminality.

Keywords

media discourse, critical discourse analysis, social actors, social actions, gender, identity

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The Language of Fear: Cybercrime and ‘the Borderless Realm of Cyberspace’ in British News

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Abstract

This paper explores the media representations of cybercrime as a source of social danger and fear. Against the backdrop of Beck’s concept of “risk society” and Cohen’s “moral panic”, it focuses on a dataset of articles on cybercrime from 2011 to 2016 published by two major British tabloids, the Daily Mirror and The Sun, following a Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis approach to journalism. It shows that the process of ‘othering’ in the representations of cybercrime follows, in the corpus identified, certain discourse strategies which are very similar to those employed in the representations of such ‘outgroups’ as immigrants or terrorists. The paper also considers the media narratives on cybercrime analysed as strategic configurations of nationalist discourse: by constantly associating certain countries with cybercrime and by prioritising ‘national’ security in opposition to a ubiquitously dangerous ‘other’, these representations of cybercrime ultimately seem to reinforce the sense of identity and belonging within the institutional and cultural borders of a nation.

Keywords

cybercrime, moral panic, fear society, nationalism, discourse



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Current Politics and the Printed Media:
Discursive Tensions in the Age of Populism 3.0

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Director: **Elisabetta Donadono**

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The Economic Framing of Populism: A Linguistic Overview of US and UK Newspaper Headlines

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Abstract

The study explores the headlines of some British and American highcirculation broadsheet newspapers collected during the four months leading up to the nationwide vote regarding two major political populist events, namely the UK Brexit referendum and the US presidential elections (Inglehart/ Norris 2016). The aim of this study is to investigate how core areas of populist discourse linked to the above events were covered by the press, reputed as one the main channels of information dissemination (Watoson 2007), and how these issues were voiced to inform readers regarding the impact of their electoral choices on the future economic well-being of their respective countries. To this purpose, the headlines were analyzed at a more general level by using the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC), a corpus-assisted software tool (Tausczick/Pennebaker 2010; Pennebaker et al. 2015) to assess the overall tone of the messages. At a more granular level, they were analyzed by using the qualitative tools afforded by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (van Dijk 1995), the Social Actors Network (van Leeuwen 1996) and Appraisal Theory (Martin/White 2005; Ellsworth 2013) in order to reveal instantiations of populist political discourse strategies deployed by the UK Government and the US presidential candidate in their campaign documents. Central to this study's theoretical framework are the concepts of newsworthiness and framing (De Nies et al. 2012) as they shape the kind of reality that the political and media establishments co-jointly strive to portray. The results of this analysis lead to the preliminary conclusion that the press coverage of these events was markedly polarized and highly reliant on the strategies of populist discourse to reinforce views, engaging in a sort of press competition where some broadsheets were more successful than others in leading readers towards a partisanship-related vote.

Keywords

newsworthiness, framing, sentiment analysis, social actors network, appraisal theory

Exploring the Current Treatment of Populism in European Media: A Linguistic Case Study

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Abstract

Recently in the European political scene right-wing and left-wing populist parties have emerged in different countries: left-wing populism in Greece with SYRIZA (acronym for the Coalition of the Radical Left), and Spain with Podemos ('We can'), right-wing populism in France with the National Front (FN); in Germany with Alternative for Germany; in the Netherlands with the Party for Freedom (PVV); in Italy with the Five Star Movement (M5S) and Lega Nord; in Austria with the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ); in the United Kingdom with the UK Independence party (UKIP), among others. Most of these parties, regardless of their position on the political spectrum, reject the populist label. In this paper, we conduct an analysis of the linguistic treatment of populism in European media and its implications. We are aware that populism can be viewed from different angles, for example, as an ideology (Abts/Rummens 2007: 421), as a "political style" (Moffit 2016: 27), as political tactics (Weyland 2003: 1112), as a type of discourse (Hawkins 2009: 1047), or as the sum of all those (Caiani/Graziano 2016: 20). The present study approaches populism from an interdisciplinary stance through the linguistic study of a selection of texts extracted from the European media.

Four political movements were selected for analysis, one of them is currently in power after winning two consecutive elections, i.e. the Greek SYRIZA, and the other three parties have MPs in the parliaments of their respective countries. These are: FN in France, PVV in Netherlands and Podemos in Spain. We initially assumed that the media would change their wording according to their political affinity and inclination. Results show, nonetheless, that the variations observed seem to be more influenced by the media typology than by political considerations.

Keywords

media studies, critical discourse analysis, news analysis, populism in Europe

El Discurso sobre los Términos 'Populismo' y 'Populista' en los Titulares de la Prensa Española

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Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un análisis cuantitativo-cualitativo de los valores discursivos de los términos 'populismo(s)' y 'populista(s)' en un corpus de titulares de prensa publicados en El País, El Mundo, ABC, La Vanguardia y El Periódico. El estudio, basado en el análisis crítico epistémico del discurso y en el concepto de encuadre, se centra en las dimensiones gramatical y léxico-semántica de ambos lexemas, con el objeto de identificar los marcos o encuadres interpretativos que los diarios elaboran hoy en día en torno a este fenómeno. Para ello, se tiene en cuenta también que el discurso mediático participa de la construcción del marco interpretativo del discurso político. Los primeros resultados muestran que, con pocas diferencias entre medios, las palabras co-aparecen a menudo con sustantivos y verbos de sema negativo que elaboran encuadres basados en una idea de amenaza incontrolable, principalmente en relación con determinados actores políticos tanto españoles como europeos.

Palabras clave

populismo, populista, prensa, discurso, selección léxica, sintaxis

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a quantitative-qualitative analysis of the discursive values of the words 'populismo(s)' and 'populista(s)' in a corpus of news headlines published in the digital editions of the Spanish press media El País, El Mundo, ABC, La Vanguardia and El Periódico. Based on a critical epistemic discourse analysis approach and on framing theories, this study focuses on the grammatical and lexico-semantic dimensions of both terms, in order to identify the interpretative frames the newspapers elaborate around this current phenomenon. We also assume that media discourses participate in the construction of the interpretative framework of political discourses.

The results show that, with few differences among these media, both words often co-occur with negative nouns and verbs. This discourse frames the idea that there is a growing threat that should be prevented, mainly in relation to certain political Spanish and European political leaders.

Keywords

populism, populist, press, discourse, lexical choice, syntax

Understanding Trump: Power back to the People?

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Abstract

Trump's election in the US (November 2016) is another episode of the 'populist' wave that is competing with left-wing and right-wing mainstream politics. This paper adopts a critical discourse perspective to find out why US

voters decided to trust a rich and controversial businessperson who has often declared his contempt for politics and politicians. We try to outline, in terms of debate framing, some language features of Trump's communication that proved to be effective in the electoral contest and may serve to explain his final election. Qualitative analysis, based on pronoun distribution, tenses, and naming, is integrated with a preliminary quantitative analysis of campaign communication through a corpus of Trump's speeches (82 speeches, delivered from June 2016 to the acceptance speech delivered on November 9, 2016). This corpus is compared to the speeches delivered by Trump's political contender to the White House, Hillary Clinton (36 speeches, delivered from July 28 to November 9, 2016). As a result, we can see that Trump's informal style follows a clear strategy, which is the intention to trigger an emotional response from his audience in opposition to the political rationality of his rival.

Keywords

Trump, people, populism, campaign, discourse, power

Populismo en el Discurso Político y Mediático en América Latina: El Caso de Rafael Correa en Ecuador

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Resumen

Las últimas décadas han estado marcadas en América Latina por la presencia de gobiernos progresistas y populistas (Alcántara et al. 2016) que han venido a cambiar las relaciones históricas de los actores principales de la política latinoamericana, pero también su relación con los medios de comunicación. En el caso de Ecuador, Rafael Correa (2007–2017) modificó el panorama mediático y las relaciones entre el gobierno y los medios. Una de estas novedades es su contacto directo con la ciudadanía, cuestionando así la capacidad de mediación de los medios. Una de sus principales herramientas ha sido el Enlace Ciudadano, un espacio semanal de comunicación y rendición de cuentas convertido en el principal escenario de “campaña permanente” (Blumenthal 1980) no sólo con los líderes políticos, sino también con los medios de comunicación privados, a quienes el expresidente convirtió en adversarios políticos, siguiendo la lógica de la mediatización de la política (Mazzoleni/Schulz 1999).

Aunque la conceptualización de populismo no es tarea sencilla, entre los autores existe un acuerdo en la importancia que los líderes populistas dan al ‘pueblo’ y el antagonismo entre éste y los ‘otros’ (Deiwiks 2009). A partir de éstas y otras características, en el presente artículo realizamos un análisis del discurso político del expresidente Correa y del discurso de los principales medios de comunicación, a fin de (a) identificar si tienen características populistas; y (b) analizar si el discurso de Correa – dadas sus características como líder político populista (de la Torre 2012) – se refleja en el discurso de los medios. El corpus de análisis está formado por los Enlaces Ciudadanos y los dos principales diarios: El Telégrafo (público) y El Comercio (privado) del último trimestre de 2015. Los hallazgos obtenidos dan cuenta de algunas características compartidas entre el discurso político y mediático, pero también de importantes diferencias entre ellos.

Palabras clave

populismo, discurso político, medios de comunicación, liderazgo político, Ecuador.

Abstract

The last decades have been marked in Latin America by the presence of progressive and populist governments (Alcántara et al. 2016) that have come to change the historical relations of the main political actors, but also their relationship with the media. In the case of Ecuador, Rafael Correa (2007–2017) modified the media landscape and the relations between the government and the media. One of these developments is his direct contact with citizens, questioning the ability of the media to mediate.

One of its main tools has been the Enlace Ciudadano, a weekly communication and accountability space turned into the main stage of “permanent campaign” (Blumenthal 1980) not only with political leaders, but also with the private media, to whom the former president became political adversaries, following the logic of the mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni/Schulz 1999).

Although the conceptualization of populism is not an easy task, among the populist leaders (Deiwiks 2009), there is an agreement on the importance of the ‘people’ and the antagonism between it and the ‘others’ in the populist leaders (Deiwiks 2009). Based on these and other characteristics, in this article we carry out an analysis of President Correa’s political discourse and the discourse of the main media, in order to (a) identify if they have populist characteristics; and (b) analyze if Correa’s speech – given its characteristics as a populist political leader (de la Torre 2012) – is reflected in the discourse of the media. The corpus of analysis is formed by Enlace Ciudadano and the two main newspapers: El Telégrafo (public) and El Comercio (private) of the last quarter of 2015. The findings

obtained account for some shared characteristics between the political and media discourse, but also important differences between them.

Tweets across the Borders: An Interlingual Study on European Populism

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Abstract

This study explores the discourse of four European populist and extremist parties on Twitter, namely Front National, Lega Nord, Movimento 5 Stelle and UKIP, both from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. The analysis of the most frequent keywords in their tweets, compared to mainstream parties reference corpora, allowed to identify the most recurrent themes conveyed by the four groups. Results show a considerable number of common keywords in the examined parties, with the exception of Movimento 5 Stelle. Furthermore, the study of the keywords collocations depicts how each party describes common topics, such as immigration, finance and the European Union. Findings report that the majority of collocates are exclusively used by the populist parties in comparison with the reference groups, suggesting an apparent discrepancy between populist and established parties' discourse. Finally, tweets were annotated following the Appraisal framework (Martin/White 2005). This process highlighted how parties bond with their followers by identifying any propensity in the use of evaluative language, for example, instances of emotions, judgments, intensifications or expression of stance. Outcomes indicate that all four parties tend to intensify or decrease degrees of evaluation and to avoid engagement with different stances, whereas the expression of emotional, ethical and aesthetic judgments is similar in populist and reference groups.

Keywords

discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, appraisal theory, social networking, systems, populist parties, twitter

Resistance through Discourse in Right-Wing Online Commentary

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Abstract

This article argues that right-wing online commentary on news articles, despite its reputation for being poorly-written, insulting and ill-considered, is in fact often composed of discursive structures designed to mark its authors as members of a community of practice who use language to resist what they see as the dominant left-wing ideology in media outlets. First, I discuss the nature of Critical Discourse Analysis, in particular, its relation to the study of language as a tool for both social control and resistance to social control. I then show that online commenters on the Daily Mail Online newspaper website are a community of practice who have shared goals and a shared repertoire of linguistic tools. Finally, I examine some indicative comments qualitatively, in an effort to provide some insights into how right-wing commenters use language to re-frame arguments presented in online newspaper articles; by means of implicature, deliberate misspellings of key words, and straw man arguments about political correctness, they position themselves as marginalized members of society. Despite there being little or no evidence that online discussion of topics related to race are censored at the Daily Mail Online, comments arguing that political correctness prohibits certain types of speech remain popular with readers.

Keywords

discourse, CDA, resistance, community of practice, online comments