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Discourses of Societal Transformation

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The Powerful Nexus between Emotional Involvement and Social Change

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Prolonged emotional expenditure during times of transformational challenges could result in anxiety or anguish as participants struggle with constant adaptation to the often sudden changes in life course processes (Kiefer 2005). Indeed, emotional intensity is inexorably connected to major change events, which seems to suggest that the entanglement of life experiences with the emotional sphere takes on more significance, and values tend to be reconsidered as people search for existential meaning. Emotional challenges posed by contemporary social innovation and change have fluctuated between the urgency to rapidly shift course from old mindsets and approaches that no longer work to the need to cultivate a more equitable transformation of society (Louis/Montiel 2018).....

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“Don’t Call me Woke!”: Tracing the Pragmatic and Emotive Trajectory of the Word of Our Era

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Abstract

This paper investigates the fluctuating attitudes and emotional responses to the adjective ‘woke’ viewed through the lens of British news discourse. The study seeks to understand how recent newspaper coverage surrounding the notion of woke culture and its linguistic referents has influenced the semantic and pragmatic shifts of ‘woke’. The analysis is based on a self-compiled corpus of British newspaper articles featuring the contested term and is conducted both quantitatively and qualitatively. The polarisation of British newsbrands (quality vs. tabloids and left-leaning vs. right-leaning) seems to play a pivotal role in determining the way in which ‘woke’ is implemented within the text: either as part of journalistic discourse, as metadiscourse, or within reported discourse. The collocational analysis uncovers the discourses that most typically characterise news reporting on ‘woke’ highlighting different attitudes and representations. Having identified five key news narratives on wokeness, two mini case studies critically assess how multi-modal features contribute to and reinforce the meaning-making process, confirming the current polarised and ideologically loaded usage of ‘woke’.

Keywords

woke and woke culture, media studies, British newsbrands, corpus linguistics, multi-modal critical discourse analysis

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The Emotional Labour of Beauty Standards: The Case of YouTube Beauty Gurus

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Abstract

Contemporary research in the field of media and communication underlines the importance of ‘subcultures of consumption’ (Schouten/McAlexander 1995), ‘brand communities’ (Muniz/O’Guinn 2001), or ‘consumer tribes’ (Cova et al. 2007) in addressing potential buyers. These studies additionally acknowledge that one of the most important and successful strategies adopted in selling specific products is represented by the creation in buyers of a desire for belonging that “may be satisfied through social interaction surrounding products or services” (Mardon et al. 2018: 1–2). Such feeling of belongingness is based on the discursive creation of ‘tribes’ whose members are bound together by “shared emotions, styles of life, new moral beliefs and consumption practices” (Cova/Cova 2001: 67). And nowadays, online platforms and social networking sites (SNSs) have increasingly provided digital ‘spaces’ where tribe members may construct and experience a collective identity which is conveyed predominantly via discursive cues and genre constraints that allow members to recognise each other and be recognised as belonging to that community and, most notably in the case of consumption practices, in the products that are being sold to them. On the basis of this background, the present study wants to investigate the particular case of YouTube beauty gurus, an online consumer-centred community that focuses on beauty-related matters addressed via vlogs (García-Rapp 2017; Riboni 2020). In particular, the specific evaluative resources and generic constraints will be highlighted that define the contours of the linguistic practices adopted by the online beauty community embodied in the ‘emotion work’ (Hochschild 1983) that manages and regulates viewers’ feelings so as to enhance interpersonal relationships, resulting in ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild 1983; Fuoli/Bednarek 2022), that is, the commodification of feelings of belongingness. Therefore, the ensuing investigation will examine the generic structure and discursive ‘tribe’ construction found in beauty product reviews uploaded by the most popular and influential beauty gurus on YouTube.

In analysing such data, special attention will be paid to the construction of digital landscapes for culture-specific communities of affective practice in order to better understand how people forge alignments and negotiate meanings through digital practices (Zappavigna/Martín 2018).

Keywords

genre analysis, corpus linguistics, consumer tribes, beauty gurus, emotional labour, moral emotions

Problem Solving in the COVID-19 ERT University Classroom

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Abstract

This paper deals with pragmatic aspects of Emergency Remote Teaching adopted in an academic setting as a COVID-19 containment strategy. We consider an intensive introductory course in English Language and Linguistics taught at the University of Bologna by the author of this study (30 academic hours). Following university policy and Italian special COVID-19 laws, the first half of the course was taught full distance, synchronically on Microsoft Teams, while the second part was administered live, with part of the audience present in the physical classroom, and the rest connected online from home.

Lessons were videorecorded and transcribed using Microsoft Stream, and subsequently stored on the Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014) to create a fully POS-tagged and lemmatized corpus in English. As the study is methodologically grounded in corpus pragmatics (Aijmer/Rühlemann 2015), both corpus findings and videorecordings are analysed pragmatically for metacommunicative expressions (Bazzanella 2002, 2010), and metadiscursively for markers of interactivity (Hyland 2005: 49). The results show that the root cause of most pragmatic accidents (as revealed, in corpus data, by the frequency of hesitations, apologies, and other expressions of uncertainty and doubt) is a contextual mismatch arising from the fact that the same lecture is administered simultaneously to students on campus and online. Despite some positives, e.g., more interactivity (Luporini 2020) in comparison with the fully in-person version of the course that was taught prepandemically (Fusari 2021), it is therefore suggested that hybrid teaching should be much more carefully planned if it is to continue after the pandemic.

Keywords

corpus linguistics, COVID-19, e-learning, emergency remote teaching (ERT), English for academic purposes (EAP)

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Old, Female and COVID-19+: Issues of Age and Gender in the Midst of the SARS- CoV-2 Pandemic

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Abstract

Although it is still unclear whether COVID-19 infected elderly people more than young people, seniors fell victim to it more frequently and severely. This exploratory sample study addresses the impact of the pandemic on the socially vulnerable group of older women, by analysing their representation in supranational institutional publications. To do so, documents were collected from the WHO website that dealt with COVID-19, women and older people. Findings show that very few of these documents deal with older women and COVID-19. Those that do were examined discursively following a CDS qualitative approach. The analysis suggests that older women are little investigated, and that more qualitative studies are needed to explore their presence in supranational institutional discourse, if material is quantitatively limited.

Keywords

older adults, women, COVID-19, WHO, critical discourse studies

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Emotional Advocacy and Cognitive Empowerment in Social Change and Crisis Communication: Exploring Multimodal Discursive Strategies in THE WHY Videos

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to explain how to explore the roles of multimodal crisis discourses in NGO's empowering and advocacy communication meant to fight cognitive limitations and lack of genuine commitment to implementing social changes that can alleviate or eradicate ongoing global crises. The selected data is represented by THE WHY foundation's videos addressing the globalised community. The methodological approach combines multimodal discourse analysis with thematic reflexive analysis. Drawing upon this methodological framework, the article shows how to examine the integration of several semiotic modes in empowering or disempowering representation of social actors as groups or identifiable individuals affected by global crises' consequences. Drawing upon an understanding of discourse as socially constructed knowledge, the article also shows how to explore crises-related social practices that are multimodally legitimated (or delegitimated) according to strategic advocacy goals. The identified multimodal discursive strategies are connected according to their crisis-related communicative themes (issue identification, blame attribution, and potential solutions) and accomplish two overarching functions related to implementing social change: empowerment articulation and advocacy orientation. This article contributes to the expanding fields of both crisis communication and communication for social change in NGO context. By showing how to examine the roles and effects of the semiotic modes' potent interdependence and functional differentiation upon the emotional convergence or segregation between represented social actors and prospective viewers, it provides means for rethinking and improving the strategic usage of multimodal discursive strategies and, consequently, move the study of crisis communication and communication for social change forward.

Keywords

social change, crisis communication, advocacy, empowerment, discourse, multimodality

Sex, Love, and Stigma: A Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis of Sexual- Emotional Disability Discourse on Reddit Posts

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Abstract

Sexuality and disability have always represented two opposite and distinct polarities due to a long-lasting narration of people with impairments as asexual, unattractive, unable, and non-normative individuals. However, they have found in social media a safe place where sharing experiences, feelings, and emotions with people facing similar issues. Drawing on Social Media Critical Discourse Analysis, this study investigates an underresearched area of discourse-based disability studies, namely digitally-based (intersectional) sexual-emotional disability discourses, by analysing a corpus of threads, posts, and comments retrieved from the Reddit social media platform. The results unveil that people with impairments still undergo marginalisation and alienation phenomena based on centrist culturally-based beliefs, ideologies, and mental models that enact a vicious cycle of stigmatisation by their able-bodied counterparts and internalisation of stigma by the disabled that contribute to enhancing their invisibility. Contemporarily, they also show that people with impairments try to resist and challenge ableist and heteronormative discourses through social media spaces. Accordingly, this paper aims to shed new light on the topic and provide insightful reflections on disability at its intersection between sexuality, socio-culturally-based ideologies, and media technologies.

Keywords

ableism, disability discourse, critical discourse analysis, reddit, sexuality, social media studies