

A Corpus-Based Analysis of Cosmetic Surgery Discourse: Signs of Age(ism) in the British Press

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Abstract

Cosmetic Surgery discourse has been scantily addressed in the literature despite encompassing elements of identity, age/ageing, gender and social context to name but a few. In this vein, the concepts of old and young as well as reasons for opting for cosmetic surgery may indeed be linked to no longer being permitted to grow old gracefully. The study combined a qualitative and quantitative discourse analysis with corpus linguistics tools to study the representation of the social variables of age and gender in the online British press within the context of cosmetic surgery. The lines of enquiry questioned how gender and age are portrayed in the British media in relation to cosmetic surgery and what a linguistic lexical analysis would reveal in terms of ideological as well as metaphorical content. The corpus under scrutiny was collected using the online platform LexisNexis using the seed words of cosmetic surgery* and plastic surgery* from four British Daily Newspapers: The Guardian, Daily Mirror, The Times and The Daily Mail. A corpus-based discourse analysis was employed to analyse the corpus. Results revealed interesting linguistic patterns in terms of cosmetic surgery representation in the British press and how cosmetic surgery is portrayed in reference to age(ism).