DN34 | DISCOURSE NET INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

DARE

Discourse, Identity and Polarisation

10–12 NOVEMBER 2026

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF PHILOLOGY



VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
1579

Conference Committees

Organising Committee

- Silvia Peterssen, Chair
  Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University
- Liudmila Arcimavičienė, Co-chair
  Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University
- Jurga Cibulskienė
  Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University
- Virginija Masiulionytė
  Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University
- Lina Inčiuraitė-Noreikienė
  Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University
- Irena Snukiškienė
  Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University
- Lina Marčiulionytė
  Faculty of Philology, Vilnius University

Scientific Committee

- Anna Ruskan, Vilnius University
- Audronė Šolienė, Vilnius University
- Aurora Fragonara, University of Picardy-Jules Verne
- Dolores Porto, University of Alcalá
- Ieva Bisigirskaitė, Vilnius University
- Inesa Šeškauskienė, Vilnius University
- Isabel Alonso, Autonomous University of Madrid
- Jens Maesse, University of Giessen
- Jolanta Šinkūnienė, Vilnius University
- Leandro Paolicchi, Mar del Plata University
- Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak, University of Lodz
- Manuela Romano, Autonomous University of Madrid
- Michael Kranert, University of Southampton
- Orlagh Woods, Vilnius University

Table of Contents

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS ***6***

Eleonora Esposito 6

Orlagh Woods[1] & Silvia Peterssen[2] 7

KEYNOTES ***8***

Ruth Breeze 8

Veronika Koller 9

Augusto Soares da Silva 10

Jan Zienkowski 11

PANEL: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND IDENTITIES IN POLARISED CONTEXTS ***12***

Ieva Bisigirskaitė[1] & Lina Šumskaitė[2] 13

Eleonora Esposito 14

Silvia Peterssen[1] & Lorella Viola[2] 15

Orlagh Woods 16

SESSION PRESENTATIONS ***17***

Fidan Abiyeva 17

Isabel Alonso-Belmonte[1] & Dolores Porto[2] 18

Cláudia de Araújo 19

Liudmila Arcimavičienė 20

Maryam Ayad 21

Adeliya Bissenbayeva 22

Xinying Chen[1] & Miroslav Kubát[2] 23

Desislava Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva 24

Nina Cingerová[1] & Katarína Motyková[2] 25

Nicola Davies-Laubscher 26

Alexia DeBono 27

Marcin Deutschmann 28

Geoffroy Dewandeler 29

Ping Du 30

Selman Ecevit 31

Jaanika Erne 32

Awni Etaywe 33

Zainab Faayiza[1] & Peter Teo Chin Soon[2] 34

Chris Featherman 35
Javier Fernández-Cruz[1] & Antonio Moreno-Ortiz[2] 36
Karol Franczak 37
Adrià Gibernau 38
Daniil Goncharenko[1] & Arseniy Karsakov[2] 39
Panayota Gounari[1] & Minh Nghia Nguyen[2] 40
Giuseppina Di Gregorio 41
Sixian Hah[1] & Johannes Angermuller[2] 42
Jakub Handzlik 43
Aimee Herring 44
Anna Ivanova 45
Luis Miguel Jaraba Andrade 46
Artūr Afanasjev[1] & Rita Juknevičienė[2] 47
Hana Kallus 48
Marge Käsper[1], Raili Marling[2] & Ann Veismann[3] 49
Iralia Kotsakidou 50
Jan Křovák & Annkatrin Reiner 51
Inês Lameira Grosso 52
Mario Leto 53
Maria Antonietta Marongiu 54
Janaica Gomes Matos[1] & Mario Junglas Muniz[2] 55
David Mitchell 56
Alina Mozolevska[1] & Olena Siden[2] 57
Clara Müllenmeister 58
Atefeh Namdari 59
Silvana Neskovska[1] & Zorica Trajkova[2] 60
Minh Nghia-Nguyen[1] & Panayota Gounari[2] 61
Maciej Nowakowski 62
Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak 63
Cristina Núñez-Rodríguez[1] & Antonio Moreno-Ortiz[2] 64
Dolors Ortega Arévalo[1] & Thor Kerr[2] 65
Manuel Padilla Cruz 66
Liran Peretz[1] & Alena Vasilyeva[2] 67
M Dolores Porto[1] & Manuela Romano[2] 68

Serhiy Potapenko 69
Leyla Rommel 70
Palina Salei 71
Giuseppina Scotto di Carlo 72
Jaspal Naveel Singh 73
Alexandra Shaitan 74
Demetrios Mitres Sioupis[1] & Athina Sioupi[2] 76
Eleni Siouti 77
Gabija Skucaite 79
Rainer Stummer 80
Arina Sydorkina 81
Inesa Šeškauskienė[1], Jurga Cibulskienė[2] & Virginija Masiulionytė[3] 82
Sabina Tabacaru 83
Nataliia Talavira 84
Ellen Thorisaen 85
Bilyana Todorova 86
Piotr Topolski 87
Geremia Trinchese 88
Simona Uksaitė 89
Mehmet Recai Uygur 90
Lorella Viola 91
Johannes S. Vogel[1] & Daniel Bultmann[2] 92
Mark Winston Visonà 93
Klaudia Wolniewicz-Slomka[1] & Adam Konopka[2] 94
Ozan Deniz Yalçınkaya 95
Lara Su Yaman[1] & Audronė Šolienė[2] 96
Yiting Yan 97

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Eleonora Esposito

University of Navarra

BIONOTE

Eleonora Esposito is a Research Scientist in Digital Safety, Platform Governance & Fundamental Rights at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). She holds a European PhD in Critical Discourse Studies from the University of Naples Federico II, with doctoral research also undertaken at Lancaster University, and an MA in Cultural, Gender and Postcolonial Studies from the University of Naples L'Orientale. A former Marie Curie Fellow and Research Fellow at the University of Navarra, her research draws on critical discourse studies, feminist theory and political communication to examine gender, power and digital technologies, with a particular focus on online misogyny, antifeminist backlash, technology-facilitated gender-based violence and women's political participation. Her professional experience also includes roles at the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Commission's DG CONNECT, where she contributed to work on gender-based violence and the implementation of the Digital Services Act.

Applying for MSCA and ERC Starting Grants: Strategies, evaluation criteria, and the discursive construction of "excellence" in European research funding

European research funding programmes such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and the ERC Starting Grant represent two of the most important opportunities for early-career researchers in Europe. Yet navigating these schemes can be challenging, particularly for doctoral candidates and postdoctoral researchers who are approaching European funding for the first time. This session provides a practical introduction to how researchers can successfully prepare competitive applications for MSCA fellowships and ERC Starting Grants. It will explain the objectives, structure, and evaluation criteria of the two programmes, highlighting key differences in terms of career stage, expectations of scientific leadership, mobility requirements, and proposal design. Alongside this practical guidance, the lecture will also reflect on the broader research policy context in which these programmes operate. In particular, it will examine how concepts such as "excellence", "impact", and "frontier research" are articulated in European funding frameworks and how applicants learn to position their work within these narratives. From this perspective, writing a successful proposal is not only a technical exercise but also a process of discursively framing one's research agenda and academic trajectory within the discursive expectations of European research funding. The session will combine practical advice on proposal preparation with reflections on academic career development in the European research landscape. It will be particularly relevant for postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career scholars interested in applying for European funding schemes.

The talk will include time for questions and discussion.

Orlagh Woods[1] & Silvia Peterssen[2]

[1]Vilnius University; [2]Vilnius University

BIONOTES

Orlagh Woods is an MSCA Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University. She completed her PhD at Maynooth University in 2024. Her current research project, Repro-fiction, explores representations of reproductive bodies in contemporary literature. Her work has appeared in edited collections published by Routledge and Palgrave Macmillan. Her broader research interests include life writing, adaptation and experimental literary form.

Silvia Peterssen is an MSCA Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University. Her research explores how polarisation is linguistically realised in a wide range of contexts and discourses. She is currently leading the EU-funded project DARE, which aims to address the polarising conceptualisations of abortion and its related actors in European mainstream news media. Her work has been published in journals such as Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict, as well as in edited volumes from de Gruyter and Peter Lang.

Reading across disciplines: CDA and literary critique in polarisation and identity research

This workshop aims to show how feminist literary analysis and feminist critical discourse studies can intertwine to study polarisation and identity, using the Polish context as a case study. In 1993, Poland introduced one of Europe's strictest abortion laws, allowing abortion only in cases of rape/incest, foetal abnormality or danger to maternal life. In 2021, the Constitutional Tribunal ruling effectively banned abortions for foetal abnormalities, triggering nationwide protests. This backlash against women's reproductive rights can be linked not only to the rise and normalisation of radical right populisms and their antifeminist agendas (represented by PiS, the Law and Justice party, in Poland), but also to the central role of Catholic religion in the country. Despite the rise of antifeminist discourses and policies, the Polish female writer and feminist activist Olga Tokarczuk was awarded the Nobel prize in 2018. Since then, Tokarczuk has gained prominence in Poland and worldwide, and she has not only publicly expressed support for progressive causes, including reproductive rights and climate change activism, but also explicitly condemned populism, capitalism and the far right. She considers her literary work and storytelling as her main platform for activism. However, Tokarczuk also remains a controversial figure, as she has been recently criticised for her statements on the use of AI in the literary creative process. Considering the polarisation surrounding Tokarczuk and the Polish context, our study analyses two different dimensions of this female writer: (i) media representations of Tokarczuk, and (ii) excerpts of her work as potential manifestations of her feminist and anticapitalist views. The main goal of this workshop is, however, not to provide an in-depth analysis of this corpus, but rather to take the audience into the interdisciplinary collaborative process between a literary scholar and a discourse scholar, explaining how we would approach this research, the convergence and divergence between our frameworks, and finally practicing the application of our joint approach in short excerpts.

KEYNOTES

Ruth Breeze

University of Navarra

BIONOTE

Ruth Breeze is Professor at the University of Navarra and Scientific Director of the Institute for Culture and Society, where she leads research on public discourse. Her work focuses on discourse analysis, professional communication, corpus linguistics and educational linguistics, with particular attention to language in legal and media contexts. She is editor of the international journal Ibérica and has recently co-edited, with Magdalena Szczyrbak, the volume *Transforming Legal Communication: Cognitive and Multimodal Approaches*, published by Routledge. The volume explores how legal and administrative information can be communicated more accessibly to diverse audiences through cognitive, digital and multimodal strategies.

Identity, community and polarisation in online forums

Discourse-based research on populism has often focused on ideological aspects of the representation of social groups or addressed solo performances of populism by well-known political figures. We know much less about how ordinary people develop their thinking on politics, express their political allegiances and engage with members of other groups. This paper looks at how ordinary people act out political positions by engaging with each other, using examples from reader comments pages on newspaper articles about right-wing politics. Antagonistic exchanges in online forums of this kind generally involve many different participants, who align with each other, building a sense of ad hoc 'community'. They also compete with each other to denigrate or insult other groups, in a phenomenon that has been described as online 'tribalism'. My paper focuses on the discursive strategies used, often simultaneously, to affirm identity, build community within the in-group and delegitimise out-groups. After considering some theoretical approaches to identity and community, I investigate antagonism and alignment in a dataset of 2,600 comments from the reader comments section of Mail Online, in which people respond to an article published in 2025 about the immigration policy of the far-right Eurosceptic party Reform UK.

KEY WORDS

Polarisation; identity; community; online forums.

Veronika Koller

University of Southern Denmark

BIONOTE

Veronika Koller is Professor of Organisational Communication at the University of Southern Denmark. She holds a PhD in English Linguistics from the University of Vienna, where her doctoral research examined metaphor in business media discourse. Before joining the University of Southern Denmark in 2026, she spent 22 years at Lancaster University, where she was Professor of Discourse Studies. Her research is situated within Critical Discourse Studies and focuses on political discourse, corporate and organisational communication, and language, gender and sexuality. She has a particular interest in metaphor theory and analysis, as well as socio-cognitive approaches to discourse. Her work explores how linguistic and semiotic resources contribute to the construction of identities, communities and ideologies across different social contexts. She has published extensively on these topics, with works such as *Metaphor and Gender in Business Media Discourse*, the co-authored volume *Voices of Supporters: Populist Parties, Social Media and the 2019 European Elections*, and the co-edited volume *Discourses of Brexit*. She is Associate Editor of Metaphor and Symbol.

Polarisation as metaphor, polarisation and metaphor

This talk first problematises the metaphoric notion of polarisation, which conceptualises social and political processes in terms of natural science and can make them appear inevitable. In connection with this, the talk discusses van Dijk's influential notion of the ideological square, drawing attention to domains where it does and does not apply, including business media and corporate discourse. Moving from polarisation as metaphor to polarisation and metaphor, the talk reviews recent work and presents examples of metaphor functioning to create or reinforce polarised public debates. These include social media comments by supporters and opponents of populist parties across Europe, gendered polarisation in the misogynist online network known as the manosphere, and spoken interaction in business contexts. The talk concludes by considering how the scenario associated with polarisation can be revised to enable connection and commonality.

KEY WORDS

Polarisation; metaphor; ideological square; populism; manosphere

REFERENCES

Alonso-Belmonte, I., Porto, M. D., & Romano, M. (Eds.). (2026). Polarised Discourse: Language, Cognition and Social Practice. De Gruyter.

Bogetić, K., Heritage, F., Koller, V., & McGlashan, M. (2023). Landwhales, femoids and sub-humans. Metaphor and the Social World, 13(2), 178-196.

Koller, V., et al. (2023). Voices of Supporters: Populism, Social Media and the 2019 European Elections. John Benjamins.

Peterssen, S., & Soares da Silva, A. (2024). Polarising metaphors in far-right populist tweets. In M. Romano (Ed.), Metaphor in Socio-Political Contexts (pp. 107-134). De Gruyter.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. Sage.

Augusto Soares da Silva

Catholic University of Portugal

BIONOTE

Augusto Soares da Silva is Professor of Linguistics at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Catholic University of Portugal in Braga. He is also Director of the Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies and coordinates the University's PhD programme in Linguistics. His research spans lexical semantics, grammar, conceptualisation, language variation and change, metaphor, ideology and media discourse, approached primarily through empirical and usage-based Cognitive Linguistics. He has published more than one hundred articles and several books, including the award-winning *O Mundo dos Sentidos em Português*, and has edited important volumes on linguistic pluricentricity and figurative language. His current research includes comparative work on European and Brazilian Portuguese and the cultural conceptualisation of emotions.

National identity, polarisation and socio-culturally situated construal operations: The case of far-right populism in Brazil and Portugal

This presentation explores three interrelated dimensions of the relationship between polarisation and identity: (1) how national identity is represented in polarising populist narratives; (2) how these polarising representations of national identity are cognitively and discursively construed; and (3) how socio-cultural and environmental settings shape polarising construal operations and the discursive construction of both identity and polarisation. Building on previous comparative work on Spanish and Brazilian far-right populisms (Peterssen & Soares da Silva, in press), the analysis compares representations of national identity in the far-right populist narratives of Jair Bolsonaro, former president of Brazil, and André Ventura, leader of the Portuguese party Chega. The study adopts a critical usage-based socio-cognitive approach to language and discourse and applies a profile-based methodology focusing on the representation of nation social actors. The polarising potential of five construal operations - image schemas or schematisation, metonymy, profiling, specificity, and metaphor - is systematically examined. The analysis yields three main representations of national identity: the nation as oppressed victim, rebellious victim, and rescued victim. Whereas the oppressed-victim representation is most salient in Ventura's discourse, the rescued-victim representation is particularly prominent in Bolsonaro's narrative. The findings show how these construal operations integrate far-right nativist exclusionary ideologies into collective national identities and how they are motivated by distinct socio-cultural settings within the same language.

KEY WORDS

National identity; polarisation; far-right populism; construal operations; Cognitive Linguistics.

REFERENCES

Glynn, D. (2016). Quantifying polysemy: Corpus methodology for prototype theory.
Gries, S. T. (2010). Behavioral profiles: A fine-grained and quantitative approach in corpus-based lexical semantics.
Hart, C. (2014). Discourse, Grammar and Ideology. Bloomsbury.
Hart, C. (2015). Viewpoint in linguistic discourse. Critical Discourse Studies.
Koller, V. (2014). Cognitive Linguistics and ideology.
Langacker, R. W. (2008). Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction. Oxford University Press.
Romano, M., & Porto, M. D. (2016). Exploring Discourse Strategies in Social and Cognitive Interaction. John Benjamins.
Soares da Silva, A. (2021). Sociolectometry and language variation.
Van Dijk, T. A. (2018). Socio-cognitive discourse studies.

Jan Zienkowski

Université Libre de Bruxelles

BIONOTE

Jan Zienkowski is Professor Communication Studies at Université Libre de Bruxelles. His research focuses on discourse, ideological (mis)recognition and the construction of socio-political imaginaries, with particular attention to metapolitical controversies in civil society and the media. He is affiliated with ReSIC at ULB, is an associated researcher at DESIRE (VUB) and Engage - Centre for Publicness in Contemporary Communication and is a long-standing board member and now President-elect of DiscourseNet. He conceptualises discourse a performative and reflexive articulatory practice, inspired by poststructuralist, pragmatist, and linguistic pragmatic approaches to discourse. Since a couple of years, he has taken an interest in Studies of the Imaginary and Theories of Recognition. He is currently co-editing two volumes on Discourse and imaginaries with Thomas Jacobs, to be published with Palgrave Macmillan. These volumes focus on contingent trajectories of past, present and future societies.

Discourse and the construction of illiberal orders of (mis)recognition

Critical work in academia has become the target of a metapolitical attack that problematises supposedly delusional "woke" or "elite" ideas on identity, gender, social justice and democracy. Critical forms of knowledge are increasingly called into question and silenced by authoritarian actors. Far-right, libertarian and reactionary voices critique the vocabulary of critical social science: gender theory is reframed as ideology, critiques of nationalism as collective self-hatred, and research acknowledging minority experiences as political activism. This paper calls on discourse scholars to examine the metapolitics of contemporary controversies. Focusing on anti-woke discourses about cultural warfare, it draws attention to the metapolitical imaginaries underpinning the so-called culture wars. It argues that theories of (mis)recognition and studies of the imaginary provide analytical and ethical lenses for criticising illiberal and anti-democratic projects and calls for renewed dialogue between critical discourse studies and neighbouring critical perspectives in the social sciences and humanities.

KEY WORDS

Critical discourse studies; illiberalism; misrecognition; metapolitics; culture wars.

REFERENCES

Ege, M., & Springer, J. (2023). The Cultural Politics of Anti-Elitism. Routledge.

Finlayson, A. (2021). Neoliberalism, the Alt-Right and the Intellectual Dark Web. Theory, Culture & Society, 38(6), 167-190.

Herzog, B. (2016). Discourse Analysis as Social Critique. Palgrave Macmillan.

Herzog, B. (2021). Authoritarianism as pathology of recognition. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 8(1), 135.

Kølvraa, C., & Forchtner, B. (2025). Imagining Alternative Worlds. Routledge.

Zienkowski, J. (2018). Politics and the political in critical discourse studies. Critical Discourse Studies.

PANEL: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND IDENTITIES IN POLARISED CONTEXTS

Panel convenor: Silvia Peterssen, Vilnius University

This panel was organised within the framework of the EU-funded DARE project, based at Vilnius University, supervised by Liudmila Arcimavičienė and led by the panel convenor, Silvia Peterssen. The project investigates the discursive representation of abortion and related social actors in European news media during the pandemic and post-pandemic period (2020–2025), with particular attention to polarising narratives around reproductive rights.

In a context of intensifying political and social polarisation, fuelled in part by the global rise and normalisation of right-wing populist movements, women's rights remain highly at stake (Sanders & Jenkins, 2022). Over the past decade, right-wing populisms have increasingly permeated the public sphere, spreading antifeminist and discriminatory attitudes across political institutions, mainstream media and digital platforms. Patriarchal femonationalist discourses pose a direct threat to women's collective action and autonomy, as they seek to establish an oppressive social order that disregards and stigmatises those who do not conform to its exclusionary ideals (Farris, 2017). One of the central pillars of this social order is the preservation of the traditional family, which consigns women to reproductive work, frames motherhood and caregiving as central to women's identities and life paths and imposes a heteronormative gendered (and racialised) class paradigm (Pacilli et al., 2024). Two clear examples of the institutionalisation of this agenda are the establishment of a near-total abortion ban in Poland in 2021 and the overturning of Roe v Wade by the Supreme Court of the United States in 2022. Against this backlash, this panel aims to critically examine how patriarchal ideals are discursively constructed and contested in recent polarised contexts, highlighting the power of discourse in construing identities and in perpetuating or challenging gendered stereotypes.

KEY WORDS

Patriarchal discourse, feminist counternarratives, women's rights, women's identities, polarisation.

REFERENCES

Farris, S. R. (2017). In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism. Duke University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv11sn2fp

Pacilli, M. G., Spaccatini, F., Pagliaro, S., & Giovannelli, I. (2024). From "Bad" and "Good" Motivations to Abort to "Bad" and "Good" Women: Abortion Stigma and Backlash Against Women Who Interrupt Their Pregnancy. Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 21(2), 645–656. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-023-00927-8

Sanders, R., & Jenkins, L. D. (2022). Control, alt, delete: Patriarchal populist attacks on international women's rights. Global Constitutionalism, 11(3), 401–429. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045381721000198

Ieva Bisigirskaitė[1] & Lina Šumskaitė[2]

[1]Vilnius University; [2]Vilnius University

Normative motherhood as a strategy: Lithuanian NGO Mothers of LGBTQ+ Children

In Central and Eastern Europe, right-wing populist movements frequently weaponize maternal protection to attack 'gender ideology' (Fábián and Korolczuk, 2017). This paper examines a compelling case of counter-mobilization in Lithuania: the activist group Mamos už LGBTQplius vaikus (Mothers for LGBTQ+ Children). It argues that these mothers strategically co-opt emotionally resonant frames of motherhood to advance an inclusive agenda. Grounded in critical motherhood scholarship, the article analyzes the 2021 solo protest of Rasa Račienė, framing it as a performance of 'normative motherhood' (O'Reilly, 2023) that reclaims family protection discourse. Furthermore, thematic analysis demonstrates how personal struggle is transformed into political provocation through 'mothering rhetorics' (O'Brien Hallstein, 2017) and the paradigm of 'motherwork' (Collins, 1994), co-opting the very language used to marginalize them.

KEY WORDS

Maternal activism; LGBTQ+ rights; normative motherhood; Lithuania; counter-mobilization.

REFERENCES

Collins, P.H. (1994) 'Shifting the center: race, class, and feminist theorizing about motherhood', in E. Nakano Glenn, G. Chang and L.R. Forcey (eds.) Mothering: ideology, experience, and agency. Routledge.

Fábián, K. and Korolczuk, E. (2017) Rebellious parents: parents' movements in Central-Eastern Europe and Russia. Indiana University Press.

O'Brien Hallstein, D. L. (2017) 'Introduction to Mothering Rhetorics', Women's Studies in Communication, 40(1), pp. 1–10.

O'Reilly, A. (2023) Normative motherhood: regulations, representations, and reclamations. Demeter Press.

Eleonora Esposito

University of Navarra

Speaking out in platformed spaces: Feminist influactivism, online misogyny, and digital governance

Building on prior qualitative research on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) targeting feminist influactivists in Italy (Esposito & Semenzin, 2025), this study extends the analysis to Spain, offering a comparative examination of how digital violence shapes feminist online activism across two Southern European contexts. While Italy and Spain share strong feminist traditions and comparable patterns of patriarchal backlash, they differ in media ecologies, platform governance practices, and institutional responses to TFGBV. These differences provide a productive lens for examining how national contexts mediate the forms, intensity, and consequences of TFGBV. Methodologically, the study is grounded in feminist digital ethnography (Herron, 2023) combined with Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS) (KhosraviNik & Esposito, 2018), integrating in-depth qualitative interviews with feminist influactivists and a critical analysis of selected instances of misogynistic and gendered hate to examine how misogynistic violence is discursively constructed, circulated, and normalised on social media platforms, particularly Instagram. Attention is paid not only to overt harassment, but also to subtler discursive strategies such as delegitimisation, sexualised ridicule, algorithmically amplified pile-ons, and intra-feminist conflict. The analysis examines whether patterns observed in Italy, including attacks by manospheric and far-right networks, extend to Spain, and how emerging forms of abuse such as doxxing, deepfake pornography, and AI-assisted harassment are reshaping the risk landscape for feminist activists. The study also examines platform governance and evolving regulatory frameworks at EU level, with particular attention to how recent instruments such as the Digital Services Act and the AI Act contribute to shaping platform moderation practices, response mechanisms, and transparency obligations in relation to gendered harms. By situating feminist online activism at the intersection of discourse, platform affordances, and regulatory environments, this paper foregrounds how formal governance arrangements interact with the everyday experiences of activists navigating online hostility. The comparative findings contribute to wider debates on digital risk, feminist resistance, and accountability in platform-mediated public spheres.

KEY WORDS

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV); platform governance; digital feminism; Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (SM-CDS).

REFERENCES

Esposito, E., & Semenzin, S. (2025). Women's activism online in Italy: Claiming spaces, navigating misogyny, reimagining feminisms. European Journal of Communication, 40(4), 373–390. https://doi.org/10.1177/02673231251349009

European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2022). Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act). Official Journal of the European Union, L 277, 1–102. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj

European Parliament and Council of the European Union. (2024). Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act). Official Journal of the European Union, L, 2024/1689. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj

Herron, B. A. (2023). 40 years of qualitative feminist interviewing: Conceptual moments and cultivating ecosystems of care. Qualitative Inquiry, 29(6), 659–668. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778004221139611

KhosraviNik, M., & Esposito, E. (2018). Online hate, digital discourse and critique: Exploring digitally-mediated discursive practices of gender-based hostility. Lodz Papers in Pragmatics, 14(1), 45–68. https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2018-0003

Silvia Peterssen[1] & Lorella Viola[2]

[1]Vilnius University; [2]Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Polarisation and activism in news reports on abortion during and after the Covid-19 pandemic

Drawing on Feminist Critical Discourse Studies (Lazar, 2005), this study analyses the representation of activist actors in a corpus of news reports on abortion published by five mainstream European online news media (BBC, The Guardian, Euronews, Reuters and Politico Europe) during the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic period (2020-2025). This timeframe reflects the increasing polarisation associated with the global rise and normalisation of right-wing populisms and their anti-gender discourses, which stigmatise abortion (Santos & Geva, 2022). Considering the central role of activist organisations in the abortion debate (Hunt, 2021), this study focuses on the discursive inclusion, exclusion, evaluation, and blame attribution of pro-choice and anti-abortion activist actors in the corpus. Methodologically, the study uses a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative corpus-linguistic and topic modelling techniques with qualitative critical discourse analysis to explore which actors have a voice, in which contexts, and whether representations of abortion-related activism change over time. Preliminary findings suggest (i) an unequal representation of pro- and anti-abortion activist organisations and movements in the corpus, with a higher presence of anti-abortion movements as collective actors, but a more frequent inclusion of specific pro-choice organisations, such as Planned Parenthood, as individual actors, and (ii) a significant association of activist actors with the contexts of abortion bans in Poland, Malta and the United States.

KEY WORDS

Abortion activism; polarisation; news media discourse; mixed methods; feminist CDS.

REFERENCES

Hunt, K. (2021). Exploiting a Crisis: Abortion Activism and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Perspectives on Politics, 20(2), 396–411. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592720004673

Lazar, M. M. (Ed.). (2005). Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230599901

Santos, F. G., & Geva, D. (2022). Populist strategy in the European parliament: How the anti-gender movement sabotaged deliberation about sexual health and reproductive rights. European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology, 9(4), 475–501. https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2022.2113417

Orlagh Woods

Vilnius University

Counter-narratives of reproduction: In her shoes and the discursive politics of repeal

This paper examines the role of testimonial storytelling in public discourse surrounding the 2018 Irish abortion referendum through an analysis of In Her Shoes by Erin Darcy. In Her Shoes is a published collection of testimonies that originated in the anonymous Facebook archive of the same name, which documented personal experiences of crisis pregnancy, abortion, and reproductive healthcare in Ireland. Within a deeply polarised referendum campaign in which abortion was framed through competing discourses of morality, religion and citizenship, In Her Shoes emerged as a grassroots intervention that challenged dominant discourses surrounding Irish women's bodies by foregrounding intimate first-person narratives that had historically been excluded from mainstream political and media representation. This intervention aligns with Michelle M. Lazar's emphasis on the importance of analysing how discourse is used by historically disadvantaged groups to "resist and challenge the social status quo," particularly through culturally valued communicative genres (188). Focusing primarily on the memoir as a textual and discursive intervention, the paper also considers its relationship to the wider digital archive from which it emerged. Drawing on Lorraine Grimes et al.'s analysis of feminist archiving practices as well as scholarship on testimonial self writing, the paper explores how testimonial narratives operated discursively within the repeal campaign as counter-narratives to dominant institutional representations of abortion and reproductive citizenship. In this context, Lazar's claim that "critical awareness-raising is an action that enables one to begin to see things differently that before," and that "the political critique of discourse can be viewed not only for action, but as action", helps frame In Her Shoes as not only representing political discourse but actively participating in it (185). Ultimately, the paper argues that digital testimonial archives can intervene in dominant discursive frameworks surrounding gendered citizenship, while also reshaping what counts as legitimate knowledge within debates on reproductive rights.

KEY WORDS

Feminist testimony; reproductive citizenship; memoir; abortion; crisis pregnancy.

REFERENCES

Grimes, L, Cassidy, K., Dias, M., Lanigan, C., O'Carroll, A., Singhvi, P. (2023) Archiving "sensitive" social media data: 'In Her Shoes', a case study. Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies, 10(19), 1-19.

Lazar, M. M. (2014) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Relevance for Current Gender and Language Research. In S. Ehrlich, M. Meyerhoff & J.Holmes (Eds.), The Handbook of Language, Gender and Sexuality (pp. 180-201). Wiley Blackwell.

SESSION PRESENTATIONS

Fidan Abiyeva

Military Scientific-Research Institute under National Defence University

Building collective military identity in English military discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis

This study investigates the discursive construction of collective military identity in military English texts through the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Within the military context, language doesn't only serve as a tool for communicating directives or conveying information, but also as a mechanism for maintaining institutional authority, constructing hierarchical relationships, and fostering collective, shared sense of professional identity among the members of military institutions. Military discourse thus supports the production of a collective identity that strengthens organizational cohesion and operational readiness. The study explores the ways language is used to build group identity, a sense of institutional belonging and hierarchical authority by using a qualitative corpus of English military texts that encompasses official orders, doctrinal publications, instructional materials, training manuals. The research, methodologically being anchored in Critical Discourse Analysis, is guided by the models advanced by Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1998) and Wodak (2011). The study investigates how institutional identity is articulated by analyzing language patterns, modal constructions, imperative forms and language tools contributing to collective identity formation. The results indicate that military discourse systematically shapes collective identity by emphasizing cooperation, hierarchy and common responsibilities and objectives. Frequently used forms and expressions like imperative forms and deontic expressions serve to support authority and obedience, while inclusive pronouns and expressions cultivate strong sense of collective commitment. The linguistic patterns used in military texts not only regulates behavior; they also contribute greatly to organizational ideology. The study further explores the way how military text balance the individual and the collective, namely the relationship between individual and collective identity. In this respect, military texts encourage personnel to adopt the institution's values and identify themselves as loyal representatives of military institutions and align their identities with aims of military organizations. The findings advance Critical Discourse Studies by examining the ways how linguistic practices shape professional identities and legitimize institutional authority. Furthermore, the results offer pedagogical implications for Military English teaching by addressing the social and professional importance of discourse competence in military contexts.

KEY WORDS

Military texts, military discourse, collective identity, institutional communication, Critical Discourse Analysis.

REFERENCES

Fairlough, N. (1995). Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language. Longman.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach.

Wodak, R. (2011). "Us" and "Them": Inclusion and exclusion-discrimination via discourse. In G. Delanty, R. Wodak, and P. Jones (Eds.), Identity, belonging and migration (pp.54-77). Liverpool University Press.

Isabel Alonso-Belmonte[1] & Dolores Porto[2]

[1]Autonomous University of Madrid; [2]University of Alcalá

Identity First: Grassroots slogans and the discursive logic of polarization

Disinformation goes beyond false claims to encompass discursive practices such as selective framing and relexicalization that reshape political meaning and undermine trust in democratic institutions (Maci et al. 2023; European Commission 2018). Closely tied to polarization, these practices foster antagonistic constructions of social reality in which political conflict is reframed as a moral struggle between opposed collectives. Across media and digital platforms, stance taking practices articulate epistemic certainty, moral evaluation, and affective alignment that consolidate in group identities while delegitimizing institutions and political out groups (Alonso Belmonte, Porto & Romano 2026). This paper examines relexicalized grassroots slogans as discursive resources in the construction of polarized identities during crises through a cross linguistic and transnational comparison of two formally analogous expressions: the Spanish slogan solo el pueblo salva al pueblo ("only the people save the people") and the English language slogan we keep us safe. Widely circulated in protest movements and social media, both foreground collective self reliance while implicitly constructing an antagonistic divide between "the people" and delegitimized institutions. The Spanish slogan is analyzed in relation to the 2024 DANA floods and the 2025 wildfires in Spain, while the English slogan is examined in the context of pro Palestine student encampments (2024) and mobilizations against ICE raids in the United States (2025–26). Drawing on a sociocognitive discourse analytic framework (van Dijk 2018), the analysis focuses on semantic displacement, ideological recontextualization, and polarized stance taking. The findings show that these slogans function as markers of belonging and as discursive anchors for polarized interpretations of crisis and political agency, contributing to reductive—and potentially misleading—worldviews that facilitate disinformation and anti institutional sentiment.

KEY WORDS

Disinformation, polarization, grassroots slogans, relexicalization, discursive identity construction.

REFERENCES

Alonso-Belmonte, I., Porto, M. D., & Romano, M. (Eds.). (2026). Polarised Discourse. Walter de Gruyter.

European Commission, Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology. (2018). A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation: Report of the independent high level group on fake news and online disinformation. Publications Office of the European Union.

Maci, S. M., Demata, M., McGlashan, M., & Seargeant, P. (2023). The various dimensions of disinformation. In S. M. Maci, M. Demata, M. McGlashan, & P. Seargeant (Eds.), The Routledge handbook of discourse and disinformation (pp. 1-13). Routledge.

van Dijk, T. A. (2018). Sociocognitive discourse studies. In J. Richardson & J. Flowerdew (Eds.), The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies (pp. 26–43). Routledge.

Cláudia de Araújo

University College Dublin

The protesting "other": Protesters as the enemy within 21st century Spain

Who counts as a legitimate political subject? And what happens when the answer to that question is weaponised? This paper examines how protest actors in Spain are discursively constructed as dangerous outsiders – enemies of democracy, threats to social cohesion, and, increasingly, terrorists – through the systematic analysis of reactions to protest events in Spanish print media between 2000 and 2020. Drawing on a Critical Frame Analysis (Verloo, 2005) of reactions to protest published in two newspapers, the paper identifies the discursive mechanisms through which vested actors – principally those engaged in formal politics – construct protesters as outsiders to the political community. The analysis reveals a consistent pattern of othering operating across two intersecting dimensions: delegitimation and securitisation. On the first dimension, protesters are framed through a roster of "thought-terminating clichés" (Dimitrov, 2021): recurring discursive tropes such as radical, anti-system, anarchist, fascist, Nazi that foreclose critical evaluation and firmly place protest actors outside the boundaries of legitimate political subjecthood. On the second dimension, popular mobilisation is progressively framed as a security problem, escalating from a threat to public order to an existential threat to the democratic polity and, from the anti-austerity protest cycle onwards, to terrorism – a securitising move (Buzan et al., 1998) operationalised through the strategic invocation of Spain's collective memory of ETA and separatist violence. The paper demonstrates that these discursive constructions are not merely reactive but productive: they shape the boundaries of legitimate political participation and discipline dissent. The findings reveal a significant diachronic trend: the discursive space available for the negative construction of protesters expands progressively across the period, normalising increasingly extreme framings. This escalation is particularly directed at youth, new social movements, and independentist actors, whose political subjectivities are consistently constructed as deviant, dangerous, and undeserving of recognition.

KEY WORDS

Protest; othering; securitisation; critical frame analysis; Spain.

REFERENCES

Buzan, B. et al. (1998). Security: A New Framework for Analysis. Boulder & London, Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Dimitrov D., et al. (2021). "Detecting Propaganda Techniques in Memes". Available at https://arxiv.org/abs/2109.08013 (retrieved on 28-09-2023).

Verloo, M. (2005). "Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Europe: A Critical Frame Analysis Approach." Greek Review of Social Research, 117, 11–34.

Liudmila Arcimavičienė

Vilnius University

Marginalised women and polarisation in post-Roe U.S. abortion news

Following the overturning of Roe v. Wade in June 2022, abortion has become a site of ideological struggle in U.S. public discourse. This paper analyses how mainstream news media (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 2009) discursively construct abortion through the representation of key social actors and how such representations (van Leeuwen, 2008) contribute to legitimation and polarisation. Focusing on post-Roe reporting, the study investigates the following questions: (1) what dominant patterns of social actor representation emerge in abortion news discourse; (2) how these patterns shift when actors are represented through embedded direct quotations; and (3) how actor representation correlates with thematic constructions of abortion viewpoints across differently positioned news outlets. The analysis draws on a corpus of 60 news articles published by CNN, CBS and FOX between June 2022 and March 2024, comprising 45,866 words. Methodologically, the study combines qualitative coding of social actor identification, legitimisation and polarisation with thematic analysis of actor roles, intergroup relations and the discursive construction of abortion bias. The findings show that abortion discourse across all three outlets is strongly structured by institutional and elite-centred narration. Politicians and legal representatives are the most visible actors, while women are frequently generalised, relationally positioned as reactive rather than agentive participants. CNN and CBS rely more heavily on expert and institutional voices, which tend to frame abortion as a legitimate medical and legal issue. FOX, by contrast, more strongly intensifies moral conflict and oppositional distinctions between institutional elites and "ordinary people." Overall, abortion discourse across all three outlets remains largely anchored in institutional and elite-driven frameworks (Koudenburg & Kashima, 2022), reflecting variation within a broader continuum of socially conservative discourse on reproductive rights.

KEY WORDS

Post-Roe news; abortion discourse; social actors; media polarisation; legitimation.

REFERENCES

Fairclough, N. (2013). Critical discourse analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis (pp. 9–20). Routledge.

Folkenflik, D. (2025). CBS shifts to appease the right under the new owner. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2025/09/12/nx-s1-5537152/cbs-news-ellison-steps-appease-trump

Koudenburg, N., & Kashima, Y. (2022). A polarized discourse: Effects of opinion differentiation and structural differentiation on communication. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 48(7), 1068–1086.

van Dijk, T. A. (2009). Critical discourse studies: A sociocognitive approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis (2nd ed., pp. 62–86). Sage.

van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis. Oxford University Press.

Maryam Ayad

University of Helsinki

Success as a polarized concept: The challenge between Qur'anic Exegesis, Shi'i Ritual Discourse, and the narrative of the Islamic Republic

In the Qur'anic sentence "yā laytanī kuntu maʿahum fa-afūza fawzan ʿaẓīman: Oh, would that I had been with them, then should I have achieved a great success" (Q, 4: 73), Fawz denotes success/victory in gaining trophies of war. According to Shi'i Islam's exegeses, those who utter this phrase are out-groups who are not totally loyal to the Islamic doctrines. A similar sentence in Shi'i hadith and ziyāra texts shows a shift in the meaning of Fawz as being martyred, relating success to the afterlife instead of material victory. The group uttering this sentence are pious Shi'a Muslims. This re-semantization of vocabulary reflects polarizing the community into in-groups interpreting victory as martyrdom and out-groups interpreting it as gaining material success. Presenting different meanings of success, Shi'i community as minority may have found a way to be satisfied with being marginalized and defeated. Through altering the phrase's semantic load, Shi'i devotional discourse establishes continuity with revelation while reorienting meaning toward a communal need. In relation with these polarized meanings of Fawz, I analyze the discursive use of the Persian word Pīrūzī (Success/ Victory) in the talks by the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ali Khamenei, the last leader, constructs a narrative of Iranian's success in his speeches following the Twelve-day war between Israel and Iran, framing Pīrūzī as the defeat of Israel. Thus, this Shi'i leader represents the success of the in-groups by drawing on the meaning associated with the out-group pole in Shi'i discourse. This construction is in contrast with framing success as martyrdom by Ruhollah Khomeini, the first leader of the Islamic Republic, during the Iran-Iraq war. This semiotic shift may be a response to Iranian community's engagement with global norms of success. Such a community can no longer be mobilized through narratives of defeat transformed into metaphysical victory. The case shows how religiously polarized semantics are strategically redefined in response to changing power relations and audience expectations.

KEY WORDS

Success; war; ritual discourse; Qur'an exegesis; polarization.

Adeliya Bissenbayeva

University of Navarra

Constructing Russian identity through the use of geopolitical imaginaries of "Europe", "Asia" and "Eurasia". Shifts in Russian self/other representation from 2000 to 2024.

Mouffe (2013) pointed out that unresolved issues of collective identities in the international field could potentially lead to a multipolar world, in which not only the concept of democracy but also the "West" itself would be questioned. As a result, scholars scrutinise the conceptual representations of space of "East" and "West", as well as "Europe" as ideological and socio-political identities (Baumann, 2020; Drobnitskyy, 2017; Lyne, 2007; Varouxakis, 2025, among others). In the international arena, one of the most important actors is Russia, which actively undermines Western institutions and values. Following the aforementioned studies, and in particular Varouxakis's definition of the discursive function of the "West" in historical perspective, our analysis attempts to reconstruct those units of space ("Europe", "Asia", "East", "West" and "Eurasia") through an empirical mixed method analysis, embedded into critical theoretical lens (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2005; van Dijk, 1993). Within broader focus, the role of symbolic space, such as "Europe" was reviewed as an ideological concept. Simultaneously, the analysis adopts a socio-cultural perspective (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) to demonstrate that the antagonism between collective identities in the international arena led to a shift in Russian civilizational identity. For instance, one of the empirical results demonstrates that Russian identity construction post 2022 became double-folded: (1) to claim to conserve genuine European identity, which was exterminated in the West; (2) to construct "Eurasian" identity, as a legitimation tool of Russian imperial policies at home and abroad. Hence, the new construct of identity is the fruit of a number of geopolitical tensions against the West. Furthermore, we claim that Russian (re)construction of its civilisational identity serves both as a representation of its idealised cognitive model of the space (as in Lakoff, 1987), as well the legitimation strategy of pertinence to economic and social structures abroad (following Chilton, 2004). The aim of this presentation is to scrutinise the preliminary results of the analysis, reviewing the role of metaphors in the construction of identity, not only within Russian discourse, but within general political discourse as well.

KEY WORDS

Imaginaries; metaphors; CDA; Russia; identity.

REFERENCES

Baumann, M. (2020). 'Propaganda Fights' and 'Disinformation Campaigns': The discourse on information warfare in Russia-West relations. Contemporary Politics, 26(3), 288-307. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2020.1728612

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. Discourse Studies, 7(4-5), 585-614. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407

Charteris-Black, J. (2004). Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis. Palgrave Macmillan.

Charteris-Black, J. (2005). Politicians and rhetoric: The persuasive power of metaphor. Palgrave Macmillan.

Chilton, P. A. (2004). Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice. Routledge.

Drobnitskyy, D. (2017, julio 24). Zapad—Eto dve civilizatsii, a ne odna [The West is two civilizations, not one]. Livejournal. https://matveychev-oleg.livejournal.com/5830705.html

Lakoff, G. (1987). Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind. The University of Chicago press.

Lyne, R. (2007). Rossiya i Zapad: Konfrontatsiya neizbezhna?[Russia and the West: Confrontation is Inevitable?]. Russia in Global Affairs, 6(2007). https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/rossiya-i-zapad-konfrontacziya-neizbezhna/

Mouffe, C. (with Martin, J.). (2013). Chantal Mouffe: Hegemony, radical democracy, and the political. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203788905

van Dijk, T. (1993). Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. Sage Publications, 4(2), 249-283.

Varouxakis, G. (2025). The west: The history of an idea. Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691272368

Xinying Chen[1] **& Miroslav Kubát**[2]

[1]University of Ostrava; [2]University of Ostrava

When Complexity Misleads: Syntactic Structure and Disinformation in Czech News Discourse

As online news environments become increasingly fragmented, understanding how manipulative content differs linguistically from credible reporting has become an important research task. This study investigates whether syntactic complexity systematically varies across Czech online news articles assigned different levels of trustworthiness and whether it can help distinguish manipulative from credible reporting. We analyze the Verifee corpus (Boháček et al., 2023), comprising more than 10,000 Czech news articles annotated on five credibility levels (credible, partially credible, misleading, manipulative, and unclassifiable). Texts are parsed with UDPipe (Straka, 2018). For each article, we compute five complementary metrics of linear and hierarchical complexity: average sentence length in tokens and in clauses, average clause length, mean dependency distance (Liu, 2008), and mean hierarchical distance (Jing & Liu, 2015). Across metrics, manipulative and misleading articles are consistently more syntactically complex than credible and partially credible texts, with longer sentences and higher dependency-distance scores. We argue that this added complexity can function rhetorically, mimicking academic sophistication, raising the reader's processing load, and making questionable claims harder to evaluate, whereas credible journalism favors structural simplicity and communicative clarity.

KEY WORDS

Disinformation; syntactic complexity; media discourse; news credibility; mean dependency distance.

REFERENCES

Boháček, M., Hruška, J., Straka, M., & Žabokrtský, Z. (2023). Czech-ing the news: Article trustworthiness dataset for Czech. In Proceedings of the 13th Workshop on Computational Approaches to Subjectivity, Sentiment & Social Media Analysis (WASSA) (pp. 105–114). Association for Computational Linguistics.

Jing, Y., & Liu, H. (2015). Mean hierarchical distance as a syntactic complexity metric. Journal of Quantitative Linguistics, 22(4), 345–364.

Liu, H. (2008). Dependency distance as a metric of language comprehension difficulty. Journal of Cognitive Science, 9(2), 159–191.

Straka, M. (2018). UDPipe 2.0 prototype at CoNLL 2018 UD shared task. In Proceedings of the CoNLL 2018 Shared Task: Multilingual Parsing from Raw Text to Universal Dependencies (pp. 197–207). Association for Computational Linguistics.

Desislava Cheshmedzhieva-Stoycheva

Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen

Constructing Roma and GRT identities in media discourse: A critical discourse analysis

The paper analyses on a comparative basis the way three newspapers in Bulgaria and three in the UK construct the image of Roma and Gypsies, Roma and Travellers. The corpus for analysis is collected over the span of five years, i.e. 2020-2025 and comprises 600 articles altogether. The newspapers analysed are the Bulgarian Dnevnik, Standart and Sega and the British The Guardian, The Independent and The Telegraph. In order to be able to trace the way the ethnic identities of the two groups are developed the study looks into the main topics analysed, the position of the ethnonyms in the headline structures, the most frequently occurring metaphors and stereotypes. To do that the socio-cognitive approach with CDS has been employed acknowledging the social factors that determine the thinking patterns associated with the two groups. Some of the main findings show that the image of above-mentioned groups is primarily negative, although there are some positive trends especially in terms of emotionally charged lexis or pejoratives used on the pages of national newspapers. At the same time, the most frequently employed metaphors and the implied stereotypes show the continuing existence of the same negative thinking patterns associated with the two groups, namely the predominant use of the metaphors of war, disease and parasite and stereotypes, such as Roma/GRT disobey laws, Roma/ GRT are criminals, Roma/ GRT live off the social welfare system, among others.

KEY WORDS

Ethnic identity; CDA; media discourse; Roma; GRT.

Nina Cingerová[1] & Katarína Motyková[2]

[1]Comenius University Bratislava; [2]Comenius University Bratislava

Discursive construction of polarization in Slovak online political satire: The case of the constitutional amendment on "two sexes"

This paper examines how political satire participates in the discursive (re)construction of polarization in social media environments. It focuses on the case of the constitutional amendment on "two sexes," adopted in Slovakia in September 2025, which was promoted by the populist government of Robert Fico through a narrative of national sovereignty and resistance to "progressivism." The amendment was also supported by parts of the conservative opposition, producing a more complex structure of polarization. Through value-based claims, zones of "us" vs. "not-us" / "them" vs. "not-them" were constructed, within which socio-political identities and their boundaries were negotiated. The paper explores how this event was articulated in participatory, humorous online discourse. We argue that humor is an underexamined strategy for the discursive articulation of political and social conflicts. It operates as a mode of action that condenses complex conflicts into accessible forms. As a genre, humor has a "license" to employ affect, enabling the negotiation of meaning not only through description or argumentation but through shared emotions. Its reliance on incongruity allows speakers to foreground contradictions that remain implicit in other discursive genres. The dataset consists of two types of material: (1) posts (primarily multimodal texts) from widely followed Slovak satirical profiles (e. g. Zomri, Adolf Snehuliak, Cynická obluda), and (2) related, anonymized comments as their paratexts. Both corpora are delimited by the period surrounding the parliamentary vote. We treat these profiles as relevant actors in political discourse, recognized as such both by audiences and institutional actors. The analysis asks: How do satirical profiles frame the amendment? What identities and antagonisms are constructed in posts and comments? Who becomes the target of affect? Through what tactics do satirical actors amplify, rearrange, or destabilize polarization articulated by institutional actors? How do audiences adopt, negotiate, or contest these frames? Methodologically, the study draws on critical discourse analysis (van Dijk; Fairclough; Wodak) and multimodal discourse analysis (Kress; van Leeuwen; Machin). Rather than focusing on the ontology of discourse, the paper emphasizes the operationalization of abstract categories through analytically grounded tools. The paper highlights the role of humor as a strategy in the discursive production of identities and polarization in participatory digital public spheres.

KEY WORDS

Political satire; social media; polarization; participatory discourse; Slovakia.

Nicola Davies-Laubscher

University of Cape Town

Populist discourse across the South African political spectrum: Finding common ground on X

In South Africa's fragmented, volatile, and highly mediatised political landscape, social media platforms have increasingly emerged as central arenas for the performance of political leadership, the mobilisation of affect, and the construction of competing political imaginaries. As legacy political institutions face declining trust and legitimacy (Darr & Harman, 2025), platforms such as X increasingly function as spaces where political authority is asserted, contested, and reassembled in real time through language, symbolism, and affective appeal. This article examines how South African populist political parties and leaders across the ideological spectrum deploy X to articulate political meaning, mobilise identity and belonging, and frame responsibility for social and economic crises. The article draws on existing scholarship on populist discourse in South African politics, particularly studies that conceptualise populism as a discursive logic that divides society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite' (Fölscher, de Jager & Nyenhuis, 2021). Building on this literature, the article argues that populism on X is not only a discursive strategy but also a platformed performance that relies on speed, visibility, and affective intensity. Across both left- and right-wing populist formations, this antagonistic framing is mobilised to delegitimise existing political institutions and to present populist actors as authentic representatives of popular will. Despite significant ideological differences, especially in relation to race, nationalism, redistribution, and belonging, these actors share a common rhetorical desire to 'take back control' from entrenched political systems and elites. Empirically, the article draws on an original dataset of 1684 tweets produced by prominent left- and right-leaning South African populist actors and parties. Together, these actors represent a diverse cross-section of South Africa's contemporary populist landscape, spanning radical economic leftism, ethnic nationalism, conservative minority politics, and anti-establishment libertarianism.

KEY WORDS

Populism; South Africa; Global South; X; Twitter.

REFERENCES

Darr, J.P. & Harman, M. 2025. Leaving a legacy: Shifting media use and American democratic attitudes. Political Behavior, 47(3): 1339-1362. DOI: 10.1007/s11109-024-09992-0.

Fölscher, M., de Jager, N. and Nyenhuis, R. 2021. Populist parties shifting the political discourse? A case study of the Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 59(4): 535-558. DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X21000276.

Alexia DeBono

Vilnius University

Social actor labelling in abortion news reporting: A case of Malta

This study analyses how abortion is discursively represented in English-language Maltese news reporting published between 2022 and 2026. It investigates how journalistic discourse constructs abortion not only as a medical and legal issue, but also as a moral and political question, and asks how such representations contribute to legitimisation of authority and public identity. Special attention is given to the ways in which women, medical professionals, activists, religious representatives, political actors and state institutions are positioned within news reporting, and to what extent these actors are granted agency, voice and interpretive authority. The study is situated within the framework of Critical Discourse Studies, which approaches media language as a site where social power, ideology and institutional authority are reproduced, negotiated and contested (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998; Catalano & Waugh, 2020; Wodak, 2023). Methodologically, it combines reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with a deductive application of van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor framework in order to identify recurring representational patterns such as inclusion and exclusion, activation and passivation, personalisation and impersonalisation, and individualisation versus collectivisation. The data consists of a corpus of 100 articles drawn from 5 English-language Maltese news outlets published over the four-year period. The analysis suggests that abortion reporting in Malta is organised around competing and at times polarised narratives, in which agency is unevenly distributed. Political actors, legal authorities and medical experts are frequently foregrounded as legitimate interpreters of the issue, while women are more often collectivised and represented as affected, vulnerable or constrained participants rather than as autonomous decision-makers. The study argues that these patterns reveal how news discourse can shape public understanding of abortion by normalising particular social hierarchies and forms of civic belonging in a contested national debate.

KEY WORDS

Critical Discourse Studies; abortion news; social actor; reflexive thematic analysis; Malta.

REFERENCES

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), pp. 77–101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Cap, P. (2019). Discourse studies: Between social constructionism and linguistics. A critical overview. Topics in Linguistics 20 (2), 1–16.

Catalano, Th., L. R. Waugh. (2020). Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Studies and Beyond. Springer.

Fairclough, N. (2010). Language and ideology, in Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. 2nd ed. London: Longman, pp. 56–68.

van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Representing social actors, in Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 23–54.

Wodak, R. & Reisigl, M. (2016). The discourse-historical approach (DHA), in Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (eds). Methods of Critical Discourse Studies. 3rd ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 23–61.

Wodak, R. (2023). Politics as usual: Investigating political discourse in action, in The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, pp. 595–609.

Marcin Deutschmann

University of Opole

A(nta)gonistic quasi-deliberation: Instrumentalizing free speech for extremist mainstreaming on YouTube

In January 2025, “Kanał Zero” – a high-reach, Polish YouTube channel – interviewed leaders of the pro-Russian, fascist movement “Rodacy Kamraci”. Was it a part of free deliberation, or were democratic means used to promote an anti-democratic agenda? The issue set off a heated and polarized public debate about the boundaries and rules of democratic discourse. In this paper, I argue that such media events create a hybrid form of public sphere in which an aesthetic of “neutral” political talk-show normalizes extremist, polarizing views, and in which rational deliberation between adversaries is being replaced by affective, identity-based quasi-deliberation that constructs antagonism against enemies. Democratic inclusion and free speech here are instrumentally used to legitimize anti-systemic and anti-democratic discourses, challenging traditional theoretical frameworks of the public sphere: the deliberative (Habermas) and the agonistic (Mouffe). I analyze an interview and a corpus of YouTube comments to examine how extremist ideas are normalized and resisted in public discourse. The study employs Norman Fairclough’s scheme of practical argumentation, adapted for digital discourse and supplemented by an analysis of representation. I reflect on the affective and vigilant polarisation between the system and the anti-system, framing it as a form of a(nta)gonistic quasi-deliberation, where rational argumentation is replaced by affective and vigilant forms. This study contributes to broader scholarly debates on the platform-amplified polarization and thus platform-mediated erosion of democratic resilience and the rise of authoritarian movements across the Western world by demonstrating how identity and social divisions are discursively shaped and intensified in hybrid digital public spheres.

KEY WORDS

Digital public sphere; anti-systemic rhetoric; extremist discourse; political deliberation; political agonism.

Geoffroy Dewandeler

Université Libre de Bruxelles

Producerism: Quo vadis?

Contemporary political discussions are overwhelmingly centered on “welfare dependency”, “activation policies” or taxation and demonstrate that a great deal of polarizing occurs around labour-related signifiers. Part of an ongoing PhD project supervised by Jan Zienkowski drawing on Critical Fantasy Studies (Glynos, 2021), Lacanian Ontological Security Studies (Kisić-Merino, 2024) or the Affective Methodology (Eklundh & Ronderos, 2025), notably scrutinizing “affective investments” (Grossberg, 1992; Glynos, 2001; Laclau, 2005) of social media users in online Belgian political discourses around labour, this presentation first builds on Michel Feher’s (2024) historical account of “producerism” as a transversal logic across the ideological spectrum dividing society between workers framed as “producers” of wealth and two types of « parasites » or profiteers : economic, financial, cultural, institutional or political elites at the top and unemployed or minority groups at the bottom of society. Moralizing discourses about labour and progressive or conservative versions of the “work ethic” (Meda, 2010 ; Anderson, 2023) can notably be traced back to early capitalism when idleness was cast as a moral failure (Foucault, 1961; Alloncle, 2013). However, this presentation seeks to identify precise symmetrical, asymmetrical and differentialist antagonisms generated in contemporary “producerist” discourses across the ideological spectrum, offering a conceptual exploration illustrated with Belgian case analyses. It then suggests that a focus on “producerist” antagonisms provide discourse scholars additional lens on debates about “populism” (Borriello et al., 2023), “cultural warfare” or “anti-wokism”.

KEY WORDS

Producerism; Work Ethic; Welfare Dependency; Taxation; Parasites.

REFERENCES

Alloncle, A-L. (2013). La construction historique de la mise au travail des oisifs. HEC Paris.
Anderson, E. (2023). Hijacked. Cambridge University Press.
Borriello, A., Pranchère, J.-Y. & Vandamme, P.-E. (2023). Populism and democracy: a reassessment. Contemporary politics 30(4), 416–436.
Eklundh, E. & Ronderos, S. (2025). Studying affect through discourse theory. Journal of Language and Politics 24 (1), 91 – 114.
Feher, M. (2024). Producteurs et parasites. La Découverte.
Foucault, M. (1961, 1972). Histoire de la folie à l'âge Classique. Gallimard.
Glynos, J. (2001). The grip of ideology. Journal of Political Ideologies 6(2), 191–214.
Glynos, J. (2021). Critical Fantasy Studies. Journal of Language and Politics 20(1), 95 – 111.
Grossberg, L. (1992). We Gotta Get Out of This Place. Routledge.
Kisić-Merino, P. (2024). Enjoying the Fall. Karlstad University Studies.
Laclau, E. (2005). On Populist Reason. Verso.
Meda, D. (2010). Le Travail, une valeur en voie de disparition? Champs.

Ping Du

University of Nottingham Ningbo China

Culture as action in intercultural workplace conflict resolution interactions

This paper aims to investigate the role of 'culture talk' in intercultural workplace interactions. The data is drawn from a larger dataset of an ethnographic case study on conflict resolution in a multicultural organization in China. This organization has seen continuous non-cooperation and even confrontation between the international and Chinese managers, which culminated into a major management crisis when four Chinese managers handed in resignation. The conflict resolution process lasted for about three months. I observed the process and collected a variety of ethnographic data including 16 audio-recorded meetings (29 hours), eight interviews, organizational documents and emails. Four extracts of conflict resolution interactions will be analyzed drawing on discourse analysis frameworks of Conversation Analysis (CA) and Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA). The analysis focuses on when and how the concept of 'culture' is activated and how 'talk of cultural differences' is strategically deployed by the participants in the process of conflict resolution for various interactional purposes. Preliminary data analysis reveals that 'culture talk' is often deployed to make sense of other's belief or behaviour, mitigate the force of face-threatening acts, shift blame for improprieties, attack others, and construct a superior identity. Most of these actions can be associated and explained with the theories on 'the politics of cultural differences' (Jones, 2013; Zhu et al., 2022). Some of the actions may seem benign, e.g. 'culture talk' as effort of making sense of communicative difficulties or mitigating the force of face-threatening acts. However, this paper argues that whether as political (i.e. power and control) or seemingly benign (relationally positive or neutral) actions, 'talk of cultural differences' in workplace conflict resolution interactions serves to accentuate group boundaries, perpetuate power differences based on a certain ideology (e.g. cultural chauvinism) (Holliday, 2011), and justify the lack of genuine effort for understanding others' perspective. By examining the linguistic strategies for 'culture as action' in workplace interactions, this study also provides a sample at the micro level for our understanding of the issues in larger scale intercultural collaboration at the macro level.

KEY WORDS

Culture; workplace; conflict; conversation analysis.

REFERENCES

Holliday, A. (2011). Intercultural Communication and Ideology. London: Sage.

Jones, R. H. (2013). The paradox of culture in a globalized world. Language and Intercultural Communication, 13 (2), 237-244.

Zhu, H., Jones, R. H., & Jaworska, S. (2022). Acts of distinction at times of crisis: an epistemological challenge to intercultural communication research. Language and Intercultural Communication, 1-12.

Selman Ecevit

MEF University

Virtual gentrification: Multimodal social media discourses of imagined urban redesigns of Istanbul

Over the last decade, a noticeable trend in social media content creation is the practice of imagined urban redesign, where content creators document their attempts at imagining an Istanbul from essentially an alternate timeline. Designating imagined urban redesign on social media as a discursive and social practice that is embedded in broader discourses of urbanism, neoliberalism and modernity in general, the present study investigates the issue from the lens of a prominent Instagram account creating content exclusively through visual manipulation (both through conventional tools such as Adobe Photoshop and image generation tools made available through Generative AI) of urban landscapes. A dataset of 30 Instagram posts, consisting of frame-by-frame animated re-designs of urban imagery is created and analyzed through a multimodal discourse analytic framework, consisting of a social semiotic heuristic to scrutinize issues of social representation and modality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2008; O'Halloran, 2008) as well as a dynamic semantic approach (Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2014) to analyze how frames of meaning are transformed across frames. The preliminary findings highlight the use of multimodal affordances as a practice of virtual gentrification. This is supported by frequent themes like erasure of the locals and their voices, silencing of the material conditions that underlie the urban fabric, and optimism towards the benevolence of urban renewal/ redesign practices on- and off-line. These findings are discussed in relation to the practice of "discursive investing" (Zukin, 2017), whereby discursive practices are used as capital to invest in, and therefore legitimize, marketizations of aspects of life. Moreover, this example shows another way that gentrification is amplified (Bronsvoort & Uitermark, 2022) through digital discourses. Finally, the discursive practices of imagined urban redesign is contextualized in a broader network of real-estate marketization in Istanbul, which is a key economic component of the authoritarian regime in Turkey over the last two decades (Bora, 2016).

KEY WORDS

Multimodality; digital discourse; gentrification in Istanbul.

REFERENCES

Bateman, J. A. & Wildfeuer, J. (2014). A multimodal discourse theory of narrative. Journal of Pragmatics 74, 180-208. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2014.10.001

Bora, T. (2016). İnşaat ya resulullah. Birikim Kitapları.

Bronsvoort, I., & Uitermark, J. L. (2022). Seeing the street through Instagram. Digital platforms and the amplification of gentrification. Urban Studies, 59(14), 2857–2874. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211046539

Kress, G. R., & van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Reading images: The grammar of visual design (2. ed., repr). Routledge.

O'Halloran, K. L. . (2008). Systemic functional-multimodal discourse analysis (SF-MDA): Constructing ideational meaning using language and visual imagery. Visual Communication, 7(4), 443–475. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357208096210

Zukin, S., Lindeman, S., & Hurson, L. (2017). The omnivore's neighborhood? Online restaurant reviews, race, and gentrification. Journal of Consumer Culture, 17(3), 459–479. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540515611203

Jaanika Erne

University of Tartu

Three perspectives on ideology critique: Foundational, traditional and post-structuralist

Ideology critique has been defined as a method of analysis rooted in critical theory and Marxism, that identifies and challenges hidden beliefs, trying to reveal how dominant groups use ideas for social change. Instead of ideology, Michel Foucault has focused on power/knowledge to show how subjects are formed through discursive practices and power relations. The research question in this Paper is: How has ideology critique developed in the foundational and traditional critique, and in the contemporary post-structuralist critique? That way, the Paper touches topics from false consciousness, hegemony, and ideological control to systems of power/knowledge. To normatively evaluate the developments, the Paper also uses the ideas of those thinkers of social and political theory who have not used the word ideology in the modern sense, but have still explained social processes (Plato, Kant). The aim of the Paper is to show that there are different critical frames through which to assess the current political constructs. I am not sure yet whether the best approach would be the comparative method, or process tracing, because of the different understandings of the concept of ideology. The results of the Paper could be useful for critical assessment of concrete political constructs/ideas. The importance is to remind of different frameworks of critique from German Idealism to Foucault, and to find common grounds for reference.

KEY WORDS

Ideology critique; Karl Marx; Michel Foucault; Immanuel Kant.

REFERENCES

Foucault, M. 1970. The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences. Tavistock/Routledge.

Hegel, G. W. F. 2010. The Science of Logic. (G. di Giovanni, Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1812-1816).

Kant, I. 1998. Critique of Pure Reason. (P. Guyer, A. W. Wood, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Marx, K., Engels, F. 1975. The. German Ideology. In: K. Marx, F. Engels (Eds.). Marx/Engels collected works (Vol. 5, 19-581). International Publishers. (Original work written 1845-1846)

Plato. 1992. Republic (G. M. A. Grube. Trans.; C. D. C. Reeve, Rev.). Hackett Publishing. (Original work published ca 375 B.C.E.).

Awni Etaywe

Charles Darwin University

Grievance, legitimation, and ambient polarisation: Discourse as mobilisation in extremist texts

This paper argues that polarisation is conceptualised not merely as ideological division but as a discourse-semantic process that constructs subjectivities, legitimises antagonism, and produces moral and practical imperatives for action. While polarisation is often treated as a psychological or behavioural outcome (Smith et al., 2024; Bjornsgaard & Dukić, 2023), this study foregrounds its linguistic architecture. Building on Etaywe and Giles' (2025) notion of "ambient polarisation," it argues that extremist texts generate a saturated communicative environment in which antagonistic binaries, epistemic monopolisation, and pre-emptive inoculation against counter-evidence become normative background assumptions. Even in the absence of dialogue, these texts cultivate 'communion' and convergence around in-group identities and moral obligations while deepening 'alienation' and divergence from constructed out-groups. Drawing on a two-million-word corpus encompassing jihadist (ISIS, Al-Qaeda) magazines and far-right lone-extremist manifestos, the study integrates AI-assisted discourse analysis with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the Engagement system (Martin & White, 2005). An LLM (ChatGPT)-assisted inductive (data driven)–deductive (theory driven) workflow identified recurring disinformation architectures – absolutist binaries ("no third camp"), conspiratorial orchestration ("New World Order"), epistemic monopolisation ("the truth"), and inoculation against counter-evidence ("spread lies"). Crucially, the analysis situates these patterns within Van Leeuwen's (2008) framework of justification and legitimation, showing how perceived grievances – oppression, humiliation, injustice, and civilisational threat – are semiotically engineered to justify violent or exclusionary action. Legitimation operates through four dominant mechanisms: Authorization, invoking divine or leadership authority; Rationalization, framing violence as necessary or inevitable; Moral Evaluation, morally charging inaction or positioning retaliation as ethically required; and Mythopoesis, embedding acts within narrative arcs of retribution and destiny. Linguistic resources – including conditional causality, deontic modality, inevitability framing, evaluative reversal, and future certainty – align audiences into coherent in-groups while constructing out-groups as legitimate targets. The study demonstrates that ambient polarisation and grievance-informed justificatory discourse interact to produce moralised imperatives for action. ISIS texts emphasise instrumental rationalisation to remove threats and restore order; Al-Qaeda combines rationalisation with moral evaluation, portraying inaction as betrayal; lone-extremist materials often present conditional inevitability, linking personal deprivation to collective grievance. Theoretically, the paper bridges Critical Discourse Studies, SFL, and relational-semiotic models of mobilisation, showing how discourse functions as epistemic engineering, moral alignment, and relational bonding. Methodologically, it provides a replicable hybrid corpus-deductive approach. Practically, it identifies key leverage points – grievance amplification, binary framing, and justificatory discourse – for counter-extremism interventions.

KEY WORDS

Extremist mobilisation; ambient polarisation; grievance discourse; legitimation; identity fusion.

REFERENCES

Bjornsgaard, K., & Dukić, S. (2023). The media and polarisation in Europe: Strategies for local practitioners to address problematic reporting. Publication Office of the European Commission.

Etaywe, A., & Giles, H. (2025). Relational dynamics in violent extremist incitement communication: Language as bonds, obligations, and a catalyst for polarisation. Discourse & Communication. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/17504813251378884

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English. Palgrave Macmillan.

McNeil-Willson, R., Gerrand, V., Scrinzi, F., et al. (2020). Polarisation, violent extremism and resilience in Europe today: An analytical framework. BRaVE Project.

Smith, L. G. E., Thomas, E. F., Bliuc, A. M., et al. (2024). Polarization is the psychological foundation of collective engagement. Communications Psychology, 2(42), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44271-024-00089-2

Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zainab Faayiza[1] & Peter Teo Chin Soon[2]

[1]National Institute of Education; [2]National Institute of Education

Keeping the peace: A Critical Discourse Analysis of peace representations in primary school textbooks

Singapore stands out as a country relatively successful in its cultivation of peaceful domestic and international relations. The sociocultural construct of peace has been embedded in the country's sociopolitical ethos since the 1964 and 1969 racial riots, which function as cautionary tales that emphasise the value of harmony for Singapore's progress (Cheng, 2001). Various state institutions contribute to the maintenance and transmission of peace, one of which is the education system, which plays a central role in shaping individuals' values, identities, and dispositions (Apple, 2004). As peace can be understood as a pre-condition for progress (Smoljan, 2003), and no existing study in the Singaporean context has focused on the representation of peace within educational materials, an inquiry into how this value is discursively constructed in and through primary school English Language textbooks would be interesting. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical orientation, this study aims to examine how four reading passages (fictional stories) that strongly focus on the theme of peace evaluate disruptions to and restorations of peace. In particular, Judgement (Martin & White, 2005) is used to analyse how evaluative language constructs peace-related behaviours positively or negatively, and how such language positions individuals in relation to peace. It was found that Social Sanction (Propriety) was the most instantiated Judgement type, with Social Esteem (Normality), (Capacity), and (Tenacity) being instantiated in equal amounts, but less frequently. It was also found that implicit forms of evaluation were more prevalent than explicit forms. Through these patterns that emerged, this study discusses how upholding peace as an individual ethical responsibility is naturalised through the stories. It also discusses how the stories present more nuanced perspectives of peace beyond individual ethical responsibility, and identifies that the texts predominantly depict external peace (macro) as cascading down to the individual (micro). By examining how the sociocultural value of peace is discursively constructed in and through educational materials, this study shows how such representations reflect, reproduce, and complicate broader sociocultural values and goals in Singapore.

KEY WORDS

Peace; critical discourse analysis; appraisal theory; primary school textbooks; ideology.

REFERENCES

Apple, M. W. (2004). Ideology and curriculum. Routledge.

Cheng, A. L. H. (2001). The Past in the Present: Memories of the 1964 'Racial Riots' in Singapore. Asian Journal of Social Science, 29(3), 431-455. https://doi.org/10.1163/156853101X00181

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English. Palgrave Macmillan.

Smoljan, J. (2003). The relationship between peace building and development. Conflict, Security & Development, 3(2), 233–250. https://doi.org/10.1080/1467880032000126930

Chris Featherman

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Producing 'us' and 'them' within NATO: Ideological proximation and the Baltic States in Trump administration discourse

How does political discourse produce polarisation within ostensibly unified alliances? This paper argues that ideological formations operate as mechanisms for constructing differential proximity and hierarchical identities, positioning alliance members within ideologically differentiated categories that define the terms of worthiness and commitment. The analysis integrates Cap's (2008) proximation framework with Discourse-Historical Analysis (Wodak, 2015) to examine how Trump administration discourse on NATO member states constructs internal polarisation through selective ideological proximity. It draws on three purpose-built and comparatively structured subcorpora totaling approximately 27,000 words: a Baltic States corpus (8–10K words), a Central European corpus focused on Poland (8–10K words), and a NATO-focused reference corpus (≈10K words). The data consist exclusively of official Trump administration discourse (2025–present), including presidential statements, State Department communications, and diplomatic briefings. Methodologically, the study employs a triangulated and integrative approach, combining systematic discourse-historical coding with corpus-assisted analysis. Collocation analysis identifies statistically salient lexical patterning across subcorpora and corroborates qualitative findings on actor representation, agency attribution, and evaluative positioning. The findings reveal a striking paradox: despite identical NATO membership and comparable geographic proximity to Russia, the Baltic States are discursively positioned as axiologically distant through transactionalist framings of obligation, cost, and burden-sharing, while Poland is constructed as ideologically proximate through values-based language emphasizing alignment and mutual understanding. This differential proximation reflects two interconnected ideological formations: a transactional logic that frames alliance as economic exchange and an ideological logic that selectively affirms alignment with nationalist and sovereigntist values. These dynamics push the Baltic States toward the margins of alliance identity, redefining solidarity as conditional on alignment rather than guaranteed by institutional membership. The analysis demonstrates that Trump discourse constructs an internal "Us" versus "Them" antagonistic dynamic (Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2011) not through explicit conflict but through the selective naturalization of ideological formations that determine which actors are recognized as legitimate allies. By positioning the Baltic States as obligated cost-bearers rather than ideological partners, the discourse produces polarisation within the alliance structure itself, revealing how proximity is ideologically constructed rather than spatially determined. This study contributes to understanding how discourse produces polarisation within institutionalized structures by organizing collective identities through processes of ideological differentiation and boundary-making. It shows that polarisation operates not only through overt conflict but through the discursive naturalization of ideologies that regulate belonging and exclusion within geopolitical alliances.

KEY WORDS

Polarisation; proximation; ideology; alliance identity; discourse.

Javier Fernández-Cruz[1] & Antonio Moreno-Ortiz[2]

[1]University of Málaga; [2]University of Málaga

Semantic infrastructures of polarization: Ontological divergence in YouTube political discourse during Trump's first 100 days

This presentation examines how political polarization in digital environments operates not only through ideological disagreement, but through processes of ontological divergence (Matthews, 2023), understood here as the emergence of incompatible interpretative frameworks regarding what counts as social reality, legitimate knowledge, and valid political authority. Drawing on a corpus of YouTube comments on mainstream TV news (CNN, FoxNews, Bloomberg...) posted during the first 100 days of Donald Trump's presidency, the paper investigates how key political and socio-cultural concepts are discursively redefined across polarized communities. The analysis combines corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS), conducted through the Corpus Sense suite (Moreno-Ortiz, 2025), with network analysis to identify semantic infrastructures of polarization. A set of 24 target nodes was selected according to three criteria: institutional relevance, identity-based friction, and potential for othering. These nodes include foundational democratic signifiers (e.g., democracy, justice, constitution), far-right culture-war terms (e.g., gender, women, trans), institutional mediators (e.g., media, court), and geopolitical "threat" markers (e.g., border, China, Russia). Collocational patterns were measured using LogDice scores, while semantic network structures were examined through betweenness centrality and graph analysis. The findings reveal a profound semantic fragmentation across political communities. Users from different political backgrounds use the same words with shifts in connotation rather than stable meanings. Shared lexical anchor words such as democracy and justice are associated with radically different discursive worlds, suggesting that polarization increasingly operates at the level of epistemic legitimacy — what groups accept as valid knowledge or truth — (Thomas, 2011; Pham, Rubel & Castro, 2022) and ontological framing — (Beal & Rottman, 2024) the underlying assumptions about what counts as reality, identity, or social order — rather than policy disagreement alone. Preliminary results show that metrics further show that culture-war terms, particularly women, media, and gender, function as high-centrality bridge nodes connecting otherwise disconnected thematic clusters. At the same time, a more institutional and non-belligerent discourse occupies a weak and peripheral position within the broader semantic network, which may indicate a reduced discursive mediating role traditionally associated with mainstream democratic institutions. We argue that YouTube's comment section may function as a site that facilitates ontological divergence through emotional reinforcement mechanisms embedded in language within internally coherent interpretative communities. More broadly, the study contributes to Critical Discourse Studies by proposing the concept of semantic infrastructures of polarization to explain how digital discourse environments — and more especially social media comment sections — may reshape the conditions of shared political reality.

KEY WORDS

Political polarization; discourse analysis; YouTube; ontological divergence; semantic networks.

REFERENCES

Beal, B. and Rottman, J. (2024) Ontological Frames Decisively Outperform Moral Foundations in Predicting Moral Judgments. Available at SSRN: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4724806

Matthews, W. (2023). Getting our ontology right: A critique of language and culture in the work of François Jullien. Theory, Culture & Society, 40(4–5), 75–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764221147664

Moreno-Ortiz, A. (2025). Corpus sense: A comprehensive tool for advanced text and discourse exploration. Applied Corpus Linguistics, 100145.

Pham, A., Rubel, A., & Castro, C. (2022). Social media, emergent manipulation, and political legitimacy. In The philosophy of online manipulation (pp. 353-369). Routledge.

Thomas, C. A. (2011). Of facts and phantoms: economics, epistemic legitimacy, and WTO dispute settlement. Journal of International Economic law, 14(2), 295-328.

Karol Franczak

University of Lodz

Between fear and resilience: Polish and German press discourses on the September 2025 drone incursions and the polarisation of threat perception

On the night of 9–10 September 2025, Russian drones violated Polish airspace, prompting the first direct NATO engagement with Russian military assets since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine. The incident became a focal point of intense discursive activity in which fundamental questions of national identity, security and the credibility of alliances were renegotiated. This paper examines how Polish and German symbolic elites (van Dijk, 1993) discursively constructed the event, drawing on an ongoing Polish–German comparative research project on discourses of fear and resilience in press coverage of the war in Ukraine. Theoretically, the paper combines a constructionist sociology of fear (Altheide, 2002; Furedi, 2018; Biess, 2020), securitization theory (Buzan et al., 1998), and the analysis of resilience as a technology of governance (Bröckling, 2017; Graefe, 2019) with framing analysis (Benford & Snow, 2000; Mendelsohn et al., 2025). Empirically, it is based on a sequential framing analysis of opinion-forming press: four Polish weeklies spanning the liberal–conservative spectrum (Newsweek, Polityka, Do Rzeczy, Sieci) and five German titles (Der Spiegel, FAS, Die Zeit, Welt am Sonntag, Junge Freiheit). The analysis demonstrates that the drone incursions functioned as a discursive catalyst of polarisation along two intersecting axes. Within the Polish public sphere, competing framings of fear – ranging from mobilising alarm to accusations of fearmongering – became resources for antagonistic identity work, mapping the event onto pre-existing political divides and constructing opposed visions of national subjectivity. Between the two national public spheres, asymmetries in meta-concern and in the discursive management of fear reveal how geopolitical positionality shapes the boundary-making between "Us" and "Them": while Polish discourses tended to securitize the incident as an attack on the national community, German discourses oscillated between solidarity, distancing and the domestication of threat. The paper proposes a typology of resilience discourses and a graded scale of meta-concern as comparative analytical tools. It argues that fear and resilience should be understood not as opposites but as co-constitutive elements of a discursive formation in which polarisation itself – who is entitled to be afraid, and whose fear counts as rational – becomes an object of struggle.

KEY WORDS

Discourse of fear; resilience; securitization; framing analysis; polarisation.

REFERENCES

Altheide, D. L. (2002). Creating fear: News and the construction of crisis. Transaction Publishers.

Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. Annual Review of Sociology, 26, 611–639.

Biess, F. (2020). German Angst: Fear and democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany. Oxford University Press.

Bröckling, U. (2017). Resilienz: Über einen Schlüsselbegriff des 21. Jahrhunderts. In Gute Hirten führen sanft: Über Menschenregierungskünste. Suhrkamp.

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). Security: A new framework for analysis. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Furedi, F. (2018). How fear works: Culture of fear in the twenty-first century. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Graefe, S. (2019). Resilienz im Krisenkapitalismus: Wider das Lob der Anpassungsfähigkeit. transcript.

Mendelsohn, J., Vijan, M., Card, D., & Budak, C. (2024). Framing social movements on social media: Unpacking diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational strategies. Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media, 4, 1–61.

van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Elite discourse and racism. Sage.

Adrià Gibernau

Pompeu Fabra University

From the procés to the post-procés: Identity privatisation, political disenchantment and the rise of nativist nationalism in Catalonia

The so-called Catalan procés redefined, throughout the 2010s, the symbolic frameworks through which Catalan society understood itself in national terms. In Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) terms, the Catalonia–Spain antagonism functioned as a nodal point articulating collective subjectivities around a shared project that mobilised ideologies ranging from the independent left to the Catalan centre-right. With the exhaustion of this cycle—accelerated by the judicial repression following the 2017 referendum, the COVID-19 pandemic and the return to pact-making between independentist and state-level forces— Catalonia entered the post-procés: a period characterised by the crisis of collective grand narratives and the reconstruction of identities amid demobilisation and political disenchantment. This paper presents key findings of a doctoral research examining how twenty-five Catalan young people aged 22–35, with diverse national and ideological positions, discursively construct their identities in this context. Data come from in-depth interviews conducted between May 2022 and May 2023, analysed through narrative semiotics and critical discourse analysis. The analysis identifies five discursive coherence axes —pragmatism, coexistence, national agency, disenchantment and cosmopolitanism— organised not around explicit national positions but around deeper discursive structures. Four of the five axes share a common underlying logic: the naturalisation of the individual as the legitimate and sufficient unit for managing identity and belonging. The exception is national agency, whose coherence rests on a collective, though increasingly residual, political project. This privatisation of Catalanness —whereby national identity ceases to be a collective project and becomes a personal, intimate trait— constitutes the central finding of the research. The paper argues that this collective void is not politically neutral. Corpus data, collected prior to Aliança Catalana's electoral breakthrough in May 2024, already reveal the discursive conditions that enabled the rise of far-right nativist nationalism: two participants ultimately voted for this party, a finding that, while not statistically representative, illustrates the structural logic identified across the corpus. Following Mudde (2007, 2019), Aliança Catalana's nativism does not contradict the individualist logic of the post-procés but projects it outward. In Mouffe's (2005) terms, antagonism does not disappear: it shifts. The "constitutive outside" that had been Spain is replaced by immigration as an identity threat.

KEY WORDS

Post-procés; identity construction; nativism; political disenchantment; Critical Discourse Analysis.

REFERENCES

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics. Verso.
Mouffe, C. (2005). On the political. Routledge.
Mudde, C. (2007). Populist radical right parties in Europe. Cambridge University Press.
Mudde, C. (2019). The far right today. Polity Press.

Daniil Goncharenko[1] & Arseniy Karsakov[2]

[1]HSE University; [2]University of Padua

Less divided, more hostile: Hegemonic discourse and divergent polarization in pandemic Italy

This paper examines how the COVID-19 polycrisis (a combination of several crises at the same time) changed political identity and affective polarization in Italy between 2020 and 2022, tracing the mechanism through which a temporary drop in ideological polarization produced the conditions for the rise of Brothers of Italy (FdI). Drawing on Laclau and Mouffe's framework of hegemonic and subaltern discourse, we reconstruct the sequence through theory-building process-tracing combined with discourse analysis of political communication from the pandemic period. The supermajority coalition of the Draghi government established hegemonic national-unity discourse, similar to the rally around the flag effect, against the "war on pandemic", which was seen as an external enemy. This discourse temporarily suppressed ideological conflict. FdI, excluded from the coalition, occupied the only available subaltern position. Meloni's response was not to contest the government on programmatic grounds but to contest the terms of the hegemonic formation itself, rejecting the green pass, mandatory vaccination, and the immigration policy framing that the unity discourse rendered illegitimate to question. The result was a dissociation between the two types of polarization. Ideological polarization, measured through the Dalton index, fell to its lowest point after the Draghi government's formation. Affective polarization, measured through V-Dem data, rose to its peak over the same period. This divergence is the central empirical puzzle of the paper: the electorate became less divided on issues while becoming more hostile toward political opponents. The paper argues that subaltern counter-discourse was the driving force of this discrepancy, as the FdI's identity formation was not programmatic but antagonistic, built around opposition to the hegemonic subject position rather than an alternative policy platform. Therefore, the FdI's rise was less a product of ideological radicalization than of the discursive position the polycrisis imposed on it: the only available opposition was antagonistic by definition. The Italian case suggests a broader mechanism, as crisis-induced national unity can accelerate affective polarization by collapsing the discursive space available to opposition actors, forcing them toward identity-based rather than issue-based mobilization.

KEY WORDS

Affective Polarization; Hegemonic Discourse; Rally-around-the-flag; Brothers of Italy; Polycrisis.

REFERENCES

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). Hegemony and socialist strategy. Verso.

Lawrence, M., Homer-Dixon, T., Janzwood, S., Rockström, J., Renn, O., & Donges, J. F. (2024). Global polycrisis: The causal mechanisms of crisis entanglement. Global Sustainability, 1–36.

Russo, L., & Valbruzzi, M. (2022). The impact of the pandemic on the Italian party system: The Draghi government and the 'new' polarisation. Contemporary Italian Politics, 14(2), 172–190.

Panayota Gounari[1] & Minh Nghia Nguyen[2]

[1]University of Massachusetts Boston and National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; [2]University of Massachusetts Boston

From "the people" to "the enemy": Trumpism, identity, and one-dimensional polarization

This paper examines Trumpism as a far-right authoritarian discourse in which polarization functions as a mechanism for producing identity, subjectivity, and social division. It conceptualizes polarization as a structured process of boundary-making through which antagonistic identities are discursively produced, intensified, and normalized, while also attending to the "messy" space between the two extremes. Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies, Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach and politics of fear, Marcuse's critique of one-dimensional discourse, and Gounari's work on one-dimensional authoritarian discourse, the paper argues that Trumpism offers a paradigmatic case of how authoritarian formations produce "the people" and their enemies through discourse. The paper focuses on anti-woke, anti-Critical Race Theory, anti-DEI, anti-immigrant, nationalist, and related discourses that reduce complex histories of inequality, migration, race, gender, sexuality, and education to antagonistic oppositions between "us" and "them." Analytically, it traces how these identity formations circulate across three interconnected tiers: the ideological tier, where political actors, policy entrepreneurs, think tanks, and affiliated networks craft narratives of invasion, institutional capture, civilizational decline, and national betrayal; the institutional tier, where these narratives are translated into executive orders, legislation, campaign discourse, litigation, immigration enforcement, and official communications; and the media-public tier, where cable news, podcasts, social media, memes, and digital influencers amplify and affectively intensify them through repetition, ridicule, outrage, and spectacle. Methodologically, the study draws on the Discourse-Historical Approach and multimodal analysis to examine topoi, metaphors, pronouns, visual symbols, affective cues, and argumentation strategies. The theoretical contribution lies in extending the analysis of polarization beyond ideological disagreement to show how it operates as one-dimensional authoritarian discourse: a discursive formation that flattens historical complexity, converts social antagonisms into moral absolutes, and produces identity through fear, resentment, and exclusion. The paper amplifies this framework through concepts of dehistoricization, instrumentalism/operationalism, digital aggressiveness, discourse as commodity, self as brand, and the discourse of amusement (Gounari, 2022). In doing so, it theorizes Trumpism as a discourse regime that organizes identity, affect, policy, and common sense around authoritarian boundary-making.

KEY WORDS

Trumpism; one-dimensional discourse; far-right; Discourse Historical Approach; Critical Theory.

REFERENCES

Gounari, P. (2022). From Twitter to Capitol Hill: Far-right authoritarian populist discourses, social media and critical pedagogy. Brill.

Marcuse, H. (1964). One-dimensional man. Beacon Press.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis.

Wodak, R. (2015). The politics of fear. SAGE.

Giuseppina Di Gregorio

University of Catania

Rewriting legal identity: From newspapers controversy to streaming narrative in the case of Lidia Poët

This paper investigates the construction of legal identities in media discourse through a comparative analysis of contemporary television representation and historical press coverage, focusing on the case of The Law According to Lidia Poët (2023–) and late nineteenth-century journalistic discourse in Italian and Anglophone newspapers. Lidia Poët, generally regarded as the first woman admitted to the Italian bar and a pioneering figure in the Italian legal profession, was disbarred on the basis of gender, generating significant legal and public debate across national contexts. Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), media framing theory (Entman, 1993), and theories of representation (Hall, 1997), the study examines how the legal identity of the "female lawyer" is discursively constructed, contested, and reconfigured across media forms and historical periods. The methodology combines a corpus of digitized newspaper articles retrieved from the Archivio Storico La Stampa, the Archivio Storico Corriere della Sera, The Times Digital Archive, and The New York Times Archive. The corpus was compiled through historically and contextually relevant search terms, including "Lidia Poët," "women lawyers," "lady lawyer," and related legal-professional terminology. CDS is employed to identify linguistic patterns of exclusion, legitimacy, and authority in historical reporting, where Poët is frequently framed through juridical reasoning that reinforces gendered boundaries of the legal profession. These representations resonate with broader legal-cultural dynamics of exclusion, as theorized by Kalsem (2012), who highlights the structural barriers and institutional resistance that historically shaped women's entry into the legal profession. Particular attention is paid to the framing strategies through which newspapers construct women's participation in legal practice as exceptional, controversial, or socially disruptive. In contrast, MDA reveals how the television series rearticulates Poët's legal identity through visual, narrative, and affective strategies, positioning her as an agentive subject challenging systemic injustice. The series mobilizes contemporary sensibilities around gender equality while selectively reinterpreting historical constraints. The comparative analysis demonstrates that while nineteenth-century press discourse constructs the female legal subject as deviant and legally problematic, contemporary television reframes this identity through empowerment, visibility, and narrative centrality. The study argues that the interplay between historical media discourse and contemporary audiovisual representation not only reflects evolving social norms but also actively reshapes cultural understandings of legal legitimacy, gender, and professional identity. By integrating CDS and MDA within a diachronic and cross-cultural framework, the paper highlights the value of combining discourse, framing, and representation approaches to examine how legal identities are negotiated across media, historical contexts, and national traditions.

KEY WORDS

Identity; legal profession; gender; media discourse; TV series.

REFERENCES

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. Journal of Communication, 43(4), 51–58.
Fairclough, N. (2003). Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research. Routledge.
Hall, S. (1997). Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices. Sage.
Kalsem, K. (2012). In contempt: Nineteenth-century women lawyers and the creation of a gendered profession. University of North Carolina Press.
Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). Reading images: The grammar of visual design (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2016). Methods of critical discourse studies (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sixian Hah[1] & Johannes Angermuller[2]

[1]Open University; [2]Open University

Inside/outside: Academic positioning and identity construction

Academic identity is not a fixed attribute but an ongoing discursive achievement, shaped by the dual pressures of disciplinary belonging and institutional positioning. This paper examines how researchers specialising in language and applied linguistics construct and negotiate their academic identities at various stages of their careers, drawing on approximately 40 qualitative interviews with junior and senior scholars based in higher education institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom. We approach academic identity as a situated, interactional accomplishment enacted through language — both in written forms such as publications and in oral contexts such as conference talks and collegial exchange. Our analysis reveals systematic variation across career stages and national contexts. Senior academics tend to position their work in explicit tension with perceived disciplinary conventions, articulating identity through differentiation and critical distance, while non-tenured researchers are more preoccupied with demonstrating alignment with established disciplinary norms and fitting into recognised scholarly spaces. A further cross-national dimension emerges: UK-based researchers display greater flexibility in their disciplinary affiliations, appearing less anchored to narrow specialisations than their American counterparts. Drawing on discourse analytical frameworks, we theorise these patterns in terms of inside/outside dynamics — the ways academics orient to boundaries of disciplines, institutions, and scholarly communities as they claim, defend, and sometimes contest their positions. In doing so, we contribute to a growing body of research on academic identity while foregrounding the role of discourse and language use in how scholars are constituted and valued within contemporary academia.

KEY WORDS

Disciplinary identities; positioning theory; academic discourse; academic careers.

REFERENCES

Angermuller, J. (2014). Poststructuralist discourse analysis: subjectivity in enunciative pragmatics. India: Palgrave Macmillan.

Angermuller, J. (2017). Academic careers and the valuation of academics. A discursive perspective on status categories and academic salaries in France as compared to the US, Germany and Great Britain. Higher Education, 73(6), 963-980.

Harré, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (1999). Positioning theory: Moral contexts of international action. Oxford: Blackwell

Benwell, B., & Stokoe, E. (2006). Discourse and identity. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Hall, C. J., Smith, P. H., & Wicaksono, R. (2011). Mapping applied linguistics: A guide for students and practitioners: Routledge.

Widdowson, H. G. (2000). Object language and the language subject: On the mediating role of applied linguistics. Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 20, 21-33.

Jakub Handzlik

Jagiellonian University

Deleting the "other": Sovereignty and epistemic violence in US and Russian rhetoric

Superpower conflict fundamentally relies on the discursive annihilation of the "Other." Beyond mere diplomatic breakdown, macro-level polarization functions as a weaponized architecture of erasure. This paper scrutinizes these mechanics by posing a Foucauldian question: when hegemonies initiate conflict, who is granted the authority to speak, and whose sovereign identity is violently overwritten? Moving beyond traditional political euphemism, this study conceptualizes superpower war justifications as acts of epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988). Guided by Foucault's (1966/2005) notion of the episteme, that is, the unconscious matrix governing what can be thought or legitimized, and Mouffe's (1999) discursive antagonism, the paper conducts a comparative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of two watershed geopolitical events. The dataset deliberately isolates the concentrated rhetoric of the immediate "declaratory window" – that is to say, the exact moment the epistemic threshold is breached. This juxtaposes Vladimir Putin's February 2022 addresses initiating the Ukraine invasion with US Executive addresses of March 2026 justifying intervention in Iran. Integrating tools from van Dijk (1998), Wodak (2011), and van Leeuwen (2008), the methodology maps argumentative topoi, historical mythopoesis, and participant positioning deployed at the moment of rupture. Findings demonstrate both nations, despite opposed ideological narratives, operate within an analogous epistemic framework. They systematically employ epistemic violence to negate the target nation's sovereignty, primarily to legitimize military action. Russian discourse constructs Ukraine as an external "puppet," denying its independent political agency. Concurrently, US demands for the unilateral "appointment" of Iranian leadership discursively invalidate Iran's statehood and standing as a rational international actor. It is argued that, within macro-level geopolitical discourse, polarization is a weaponized episteme. By discursively obliterating the target nation's capacity for self-determination, the superpower constructs itself not as a belligerent aggressor, but as the sole authorized adult in the room or, in other words, the inevitable manager of a mute and chaotic "Other."

KEY WORDS

Critical Discourse Analysis; epistemic violence; legitimation; USA; Russia.

REFERENCES

Foucault, M. (2005). The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences. Routledge. (Original work published 1966)
Mouffe, C. (1999). Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism? Social Research, 66(3), 745–758.
Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), Marxism and the interpretation of culture (pp. 271–313). Macmillan Education.
van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. Sage Publications.
van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis. Oxford University Press.
Wodak, R. (2011). The discourse of politics in action: Politics as usual. Palgrave Macmillan.

Aimee Herring

University of South Carolina

Raciolinguistic ideologies and the Lithuanian language

This presentation addresses the recent moral panic in Lithuania concerning proficiency in the Lithuanian language by foreign residents and use of the Russian language in the public space. As scholars have shown, controversies over cultural difference, language use, and language ideologies generally, are often meant to render processes of Otherization and the establishment of social hierarchies, unmarked, that is, normative and unexceptional (García-Sanchez, 2014; Mikhaylova, 2025; Pagliai 2011; Rosa, 2016). Drawing upon theory and method within linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, including raciolinguistic ideologies (Rosa, 2019), linguistic profiling (Baugh, 2021), and racialization as a discursive practice (Chun and Lo, 2015; Lemon 2002, 2019), I consider forms of racialization within the contemporary Lithuanian context primarily based upon linguistic, rather than physical, markedness – or divergence from a presumed norm - although the two are not mutually exclusive (Chun and Lo 2015). I base my analysis in this project upon ethnographic data, and analysis of recent developments in language policy, media discourse, and mediatized public campaigns concerning state language use. Ostensibly aimed toward integration, promotion of the acquisition of Lithuanian, and the overall public good, these efforts and the resultant discourse effectively brings into question the right of presence not only of languages, but of people, including previously welcomed political asylees and refugees, creating stigmatizing and characterological associations and perception of threat, particularly as these discourses overlap with those of hybrid warfare. Lithuanian language ideologies thus directly and indirectly racialize and discipline foreign-born and (im)migrant populations, as well as national minorities, creating a continuum of belonging and markedness (Bucholc and Chymowski 2024) within the contemporary Lithuanian nation-state.

KEY WORDS

Raciolinguistic ideologies; racialization; linguistic ideology; markedness; language policy.

REFERENCES

Baugh, J. (2021). Linguistic profiling and language-based discrimination. Linguistics. https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199772810-0267

Bucholc, M., & Chymkowski, R. (2024). We are all jews: (in)visible outsiders and the anthropology of the border. Palgrave Studies on Norbert Elias, 227–247. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-49523-6_9

Chun, E. W., & LO, A. (2016). Language and Racialization. In N. Bonvillain (Ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology (pp. 1–19). Introduction, Routledge.

García-Sánchez, I. M. (2014). Language and Muslim immigrant childhoods: The politics of belonging. Wiley.

Lemon, A. (2002). Without a "concept"? race as discursive practice. Slavic Review, 61(1), 54–61. https://doi.org/10.2307/2696981

Lemon, A. (2019). The matter of Race. Ideologies of Race, 59–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqc6kkz.6

Mikhaylova, M. (2025). Imperialism without prestige: The Russian language, Chronotope, and the paradoxes of linguistic decolonization in Lithuania. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 35(1). https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.70004

Pagliai, V. (2011). Unmarked racializing discourse, facework, and identity in Talk about immigrants in Italy. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 21(s1), E94–E112. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2011.01099.x

Rosa, J. (2019). Looking like a language, sounding like a race: Raciolinguistic ideologies and the learning of Latinidad. Oxford University Press.

Rosa, J. D. (2016). Standardization, racialization, languagelessness: Raciolinguistic ideologies across communicative contexts. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 26(2), 162–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.12116

Anna Ivanova

University of O´Higgins

Between democratic values and security concerns: Media frames on immigration in Chile's official Instagram communication (2022–2024)

The overarching objective of this study was to analyze the media frames concerning immigration on the official Instagram account of Chile's National Migration Service (Servicio Nacional de Migraciones) during the first two years of Gabriel Boric's administration. Specifically, the research examines how the current Chilean government communicates information relating to immigrants through its official Instagram account, with particular focus on the configuration and/or contestation of agenda-setting and media framing (López-Baucells et al., 2023). The study employed CrowdTangle as a data collection tool to retrieve Instagram publications from the National Migration Service spanning the period from March 2022 to March 2024 (Cárcamo et al., 2024). A manual qualitative content analysis was subsequently conducted using Atlas.Ti software (Kovar, 2023). Keywords, images, and other salient elements were identified to assess how immigration-related issues are framed. Furthermore, the Historical-Discursive Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) was applied to evaluate the discursive construction of the publications, complemented by social actor representation taxonomies and hashtag analysis. This methodological framework enabled the identification of discursive and multimodal patterns in how the Chilean government communicates about migration and shapes public attitudes toward it. The findings reveal three primary frames within the official governmental discourse on migration: a values-based frame (acknowledging the contribution of cultural diversity); an informational-legal frame (conveying legal procedures for regularization); and a security frame (highlighting governmental efforts to safeguard public safety in response to irregular immigration). These frames illuminate the underlying tension between the imperative to uphold core democratic values enshrined in President Boric's governmental program and the need to project security and administrative efficiency in managing the migration crisis, which has received extensive coverage in national media outlets.

KEY WORDS

Governmental communication; migration; framing; Instagram; Chile.

REFERENCES

Cárcamo-Ulloa, L., Cárdenas-Neira, C., Saez-Trumper, D., Scheihing-García, E., Vernier, M., Blaña-Romero, C. & Neira-Mellado, C. (2024). Queltehue. Pluralismo en Medios [Página web]. https://www.pluralismodemedios.cl/

Kovář, J. (2023). Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity, and political sources. Communications, 48(1), 5-27. https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2020-0087

López-Baucells, A., Revilla-Martín, N., Mas, M. et al. (2023) Newspaper Coverage and Framing of Bats, and Their Impact on Readership Engagement. EcoHealth 20, 18–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10393-023-01634-x

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2016). The Discourse-Historical Approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of Critical Discourse Studies (pp.23-61). Routledge.

Luis Miguel Jaraba Andrade

University of Barcelona

Democracy as moral community: Populism, affective polarization, and the erosion of deliberative democracy

John Dewey (1927) understood democracy as a way of life that corresponds to the idea of community. According to Dewey, a community exists only when the consequences of joint activity are regarded as beneficial for all members involved, thereby fostering a shared desire and effort to preserve it. For a political community to be democratic, it must be inclusive and allow for productive communication between individuals with different social and political identities. The exercise of collective self-government requires both mutual recognition and reflexive cooperation among people belonging to different social groups. When belonging to a group entails an exclusionary dynamic, there is no community. In this paper, I argue that there is an ongoing crisis of liberal democracy related to the fragmentation of society insofar as antagonistic narratives promoted by populist political strategies erode the understanding of joint activities among partisans as mutually beneficial. Instead, they frame the out-group as an obstacle to the interests and full realization of the social demands of in-group members. They therefore undermine the requirements of the normative ideal of deliberative democracy, understood as a collective process of inquiry and decision-making through rational dialogue. They also weaken the core value of pluralism that is necessary for an inclusive community. According to Laclau (2005), populism constructs a collective identity ("empty signifier") by linking heterogeneous social demands into a "chain of equivalence" through a radical external difference. When this difference is articulated antagonistically, it frames society as divided into two camps (Us versus Them). This process of social categorization has effects on the promotion of certain attitudes in intergroup behaviour. Individuals become attached to certain identities that are defined through their antagonistic relations to an out-group. I argue that it involves the acceptance of perceived group norms regarding appropriate attitudes toward the antagonized out-group, and that this obstructs both intergroup cooperation and sympathy. This phenomenon of discriminatory distribution of affects along partisan lines is what the literature refers to as affective polarization. Almagro (2025) has argued that affective polarization should also be understood as incorporating other elements, such as strong attachment to, and credence in, divisive narratives. Therefore, it is the credence and attachment to a populist narrative, together with identification with a particular social group, that generates negative attitudes such as disgust or distrust, which in turn prevent the creation and sustenance of the common moral community required for the proper functioning of deliberative democracy.

KEY WORDS

Pragmatism; deliberative democracy; populism; affective polarization; social identity.

REFERENCES

Almagro, M. (2025). The Rise of Polarization. Routledge.
Dewey, J. (1927). The public and its problems. Henry Holt and Company.
Laclau, E. (2005). La razón populista. Fondo de Cultura Económica

Artūr Afanasjev [1] **& Rita Juknevičienė** [2]

[1]Vilnius University; [2]Vilnius University

Creating identity in gaming chats: An exploratory corpus-driven analysis of Reddit posts

This study aims to explore identity formation in online Reddit chats, focusing on the gamers' community. Owing to the increasing popularity of video games, studies into gaming discourse are getting more linguists' attention. Previous research has revealed specific linguistic features of gaming discourse, including the use of neologisms and science-fiction terms, overtly impolite communication during games (Ensslin & Balteiro, 2019). So far, less attention has been paid to discourse on games outside the gaming environment. Such discourse usually takes place in online fora, the Reddit platform being one of them. Involving a combination of different corpus-assisted discourse analysis methods (Baker, 2023), this study was set up to answer the following research questions: (1) Which topics in the gaming subreddits evoke polarization in the gamers' community? (2) What are the linguistic expressions used to express the polarized stances? (3) How does the use of language in subreddit posts contribute to identity formation? The data for this study have been collected from a corpus of Reddit posts from several subreddits dedicated to gaming, including r/Games, r/videogames, r/gaming, r/retrogaming (Chang et al. 2020; Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil & ConvoKit Team n.d.). The posts were compiled as a corpus of .txt files and processed using LancsBox X (Brezina & Platt, 2025). The analyses of frequency lists, n-grams and keywords were used to address the research questions. Preliminary findings from a pilot study suggest that the most frequently discussed topics on subreddits concern the gaming content and news and the emotional response of the players. It is also obvious that vulgar language is often used to express evaluation and emotions. A mix of informal and technical game-related jargon contributes to a very specific identity construction in which participants present themselves as knowledgeable and highly emotional personas.

KEY WORDS

Corpus-based; gaming discourse; identity; polarisation; Reddit.

REFERENCES

Baker, P. (2023). Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis. Bloomsbury Academic.

Brezina, V., & Platt, W. (2025). #LancsBox v. 5.x. [software] (5.5.1).

Chang, J. P., Chiam, C., Fu, L., Wang, A., Zhang, J., & Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, C. (2020). ConvoKit: A toolkit for the analysis of conversations. Proceedings of the 24th Workshop on the Semantics and Pragmatics of Dialogue (SEMDIAL).

Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, C., & ConvoKit Team. (n.d.). Reddit Corpus (by subreddit). Retrieved from ConvoKit Documentation [Accessed: May 2026]

Ensslin, A., & Balteiro, I. (Eds.). (2019). Approaches to Videogame Discourse. Bloomsbury Academic. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501338489

Hana Kallus

Masaryk University

Persuasion in public speaking: Sociolinguistic, pragmatic and CDA analysis of persuasion in the iconic BBC Radio 4 political discussion programme 'Any Questions'

The iconic BBC Radio 4 series 'Any Questions' is one of the radio station's oldest political discussion programs which has kept its format for 77 years. Pre-prepared questions from the audience are answered by four invited speakers on the panel holding different views whilst the program is moderated by an experienced person who sometimes contextualises the question. A linguistic analysis can reveal different persuasion techniques and strategies used by different people on the panel as well as a change of strategies by individual speakers depending on the question. This paper looks at the language used to persuade listeners about the speaker's truth. It investigates linguistic choices used to present power and ideology, and observes institutionalised versus individualised language in public speaking. The tools used to analyse the various linguistic strategies employed by speakers in their responses to the same question include: sociolinguistic and pragmatic analysis; Critical Discourse Analysis; and the representation of social actors within the framework of Hallidayan grammar. Observations include sociolinguistic concepts of social actors (inclusion, exclusion and backgrounding); role allocation; Hallidayan transitivity and modality analysis (modalization and modulation). The paper concludes that different strategies can be observed by different speakers depending on the type of questions, manipulation and persuasion tactics and techniques employed.

KEY WORDS

Critical Discourse Analysis; Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Analysis; Persuasion; Strategies; Spoken Political Discourse.

REFERENCES

Brown, P. and S.C. Levinson (1987): Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge: CUP.

Chafe, W. (1982): Integration and involvement in speaking, writing, and oral literature. In: D.Tannen (ed): Spoken and written language: Exploring orality and literacy. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, pp.35-63.

Fairclough, N. (1989): Language and Power. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1993): Critical discourse analysis and the marketisation of public discourse: the universities. Discourse and Society, 4,133-68.

Fowler, R. et al. (1979): Language and Control. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Halliday, M.A.K. (1994 2nd edition): An Introduction to Functional Grammar. London: Edward Arnold.

Hodge, R. and Kress, G. (1993 2nd edition): Language and Ideology. London: Routledge.

Marge Käsper[1], Raili Marling[2] & Ann Veismann[3]

[1]University of Tartu; [2]University of Tartu; [3]University of Tartu

Dying or sailing? Metaphoric constructions of nationhood and polarisation in contemporary Estonia

This paper examines how nationhood is discursively constructed through metaphor in contemporary Estonia, focusing on the tensions between ethnic and civic conceptions of national identity in a context shaped by geopolitical insecurity, demographic anxieties and the rise of right-wing populism. Drawing on the Estonian National Corpus 2023 (3.8 billion tokens), the study analyses metaphorical representations associated with eesti rahvas ('Estonian people') and Eesti riik ('Estonian state'). The analysis combines corpus linguistics with Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004) and discourse-oriented approaches to metaphor (Musolff 2010). A manually annotated corpus sample was examined to identify recurring metaphorical patterns and the socio-cultural scenarios they evoke. Particular attention is paid to metaphors of the nation as body, person and material object, and to their role in constructing collective identities. The findings reveal a marked asymmetry between representations of the people and the state. References to eesti rahvas are highly affective and predominantly ethnos-oriented. The people are represented as a living organism that can awaken, blossom, suffer or disappear, drawing on historically salient narratives of national survival and independence. These metaphors frequently appear in polarising contexts that oppose "the people" to elites, supranational institutions or ethnic others. By contrast, Eesti riik is primarily personified as an administrative and financial actor that supports, protects and manages. More dramatic metaphors emerge in crisis contexts, where the state appears as a fragile building or a ship in danger. The study argues that metaphor serves as a key discursive resource for negotiating competing conceptions of nationhood and for reproducing social divisions. The Estonian case offers broader insights into the role of metaphor in identity construction and polarisation across contemporary Europe.

KEY WORDS

Metaphor; Critical Metaphor Analysis; personification; Estonian national identity; corpus analysis.

REFERENCES

Charteris-Black, Jonathan. 2004. Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230000612.

Jakobson, Mari-Liis & Anastassia Tuuder. 2024. Towards assiminationalism? The right-wing populists' transformative storytelling on an ethnic minority in Estonia. Politics, Religion & Ideology 25(4). 563–586. https://doi.org/10.1080/21567689.2024.2424794.

Musolff, Andreas. 2016. Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios (Bloomsbury Critical Introductions to Lin). London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Oskolkov, Petr. 2024. Estonianness in the Making: Transformations of Ethnic Democracy Model and Nationalism in Estonia. Ethnopolitics 23(5). 467–486. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2023.2216981.

Iralia Kotsakidou

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Examining religious and ethical references in Candace Owens' discourse – A Critical Discourse Analysis Study

The present research aims to examine the religious and ethical references in Candace Owens' discourse. Candace Owens is a far-right, conservative, Catholic Christian commentator in the USA. She used to be a Trump supporter and a Charlie Kirk's associate. Her podcasts, social media posts, and interviews deal with political events, show business, and conspiracy theories. She expresses views against – among others – the LGBTQ community, the feminist movement, Israel, and the Jewish community, and promotes polarization and othering. For the examination of her discourse, three of her podcasts were analysed qualitatively according to the Critical Discourse Analysis theoretical and methodological framework. More specifically, Fairclough's three-dimensional model was selected for the process, because it constitutes a clear, methodological tool that comprises three levels of analysis: a. text analysis (description), b. discursive practice (interpretation) and c. social practice (explanation) (Fairclough, 1995, p. 74). As CDA aims to identify how inequalities and conflicts that arise from the capitalist mode of production are manifest in discourse (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 138), the podcasts were analysed in all three levels suggested by Fairclough to examine the ideologies, power relations, and interests represented and reproduced by Candace Owens. In the podcasts chosen, Owens dealt with topics such as the modern feminist movement and its repercussions in various aspects of social life, and the role of Zionists and Israel in the USA politics and society in general. Through her claims and arguments, we were able to detect the characteristics of her discourse, the gender roles she promotes, and her views on modern society and politics.

KEY WORDS

CDA; Candace Owens; polarization; far-right.

REFERENCES

Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical Discourse Analysis: The critical study of language. Longman.
Wooffitt, R. (2005). Conversation Analysis and Discourse Analysis. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Jan Křovák & Annkatrin Reiner

Charles University

Us, "the survivors" vs. the "corrupt system": The discourse of anti-psychiatry and psychiatric populism

This paper examines how contemporary anti-psychiatry movements construct counter-discourse against institutional psychiatry and to what extent this communication adopts populist logic. The study is grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing on Teun A. van Dijk's (2015, pp. 478-479) argument that CDA has paid insufficient attention to discourses of resistance and dissent articulated by actors who position themselves as targets of hegemonic institutions. Responding to that gap, the paper analyzes anti-psychiatric communication as a form of counter-discourse situated at the intersection of health communication, discourse studies, and political communication. The study addresses two research questions: (1) What are the main discursive characteristics, themes, and strategies present in contemporary anti-psychiatry discourse? (2) To what extent, and in what ways, do selected anti-psychiatry actors employ elements of populist discourse in their online communication? Methodologically, the study is qualitative and employs critical discourse analysis of a purposive corpus drawn from three prominent anti-psychiatric actors representing different media environments: blog articles from Mad in America, articles from the quarterly magazine Asylum, and verbatim transcripts of YouTube videos produced by MindFreedom International. The primary unit of analysis is the discursive segment, defined as a sentence, paragraph, or spoken turn performing a coherent discursive function. The material was coded in NVivo using an indicator-based codebook focused on discursive objects, social actor representations, lexical and rhetorical features, framing strategies, and markers of populist communication. The analytical design combines micro-level textual analysis with contextual interpretation in order to examine how identities, grievances, and claims to authority are discursively produced. The analysis shows that anti-psychiatry discourse frequently constructs a moral opposition between experiential subjects—patients, survivors, or "ordinary people"—and institutional elites such as psychiatrists, pharmaceutical companies, and mental health systems. Across the corpus, this opposition is reinforced through strategies of simplification, emotionalization, storytelling, blame attribution, and the presentation of psychiatric authority as epistemically and morally suspect. These features often converge with populist discourse, especially in people-centred appeals, anti-elite antagonism, and moralized constructions of institutional conflict. The paper contributes academically by extending CDA to the analysis of counter-discourse in the medical field and by refining understanding of populism as a communicative logic that exceeds formal politics. Societally, it illuminates how alternative mental health discourses shape public understandings of expertise, legitimacy, and trust in psychiatry.

KEY WORDS

Anti-psychiatry; populism; medical authority; patient identity; critical discourse analysis.

REFERENCES

Van Dijk, T. A. (2015). Critical discourse analysis. In The handbook of discourse analysis (pp. 466–485). Wiley.

Inês Lameira Grosso

Catholic University of Portugal

Negotiating visibility: Political self-censorship in TikTok's algorithmic public sphere

This paper focuses on how young Portuguese TikTok users experience and negotiate political self-censorship within algorithmically mediated digital publics. Drawing on perspectives from Critical Discourse Studies, the paper explores how platform governance, discursive regulation, algorithmic imaginaries and symbolic power shape the conditions of political expression online (Foucault, 1981). It further engages with theories of subjectivity, the attention economy and the spiral of silence to analyse how visibility, audience evaluation and anticipated backlash influence communicative behaviour and the public negotiation of political identity (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). The study is based on twelve qualitative interviews conducted with Portuguese TikTok users aged between 18 and 30. The findings indicate that political content frequently appears incidentally through TikTok's "For You Page", embedded within broader flows of entertainment and everyday media consumption. Participants demonstrated a strong awareness of how algorithmic recommendation systems shape visibility and progressively reinforce ideological "bubbles" and polarised informational environments, reflecting what Bucher (2018) conceptualises as algorithmic imaginaries and what van Dijck et al. (2018) describe as platformed informational environments. In response, users strategically regulate their participation and discursively position themselves according to perceived risks of exposure, conflict and reputational damage. Comment sections were frequently described as confrontational and emotionally charged as identity spaces, where disagreement often becomes personalised and intensified. As a result, many participants avoid public interaction with political content, adopting forms of passive consumption, "ghost" participation or private sharing within trusted networks of friends and family. Political silence therefore emerges not as disengagement, but as a strategic negotiation of visibility, belonging and identity in algorithmically governed environments. The paper argues that political self-censorship on TikTok should be understood as a form of communicative adaptation shaped by algorithmic visibility regimes, social evaluation and the permanence of digital speech (Gillespie, 2018). More broadly, the study contributes to discussions on how digital platforms structure subjectivities, reinforce polarisation and reshape the possibilities of democratic participation in contemporary networked publics (Napoli, 2019).

KEY WORDS

Political self-censorship; TikTok; algorithmic visibility; political Identity; polarisation.

REFERENCES

Bucher, T. (2018). If… then: Algorithmic power and politics. Oxford University Press.

Foucault, M. (1981). The order of discourse. In R. Young (Ed.), Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader (pp. 48–78). Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Gillespie, T. (2018). Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media. Yale University Press.

Napoli, P. M. (2019). Social media and the public interest: Media regulation in the disinformation age. Columbia University Press.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). The spiral of silence: Public opinion-our social skin (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). The platform society: Public values in a connective world. Oxford University

Mario Leto

Akita International University

Negotiating stigma: Plant-based identities in social media

In my paper, I examine how plant-based social-media influencers avoid "vegan stigma" through identity performance. More specifically, I explore how social media influencers use language, imagery, and sound to frame plant-based lifestyles in ways that extend beyond diet into broader questions of selfhood, community, and ecological responsibility. My study is grounded in the Ecolinguistics framework (Stibbe, 2021) and uses social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), identity theory (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006) and narrative theory (Toolan, 2001) as analytical methodologies. In my presentation, I focus primarily on two Instagram accounts that positively represent plant-based lifestyles through the cultivation of two particular aesthetic sensibilities. In one account, the identity of the influencer is aligned with a cottagecore and bohemian ethic where rustic simplicity, handcrafted domesticity, and an embrace of the natural world become signs of authenticity. Such representations often emphasize idyllic rural settings, seasonal foods, and artisanal practices, presenting plant-based lifestyles as a harmonious mode of life rather than a restrictive lifestyle choice. The other account frames plant-based lifestyles through the discourse of family values and bildungsroman innocence. Home settings with friends and family situate plant-based values within everyday familial routines, rendering the lifestyles less radical and more accessible. Narratives of childhood growth and moral awakening portray them as part of a journey toward ethical maturity, aligning ecological concern with a broader story of personal and collective development. Overall, and in line with the conference themes, the results of my research show how social media functions as a platform for crafting identities which are simultaneously aesthetic, ethical, and relational. In the process, they tend to mitigate conflict, polarization and stigmatization while opening up spaces for alternative ecological worldviews grounded in care, simplicity, and interconnectedness.

KEY WORDS

Ecolinguistics; veganism; plant-based; social media; identity.

REFERENCES

Benwell, B., & Stokoe, E. (2006). Discourse and identity. Edinburgh University Press.
Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). Reading images: The grammar of visual design (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Stibbe, A. (2021). Ecolinguistics: Language, ecology and the stories we live by (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Toolan, M. (2001). Narrative: A critical linguistic introduction (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Maria Antonietta Marongiu

University of Cagliari

Constructing authority in a post-truth era: Trump's rhetorical stance on Iran

This work explores the discursive construction of authority and stance-taking in Donald Trump's political communication regarding the military and political tensions with Iran. In a context defined by epistemic fragmentation, political leaders employ rhetorical strategies that bypass conventional requirements for consistency and factual accuracy. Building on Mouffe (2005, 2013), this study examines how antagonism is discursively organized to shape a powerful political persona even when the narrative builds a false reality. The research addresses the questions of what rhetorical strategies Trump adopts to discursively construct and maintain agency within the "Us" v "Them" dichotomy (Van Leeuwen, 2008); and how the rhetorical strategies employed for dominant stance-taking contribute to broaden discursive polarisation and construct conflict. Utilising Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Wodak 2011, 2021), a corpus of Trump's official speeches, press statements, and social media posts concerning Iran is qualitatively analysed focusing on stance-taking markers, rhetorical tropes (such as hyperbole and metaphor), and legitimisation strategies. By examining the mutual constitution of discourse and context (Bamberg et al., 2011), the research examines how historical tensions are recontextualised into a contemporary antagonistic struggle. Preliminary findings suggest that Trump's agency does not relies on logical consistency but on a performative authenticity which prioritises emotional resonance over factual coherence. Strategic flexibility is used to recontextualise and reframe contradictory prior statements and maintain an authoritative stance despite factual shifts (Krzyżanowski, 2020). Ultimately, the "Us" v "Them" dichotomy is based on Manichean metaphors and hyperbolic soundbites which serve to polarise the audience, simplifying complex geopolitical realities into a struggle for survival, and further deepening social and political divisions.

KEY WORDS

Donald J. Trump; Critical Discourse Analysis; political discourse; polarisation; agency.

REFERENCES

Bamberg, M., De Fina, A., & Schiffrin, D. (2011). Discourse and Identity Construction. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), Handbook of Identity Theory and Research (pp. 177-199). Springer Science+Business Media.

Krzyżanowski, M. (2020). Normalization and the discursive construction of "new" norms and "new" normality: discourse in the paradoxes of populism and neoliberalism. Social Semiotics, 30(4), 431–448.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis. Oxford University Press.

Wodak, R. (2011). "Us" and "Them": Inclusion and Exclusion – Discrimination via Discourse. In G. Delanty, R. Wodak, & P. Jones (Eds.), Identity, Belonging and Migration (pp. 54-77). Liverpool University Press.

Wodak, R. (2021). The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-Right Discourse (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Janaica Gomes Matos[1] **& Mario Junglas Muniz**[2]

[1]Piauí State University; [2]Federal University of Ceará

The discursive construction of political polarization in Flávio Bolsonaro's speeches: Referential networks and the representation of social actors

This study aims to investigate how referential networks contribute to the construction of social actor representations in speeches delivered by Senator Flávio Bolsonaro in the Brazilian Federal Senate. The study seeks to understand how deictic-anaphoric mechanisms contribute to the construction of social groups, the establishment of proximity or distance between actors, and the production of ideological effects in political discourse. The research is grounded in studies on reference construction (Mondada & Dubois, 2003) and referential networks (Matos, 2018; Cavalcante et al., 2023), articulated with Van Leeuwen's (2008) socio-semantic framework for the representation of social actors and Van Dijk's (2018) socio-cognitive approach, particularly regarding processes of ideological polarization and the discursive construction of the opposition between "Us" and "Them." This study is qualitative, documentary, and descriptive-interpretative in nature. The corpus consists of two speeches delivered by Flávio Bolsonaro in the Federal Senate on issues of broad political relevance between 2023 and 2026. The ongoing analysis focuses on processes of referential networking, examining the expressions responsible for the introduction, maintenance, and recategorization of referents (Matos, 2018; Cavalcante et al., 2023). Simultaneously, the socio-semantic categories for the analysis of social actor representation proposed by Van Leeuwen (2008) are identified. The analytical procedures involve mapping the referential networks associated with the social actor Flávio Bolsonaro in relation to other referents/social actors and interpreting the meaning effects produced by strategies of indetermination and determination, including categories such as association/dissociation, differentiation/indifferentiation, categorization, and nomination. While groups associated with the speaker tend to be represented through broad and legitimizing collective categories, opposing groups are frequently individualized or represented in generic terms, producing effects of accountability, exclusion, and antagonism. The findings indicate that referential networks function as important discursive resources in the production of socio-cognitive representations and in sustaining contemporary political polarization.

KEY WORDS

Political polarization; Referential networks; Social actor representation; Determination and indetermination; Parliamentary discourse.

REFERENCES

Cavalcante, M. et al. (2023) Text Linguistics: concepts and applications. Pontes Editores.

Matos, J. G. (2018). As redes referenciais na construção de notas jornalísticas [Tese de doutorado, Universidade Federal do Ceará]. Repositório institucional da Universidade Federal do Ceará. https://repositorio.ufc.br/handle/riufc/35419

Mondada, L. & Dubois, D. (2003). Construção dos objetos de discurso e categorização: uma abordagem dos processos de referenciação (M. M. Cavalcante, Trad.). In M. M. Cavalcante, B. Biasi-Rodrigues, & A. Ciulla e Silva (Orgs.), Referenciação (pp. 17–52). Contexto.

Van Dijk, T. (2018) Discurso e poder. São Paulo: Contexto.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2008) Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

David Mitchell

The University of Sheffield

Victimhood, erasure, polarisation: UK media constructions of Palestinian and Israeli identities after October 7th

While there is a rich academic literature analysing the Palestine/Israel conflict, very few studies have looked at UK news coverage since the start of the genocide. This original work investigates how Palestinian and Israeli civilian identities were discursively constructed by leading UK media brands, specifically in the violence of the days following October 7th, 2023. Utilising the Socio-Cognitive Model (Van Dijk, 1998), articles from The Guardian, The Times and The Daily Mail were subjected to Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), tracing the operationalisation of the Us-vs-Them discursive macro-strategy. Employing compatible socio-semantic frameworks for the verbal (Van Leeuwen, 2008) and the visual mode (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021), the findings reveal dichotomous treatment of these two civilian populations in both. Primarily, it identifies a) the discursive strategies (backgrounding, abstraction, (im)personalisation, categorisation, nomination and metonymic transformation) with which Palestinian subjectivities were erased and those of Israelis foregrounded, and b) a marked ideological conformity in UK news outlets spanning the whole political spectrum - one particularly salient data point being a comparative shift in The Guardian towards a more pro-Israeli framing. Furthermore, this paper interrogates: the degree to which such dichotomous representations may facilitate polarisation in UK public life and political discourse; the merits of differing media theories and frameworks, and their relative explanatory power as to the continued production of hegemonic representations of occupied people; and the power that the lingering productive capacities of British Orientalism (Said, 2019) still demonstrate in inflecting the semiotic choices used to construct the identities of peoples in West Asia.

KEY WORDS

Media; colonialism; violence; victims; occupation.

REFERENCES

Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2021). Reading images : the grammar of visual design (3rd ed.). Routledge. https://www.vlebooks.com/product/openreader?id=USheffield&accId=8860156&isbn=9781000207958

Said, E. (2019). Orientalism (4th ed.). Penguin Random House.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: a multidisciplinary approach. SAGE.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Discourse and practice : new tools for critical discourse analysis (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.

Alina Mozolevska[1] **& Olena Siden**[2]

[1]Saarland University and Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University; [2]University of Helsinki

Performing 'the people' in times of war: Visual populism and the multimodal construction of Ukrainianness in Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Independence Day addresses (2019-2025)

The research examines how collective identity is discursively constructed and transformed in times of crisis through the multimodal political communication of Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Focusing on a longitudinal corpus of Independence Day video addresses delivered between 2019 and 2025, the study investigates how a recurring ritualised format enables the tracing shifts in the articulation of Ukrainianness under conditions of escalating geopolitical conflict. Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (van Leeuwen, 2015; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), the research conceptualises Zelenskyy's communication as a form of visual populism (Moffitt 2022; 2024), in which "the people" is constructed through the interplay of visual staging, embodied performance, and discursive strategies. Particular attention is paid to the production of "we-ness" and the construction of boundaries between "we" and "they" in a context of war and polarisation. The analysis demonstrates a significant transformation in the construction of Ukrainianness across the selected addresses. In 2019, pre-war discourse foregrounds civic unity, pluralism, and normalisation, supported by informal visual settings and a conversational style that constructs an inclusive, future-oriented "we." In contrast, wartime addresses (2022-2025) mobilise a different multimodal repertoire: militarised embodiment, constrained spatial settings, a stronger nation-centred discourse, and heightened emotional intensity. These elements contribute to the construction of a resilient and morally charged collective subject, positioned in opposition to an external aggressor. The research argues that this shift reflects a strategic reconfiguration of visual populist discourse, in which identity is not merely represented but actively performed through repeated, highly mediated acts of leadership. Through these performances, Zelenskyy's addresses reshape the collective "we" and consolidate a unified national identity under conditions of crisis, while intensifying symbolic boundaries between the national community and its adversary.

KEY WORDS

Critical Discourse Studies; multimodal discourse analysis; visual populism; collective identity; Russia-Ukraine war.

REFERENCES

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2021). Reading images: The grammar of visual design (3rd ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003099857

Moffitt, B. (2022). Taking account of the visual politics of populism. Polity, 54(3), 557–564. https://doi.org/10.1086/719829

Moffitt, B. (2024). How do populists visually represent "the people"? A systematic comparative visual content analysis of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders' Instagram accounts. The International Journal of Press/Politics, 29(1), 74–99.

van Leeuwen, T. (2015). Multimodality. In D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin (Eds.), The handbook of discourse analysis (2nd ed., Vol. 1, pp. 447–465). Wiley.

Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2009). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory, and methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods for critical discourse analysis (2nd ed., pp. 1–33). Sage.

Clara Müllenmeister

University of Bremen

Referential identification as a site of polarisation

Referential attribution of gender is one of the most prevalent discursive instances of social division. In gender languages like German, the status of binary gender as a functional prerequisite for personal reference results in a "dysaffordance" (Wittkower, 2016) for personal reference without binary gender. Binary gender serves as an anchor for pragmatic reference tracking as well as for syntactic gender agreement (Klein, 2022), while at the same time discursively positioning referents as male or female. Procedural knowledge of these languages authorizes and at the same time requires speakers to identify referents as male or female, along with most referential speech acts. Understanding gender as a matter of self-determination instead of an obvious semiotic (or even natural) feature challenges communication practices that rely on speakers' authority and ability to determine binary gender. My research traces how speakers' knowledge of the structure of German functions as an actant in discourse, lending speakers the authority to referentially determine personal gender. By analyzing doubt and insecurities that come with attempts at gender-inclusive reference in German, I show how language knowledge as a part of social materiality authorizes and at the same time requires speakers to identify referents as male or female to allow discursive representation.

KEY WORDS

Identification; personal reference; gender; communities of practice; contradiction.

REFERENCES

Klein, A. (2022). Wohin mit Epikoina? – Überlegungen zur Grammatik und Pragmatik geschlechtsindefiniter Personenbezeichnungen. In G. Diewald & D. Nübling (Eds.), Genus – Sexus – Gender (pp. 135–190). De Gruyter.

Wittkower, D. E. (2016). Principles of anti-discriminatory design. 2016 IEEE International Symposium on Ethics in Engineering, Science and Technology (ETHICS), 1–7.

Atefeh Namdari

Independent Researcher

How post-feminism made the manosphere possible: A discursive account

Most accounts of the manosphere read it as backlash: a reaction by men to the gains of feminism, accelerated by digital platforms. This paper does not contest that reading so much as redirect it. Backlash accounts explain why some men were available for anti-feminist mobilisation. They do not explain why the discursive space for that mobilisation was open. For that, the relevant object is not feminism. It is post-feminism. The argument is that post-feminism did not only weaken feminist politics. It produced something more specific, which I call a discursive vacuum. In treating gender equality as a battle largely won, and rewriting structural critique as personal choice, post-feminism took apart the public vocabulary through which collective gender grievance had been spoken. The vocabulary did not vanish. It was vacated. And what is vacated can be occupied. The argument unfolds in three moves. It begins with Gill (2007) and McRobbie (2009), tracing how post-feminism replaced the language of structural inequality with a grammar of individual empowerment, until gender remained politically legible only as personal narrative. From there it turns to the manosphere itself, which did not invent its political language so much as inherit it. The rhetorical forms it deploys, testimony, victimhood, claims of identity, are forms post-feminism had already normalised, now redirected to articulate masculine grievance. A final stage draws on Tufekci's account of platform amplification: engagement-driven architectures reward the inheritor more than the originator, because outrage scales more reliably than solidarity. The paper's contribution is conceptual. To name a discursive vacuum is to recast the manosphere as something other than feminism's enemy. It becomes, instead, post-feminism's unintended heir.

KEY WORDS

Post-feminism; manosphere; discourse theory; discursive vacuum; anti-feminism; depoliticization; platform politics.

REFERENCES

Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. European Journal of Cultural Studies, 10(2), 147–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407075898

McRobbie, A. (2009). The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture and social change. Sage.

Tufekci, Z. (2018, March 10). YouTube, the great radicalizer. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radical.html

Silvana Neskovska[1] **& Zorica Trajkova**[2]

[1]St. Kliment Ohridski University; [2]Ss. Cyril and Methodius University

Ursula von der Leyen's discursive strategies for constructing leadership identity in times of global crisis and polarisation

In an era characterized by geopolitical instability, armed conflicts, economic uncertainty, climate challenges, and increasing global polarisation, leadership identity is increasingly negotiated and legitimised through discourse. As President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen has emerged as one of the most influential political voices shaping the European Union's response to contemporary crises. Despite growing scholarship on European political communication, relatively limited attention has been devoted to the discursive construction of leadership identity and authority in von der Leyen's crisis communication. Drawing on the theoretical and methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 2006; Wodak, 2009), this study presents a qualitative analysis of a corpus of major speeches delivered by von der Leyen between 2022 and 2026 at the European Parliament, international summits, policy forums, and other high-profile political events. The study investigates the discursive strategies she employs to construct her leadership identity, negotiate political authority, and legitimise political action during periods of global crisis and geopolitical uncertainty. The analysis further examines how von der Leyen represents the European Union, its allies, and geopolitical adversaries, and whether her communicative practices reproduce, challenge, or transform traditionally masculine models of political leadership. The research particularly focuses on her use of discursive strategies such as nomination, predication, legitimisation, modality, framing, and the strategic use of personal pronouns. The findings suggest that von der Leyen constructs authority through inclusive identity narratives, moral legitimisation, strategic use of modality, nomination, predication and crisis framing. Simultaneously, she discursively positions the European Union as a resilient, united, and influential geopolitical actor committed to democratic values and collective action with its allies. With respect to geopolitical adversaries, she avoids highly emotional or openly hostile language and instead relies on institutional, moral, and value-based forms of delegitimisation. Overall, the study contributes to research on political discourse, leadership communication, and the gendered construction of authority in contemporary politics.

KEY WORDS

Ursula von der Leyen, critical discourse analysis, political discourse, leadership identity, authority, (de)legitimation

REFERENCES

Fairclough, N. (2003). Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research. Routledge.

van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Discourse and manipulation. Discourse & Society, 17(3), 359–383. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926506060250

Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse of politics in action: Politics as usual. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230316539

Minh Nghia-Nguyen[1] & Panayota Gounari[2]

[1]University of Massachusetts Boston; [2]University of Massachusetts Boston and National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

The necropolitics of American exceptionalist identity – a Discourse-Historical study

This study explores American exceptionalism (Tocqueville, 1899) under the lens of necropolitics (Mbembe, 2019)—the sovereign power to decide people's life and death. American exceptionalism perpetuates a collective identity of the United States as a divine "city upon a hill," defined by its providential greatness, geopolitical horizons, and a "hyper-power" victory culture with a mission to spread its version of democracy across the world through militarization. Globally, this exceptionalist ideological superstructure is fueled by necropower, managing whose lives are worth protecting and whose bodies are exponentially disposable, as documented throughout the history of colonial and imperialist wars in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and others. Domestically, this necro hyper-power manifests in anti-immigrant sentiments, mass killings, arrests, and deportations targeting racialized and gendered populations, calling into question the classic sermon of a "nation of immigrants." We argue that both American exceptionalism and necropolitics operate through the discursive construction of collective memory (Milani & Richardson, 2022) to define American democracy as rooted in white supremacy against a historical backdrop of unfree Black labor and the uncredited sacrifices of communities of color. In this study, we collected and analyzed multimodal data, including presidential speeches, war commemoration media discourses, and immigration legislation since the 1790s, utilizing a Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). We focused on intertextuality and interdiscursivity across political and social chronotopes, emerging through various interconnected topoi. Research findings illustrate a polarized and dehistoricized construction of "Americans" versus non/un-American identities through the topos of history and threat/burden, among others. This Us versus Them binary pits "law-abiding citizens," "patriots," and state security forces against racialized, criminalized out-groups often labeled as the enemy, animals, or illegal aliens. These constructions illustrate the necropolitical framing of non/un-American racialized and gendered subjects as the living dead in necropolitical zones such as borders and war zones. These discursive tropes align with existing contemporary far-right populist discourses while recontextualizing long-standing nativist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Black discourses that construct minoritized bodies and identities as existential threats to be eliminated.

KEY WORDS

American exceptionalism; necropolitics; national identity; collective memory; discourse-historical approach.

REFERENCES

Mbembe, A. (2019). Necropolitics. Duke University Press.

Milani, T. M., & Richardson, J. E. (2022). Discourses of collective remembering: Contestation, politics, affect. Critical Discourse Studies, 1–18.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2009). The Discourse-Historical Approach. In J. Flowerdew & J. E. Richardson (Eds.), Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis (pp. 87–123). SAGE.

Tocqueville, A. de. (1899). Democracy in America (H. Reeve, Trans.). Colonial Press.

Maciej Nowakowski

Jagiellonian University

Manufacturing "us": Discursive constructions of political peoplehood in Veneto, Silesia and Valencia

How do regional movements persuade individuals that they constitute a distinct political community rather than merely a cultural or territorial group? While scholarship on nationalism and regionalism has extensively examined movements whose collective identities are already widely recognised, less attention has been paid to regions whose status as a distinct "people" remains contested. This paper examines the discursive processes through which regional actors transform linguistic, cultural, and historical distinctiveness into claims of political peoplehood. The study compares three European cases that occupy an ambiguous position between region, language community, and nation: Veneto (Italy), Silesia (Poland), and Valencia (Spain). Despite their differing political contexts, all three movements confront similar challenges to the legitimacy of their collective identities and must continuously justify the existence of a distinct collective subject. The paper asks: How do regional movements discursively construct political peoplehood, and which discursive strategies are employed to legitimise claims to collective distinctiveness and recognition? The corpus comprises 120 texts produced between 2015 and 2026 by regionalist organisations, language-recognition campaigns, cultural associations, and autonomy movements. Materials include organisational websites, public statements, campaign texts, manifestos, and selected social media communications. Methodologically, the study combines Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach with Van Dijk's framework of ideological polarisation and Laclau and Mouffe's conceptualisation of political subject formation. Texts are comparatively coded for recurring strategies of identity construction, legitimisation, and boundary-making. The analysis identifies six recurring discursive strategies through which political peoplehood is constructed: linguistic authentication, historical continuity, cultural exceptionalism, victimisation, antagonistic boundary-making, and political legitimisation. Across all three cases, language and culture are transformed from markers of regional distinctiveness into evidence of collective political existence. Simultaneously, external political centres are represented as constraining recognition, thereby reinforcing in-group solidarity and sharpening symbolic boundaries between "Us" and "Them." While these strategies appear across all cases, their relative prominence varies according to local political and historical contexts. The paper proposes a comparative typology of discursive peoplehood construction and argues that political communities should be understood not as pre-existing entities but as outcomes of ongoing discursive labour. By shifting attention from claims for autonomy to the prior construction of the collective subjects making those claims, the study contributes to broader debates on discourse, identity, polarisation, and political mobilisation in contemporary Europe.

KEY WORDS

Discourse; identity construction; political peoplehood; regional nationalism; boundary-making.

Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak

University of Lodz

The dispositif of polarized public debate and the effect of conceptual flipsiding

Polarization is a discursive construct that shapes public debate through a self-fulfilling mechanism. The more symbolic elites problematize polarization, the further the boundaries of the field of conflict are extended. At the same time, a body of research demonstrates that political polarization does not necessarily translate into increased social polarization, and that the reduction of political discourse to antagonistic dichotomies primarily serves the interests of political and media elites (e.g., Feliksiak et al., 2025). Within the normative framework, commercial digital media are often regarded as the principal accelerators of polarization in public debate, whereas public-service media and the so-called old media are viewed as bastions of pluralism, communicative rationality, and resistance to polarization (e.g., Habermas, 2023). This presentation aims at moving beyond the binary opposition between public-service and commercial digital media by demonstrating that both constitute elements of a complex assemblage of discourses, institutional and symbolic practices, and identity models that together form the dispositif of polarized public debate. Following Michel Foucault (1980), a dispositif is understood here as an apparatus designed to address and normalize conditions of urgency. The dispositif of polarized public debate, in turn, functions as a device for producing the construct of polarization by continuously problematizing and condemning polarization as both an essential feature and a discursive predicate of public debate. This paradox becomes particularly visible through the phenomenon of conceptual flipsiding, defined as "a process of strategic reversal of notions closely associated with liberal democracy or with its key values of freedom, equality, tolerance, and the like, for pronouncedly illiberal gains" (Krzyżanowski & Krzyżanowska, 2024, p. 34). Such recontextualizations and reversals of meaning also affect concepts that describe the discursive properties and resources of public debate, including 'reasoning,' 'argument,' 'ideology,' 'dialogue,' 'freedom of speech,' and 'norm.' Within the dispositif of polarized public debate, however, the objectives of conceptual flipsiding need not be explicitly illiberal. Rather, they may primarily serve the accumulation of discursive capital by media elites (Angermuller, 2018). The paper presents this phenomenon through a post-Foucauldian analysis of a presidential debate in public television and twelve interviews conducted with candidates running in the 2025 Polish presidential election. The interviews were broadcast on Kanał Zero, a YouTube channel highly popular among Polish internet users. Its owner, Krzysztof Stanowski, was himself a candidate in the election.

KEY WORDS

Polarization; dispositif; public debate; digital media; conceptual flipsiding.

REFERENCES

Angermuller, J. (2018). Accumulating discursive capital, valuating subject positions. From Marx to Foucault. Critical Discourse Studies, 15(4), 414–425. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.1457551

Feliksiak, M., Roguska, B., Ruszkowski, P. (2025). Polaryzacja społeczeństwa polskiego a klasy i warstwy społeczne. Fundacja im. S. Batorego.

Foucault, M. (1980). "The Confession of the Flesh." In: Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977 by Michel Foucault, ed. C. Gordon (pp. 194-228). Pantheon Books.

Habermas, J. (2023) A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere and Deliberative Politics. Polity.

Krzyżanowski, M., Krzyżanowska, N. (2024).Conceptual Flipsiding in/and Illiberal Imagination: Towards a Discourse-Conceptual Analysis. Journal of Illiberalism Studies 4(2), 33-46. https://doi.org/10.53483/XCPU3574

Cristina Núñez-Rodríguez[1] & Antonio Moreno-Ortiz[2]

[1]University of Málaga; [2]University of Málaga

Laughing back at power: Sarcasm, echoic irony and counter-hegemonic discourse in American late-night television and YouTube responses

In an increasingly polarized media landscape, political satire has emerged as one of the most visible arenas in which dominant narratives are contested and alternative political identities are constructed. This paper examines how sarcasm and irony function as discursive strategies of counter-polarization in American late-night television monologues focused on Donald Trump's foreign policy during his second term, and how these strategies are received, replicated and extended by audiences in the YouTube comment sections associated with those monologues. The analysis draws on a triangulated theoretical framework combining the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo & Raskin, 1991), Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Van Dijk, 1997). The GTVH provides a systematic account of the mechanisms through which political humor is constructed at the utterance level, while Relevance Theory illuminates how echoic irony, i.e., the strategic recycling of a target's own words to expose their contradictions, is processed by audiences. CDA situates both within the broader power dynamics of populist discourse, showing how satirical language performs a counter-hegemonic function by subverting the legitimation strategies of Trumpist rhetoric. The monologue corpus comprises segments from The Late Show with Stephen Colbert addressing the 2026 US military intervention in Venezuela, selected for their density of satirical devices and topical focus on the “America First” foreign policy discourse. Qualitative analysis of the associated YouTube comment sections is conducted through a mixed-methods approach: the Corpus Sense AI-enhanced collaborative platform for discourse monitoring deploys a large language model-based Insights tool to detect and annotate instances of irony and sarcasm in viewer responses, while close manual analysis examines how commenters reproduce, amplify and transform the satirical frames established in the monologue. This combination allows for systematic coverage of the comment corpus alongside the interpretive depth required to capture the pragmatic complexity of figurative language in digital contexts. Findings suggest that late-night satire functions not merely as entertainment but as a site of discursive identity construction, where a community of critical political subjects is constituted through shared sarcastic voice. The paper contributes both empirical evidence and a replicable analytical framework for the study of humor as a mechanism of resistance in polarized digital publics.

KEY WORDS

Political satire; sarcasm; critical discourse analysis; late-night television; digital polarization.

REFERENCES

Attardo, S., & Raskin, V. (1991). Script theory revis(it)ed: Joke similarity and joke representation model. Humor: International Journal of Humor Research, 4(3–4), 293–347.

Fairclough, N. (2001). Language and power. Longman.

Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). Relevance: Communication and cognition. Harvard University Press.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). What is political discourse analysis? Political Linguistics, 11(1), 11–52.

Dolors Ortega Arévalo[1] & Thor Kerr[2]

[1]University of Barcelona; [2]Curtin University

Transoceanic Diasporas and White Nostalgia: Kamala Harris in the Age of Trump

Kamala Devi Harris already made history when she became, as she claims herself on her official website, "the second African-American woman and first South Asian-American senator in history," to what we could add, the first South Asian American and Black American Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee in the 2020 US Presidential election and the first South Asian and Black woman to run for a major party's presidential nomination in United States history. Harris has very often found herself in the spotlight over claims of racial scrutiny. Her racial and ethnical background has been a priority in media coverage, with a focus on the potentiality of her identity location to shape her policies and public persona. Her mixed heritage has been both celebrated and subject to contention, debate and careful examination, reflecting broader discussions about ethnicity, racial categorizations, multiculturalism, identity, and intersectionality. This paper examines Kamala Harris' 2020-2024 presidential trajectory as a site where multiracial, diasporic identity confronts white supremacist nostalgia in contemporary US politics. Its central thesis argues that Harris' transoceanic hybridity, rooted in Black Atlantic and South Asian Indian Ocean histories, both destabilizes hegemonic narratives of national belonging and reveals the structural limits placed on hybrid, gendered bodies within presidential politics. Drawing on Critical Mixed-Race Studies and Diaspora Theory, the article investigates how Harris' multi-ethnoracial identity was mobilized, scrutinized, and contested in media, campaign discourse, and political attacks, particularly in contrast to Donald Trump's masculinist, frontier-based imaginaries of power. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative critical discourse analysis of key campaign texts, including the September 2024 presidential debate, Trump's victory speech, and Harris' concession speech, alongside close readings of Harris' memoir. The analysis demonstrates how hybridity operates as a politically ambivalent force that can challenge exclusionary racial logics while remaining vulnerable to containment within dominant structures of power.

KEY WORDS

Transoceanic hybridity; Kamala Harris; white supremacy; Donald Trump; Critical Mixed-Race Studies.

REFERENCES

Brown, N. E., & Lemi, D. C. (2021). Sister style: The politics of appearance for Black women political elites. Oxford University Press.

Buggs, S. G. (2020, November 2). Understanding Kamala Harris, the great multiracial (Black) hope. Bitch Media. https://shantelgbuggs.com/2023/04/09/understanding-kamala-harris-the-great-multiracial-black-hope/

Daniel, G. R., Kina, L., Dariotis, W. M., & Forjas, C. (2014). Emerging paradigms in critical mixed race studies. Journal of Critical Mixed Race Studies, 1(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/C811013868

Filindra, A., & Fagan, E. J. (2022). Black, immigrant, or woman? The implicit influence of Kamala Harris' vice presidential nomination on support for Biden in 2020. Social Science Quarterly, 103(4), 892–906.

Hoffman, R. (2024). Harris–Trump presidential debate transcript. ABC News. https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/harris-trump-presidential-debate-transcript/story?id=113560542

Junn, J. (2017). The Trump majority: White womanhood and the making of female voters in the U.S. Politics, Groups & Identities, 5(2), 343–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1304224

Lemi, D. C. (2025). From descriptive to identity representation: What if a woman of color led the American empire? Politics & Gender, 21(2), 384–391. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X25100056

Leslie, G. J., Masuoka, N., Gaither, S. E., Remedios, J. D., & Vinluan, A. C. (2022). Voter evaluations of biracial-identified political candidates. Social Sciences, 11(4), 171–202. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11040171

Lipsitz, G. (1998). The possessive investment in whiteness: How White people profit from identity politics. Temple University Press.

Masuoka, N. (2015). Racial identification in a post-Obama era: Multiracialism, identity choice, and candidate evaluation. In A. A. Barreto & R. L. O'Bryant (Eds.), American identity in the age of Obama (pp. 42–69). Routledge.

Manuel Padilla Cruz

University of Seville

The online discursive construction of non-human identity as a case of social polarisation: A corpus-based analysis of otherkin discourse in Spanish on X

Identity construction is an undeniable staple of discourse analysis, which provides a unique vantage point for examining how discursive practices negotiate the boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. In the landscape of today's increasingly polarised digital spheres, the emergence of new social identities and their construction serve as a primary site for both social performance and ideological contestation in the current climate of epistemic fragmentation. A case in point is online discourse about the otherkin community, which groups individuals who identify as partially or entirely non-human. This presentation will present a computer-assisted discourse analysis of a corpus comprising comments from X in Spanish regarding this community. Utilising AntConc, the study employs a corpus-based methodology to uncover the linguistic patterns defining discourse about the otherkin community (Baker, 2006; Bouvier & Machin, 2018; Cantos Gómez, 2013; Unger et al., 2016; Zappavigna, 2012). It will analyse the keyness of specific terms, frequent collocations and relevant concurrences in order to uncover how both in-group members and out-group commentators linguistically construct the 'otherkin identity'. Preliminary findings indicate a sharp discursive divide. On one side, self-positioning strategies rely on terms related to 'sensations', 'labels' and biological terminology in order to validate subjective experiences (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Conversely, out-group discourse frequently employs antagonistic strategies that mirror broader social divisions. Specifically, the analysis unravels three primary discursive strategies used to marginalise otherkin identities: stigmatisation through the lens of 'mental illness, othering via the dismissal of identities as a 'joke' or 'delusion', and criminalising associations, most notably through collocations linking non-traditional identities to 'pedophilia'. These choices reflect what Van Dijk (1998) identifies as ideological squares, where the 'us' is protected by delegitimising the 'them'. By examining these communicative practices, the study highlights how linguistic choices reflect and reinforce social divides, materialising power imbalances within polarised digital contexts. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how identity is renegotiated through contestation and boundary-making in a fragmented socio-cultural reality.

KEY WORDS

Otherkin identity; computer-assisted corpus based discourse analysis; stigmatisation; othering; criminalisation.

REFERENCES

Baker, P. (2006). Using corpora in discourse analysis. Continuum.

Bouvier, G., & Machin, D. (2018). Critical discourse analysis and social media: The need for anthropological embedding. Sage.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. Discourse Studies, 7(4-5), 585–614.

Cantos Gómez, P. (2013). Statistical methods in corpus linguistics. Oxford University Press.

Unger, J. W., Wodak, R., & KhosraviNik, M. (2016). Critical discourse studies and social media: Data, methods and techniques. En R. Wodak y M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis (pp. 263–282). Sage.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. Sage.

Zappavigna, M. (2012). Discourse of Twitter and social media. Continuum.

Liran Peretz[1] & Alena Vasilyeva[2]

[1]University of Massachusetts Amherst; [2]University of Massachusetts Amherst

The construction of identities in public arguments on X: The Bad Bunny's Super Bowl performance controversy

In the context of global rising polarization, it has been argued that online interactions between X (formerly Twitter) users that hold similar worldviews will strengthen the in-group identity, while interactions between users with different standpoints will push groups further away (Foderaro & Lorentzen, 2023) and weaken the potential constructive dialogue between them (Katalinić, Dunđer & Seljan, 2023). In this paper we examine communicative moves used to construct distinct group identities in a recent conflict that emerged on X. On February 8, 2026, the Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny performed in Spanish during the National Football League Super Bowl's halftime show, held in California, which sparked a public controversy regarding what it means to be American. In this study, we analyze the comments posted as a reaction to a tweet uploaded by the official NFL X account on the night of the show. We use discourse analysis and a polylogue frame of argumentation (Lewiński & Aakhus, 2023), to explore how group division was created and maintained through the construction of contradicting identities. We demonstrate how the controversy was constructed as a polylogical argumentation at two levels. First, the US users' comments were constructed as a division between two groups: those who supported the show and those who opposed it. They constructed themselves and the other in terms of ideological and political identities. Users who were against the show were constructed as Trump supporters, Republicans, and racist; and those who supported the show were constructed as Woke, Democrats, and haters of the US. Second, the controversy was constructed as a division between US Americans and Latin Americans. Additionally, we demonstrate how social categories such as race, religion and gender were used in opposite ways to challenge the other. Although this controversy can be seen as a dichotomous interaction between homogenous groups, the data show that it is in fact a polylogue between heterogenous groups with multiple voices and different standpoints. We discuss how the simplification of the conflict and the construction of dichotomous identities deepens polarization.

KEY WORDS

Argument; conflict; identity; discursive practices; polarization.

REFERENCES

Foderaro, A., & Lorentzen D.G. (2023). Argumentative practices and patterns in debating climate change on Twitter. Aslib Journal of Information Management, 75(1), 131-148.

Katalinić, J., Dunđer, I., & Seljan, S. (2023). Polarizing topics on Twitter in the 2022 United States elections. Information, 14(11), 1-28.

Lewiński, M., & Aakhus, M. (2023). Argumentation in Complex Communication: Managing Disagreement in a Polylogue. Cambridge University Press.

M Dolores Porto[1] & Manuela Romano[2]

[1]University of Alcalá; [2]Autonomous University of Madrid

Humour as a polarising strategy in social media. The case of Spanish customers against Ryanair in X

Brand teasing is a recent marketing strategy in which companies use social media to mock consumers and other brands or to take sides on controversial issues in a humorous way (Oba et al. 2025, Lutzky & Rundell 2025). Companies such as Ryanair, Virgin or Wendy's have embraced this trend to gain visibility in social media through provocative posts and extreme views that generate many likes, comments and reposts. Besides, according to Yus (2018), understanding digital humour, like memes, demands shared knowledge and so strengthens in-group membership. In this sense, humorous social media posts are intended to increase user engagement with the company. Even when customers' responses do not align with the company, the strategy can be effective, as its humorous tone, often teasing opposing groups, enhances the polarising effect of the posts and increases interactions with them. This paper examines a specific case of polarisation through humorous posts in X between Ryanair_Spain and Spanish users in 2025. On September 3 and 4, the company announced that it would reduce a high number of regional flights in Spain due to the increased airport taxes imposed by the government. These posts condemning the government's decision were highly provocative and hyperbolic and generated a massive response from customers against the company. To analyse the strategies used to contest the company's criticisms, a small corpus of 100 posts published between 3 and 10 September was collected. Results show that over 50% of the posts used humorous strategies, including irony, resignification, emojis and memes. Through humour, X users constructed a strong collective identity, both as allegedly mistreated customers and as Spaniards, confronting the apparently abusive behaviour of a foreign corporation. The findings also evidence the risks of the brand teasing strategy, which can ultimately backfire on the brand itself.

KEY WORDS

Humour; social media; Spanish; corporation discourse; collective identity.

REFERENCES

Lutzky, Ursula & Mhairi Rundell (2025). "Mocking people for stupid opinions is not fun. Also, it's bad for business." From using humour for webcare to polarization. Discourse, Context & Media, 64: 100862.

Oba, Demi, Holly S. Howe & Gavan J. Fitzsimons (2025). Brand teasing: How brands build strong relationships by making fun of their consumers. Journal of Consumer Research, 52, 1: 70–92.

Yus, Francisco (2018). Identity-related issues in meme communication. Internet Pragmatics 1(1): 113–133.

Serhiy Potapenko

Kyiv National Linguistic University

"Partnership born out of dispute": King Charles' address to the US Congress from Cognitive-Rhetorical perspective

The presentation is meant to reveal how King Charles' address to the US Congress delivered on April 28, 2026 (King, 2026) transforms the ideas of the "Nations' interlink" referring to the UK and the US unity and of the "weight of history" into the effect of depolarision against the background of modern world's polarisation. The applied cognitive-rhetorical procedure is aimed at unveiling how a speaker's views outlined at the address outset are supposed to transform into effects meant to influence the audience. The procedure is based on the cognitive phenomenon of image schemas defined as recurring dynamic patterns of our perceptual interactions and motor programs (Hampe, 2005: 1). First, it is found that "the weight of history" idea determines the rhetorical division of the address into the sections dealing with the past, present, future and the eternal, concerning nature protection. Within these sections, the polarisation effect is created by the combination of the units evoking the COUNTERFORCE image schema (Hampe, 2005: 2) and those rendering its degrees in the relations between the Nations and in the contemporary world. The polarisation between the Nations is rendered by the units mitigating COUNTERFORCE degree: differences, disagreements, agree that we do not always agree while the present-day global polarisation is denoted by the units with more intensive semantics: conflict, challenges, defence, common adversaries. Second, the idea of the "Nations' interlink" based on depolarisation is rendered by a number of units signalling different degrees of unity distinguished with the help of image schemas: interlink, relationship (LINK schema representing unity generally); alliance (COLLECTION signifying a group of entities); friendship, partnership (CONTACT underlying close relations); shared, mutual (MERGING schema implying parts of one unit). To conclude, "the weight of history" idea is implemented in the structure of the speech as well as in rendering the "Nations' interlink" idea through the effects of transforming mild polarisation into depolarisation against the background of the contemporary stark polarisation of the world.

KEY WORDS

Cognitive rhetoric; speech; image schema; effect, polarisation/depolarisation.

REFERENCES

Hampe, B. (2005). Image schemas in Cognitive Linguistics. In Beate Hampe (Ed.): From perception to meaning: Image schemas in cognitive linguistics (pp. 1-12). Mouton de Gryuter.

King. (2026, April 28). The King's Address to the Joint Meeting of Congress in Washington https://www.royal.uk/news-and-activity/2026-04-28/the-kings-address-to-the-joint-meeting-of-congress-in-washington

Leyla Rommel

University of Bremen

Narrating softness: Affective polarization and identity construction in tradwife videos

This paper examines how tradwife content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram constructs gendered identities through affectively charged micro-narratives and aestheticized forms of ideological positioning. While public discussions often frame tradwife content as politically polarizing, this paper argues that polarization is not merely an external reaction to the discourse but is also embedded within the narrative and affective construction of femininity itself. Drawing on the small stories approach (Giaxoglou & Georgakopoulou, 2021; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008), the paper investigates how autobiographical formats such as "day in my life" videos, personal testimonies, routines, and transformation narratives construct desirable forms of femininity through everyday storytelling practices. These narratives frequently position traditional femininity as peaceful, authentic, emotionally fulfilling, and "natural," while implicitly contrasting it with negatively framed imaginaries of modern womanhood associated with stress, alienation, career-oriented lifestyles, or feminism. Rather than relying primarily on explicit political argumentation, these distinctions are often communicated through affective aesthetics, including visual softness, domestic imagery, nostalgia, and intimacy. Methodologically, the paper combines the small stories approach with multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen 2001), with an emphasis on affect as a multimodal practice (Westberg 2021), especially in digital media. Particular attention is paid to evaluative language, stance-taking, positioning strategies, and recurring narrative patterns through which (group) identities are constructed (Bös et al., 2018). By examining tradwife discourse as a form of affective identity work, the paper contributes to discussions of polarization, digital subjectivity, and the discursive construction of gender ideals in online spaces.

KEY WORDS

Small stories; multimodal discourse analysis; identity construction; affective polarization; gender ideologies.

REFERENCES

Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small Stories as a New Perspective in Narrative and Identity Analysis. Text & Talk, 28(3), 377–396. https://doi.org/10.1515/TEXT.2008.018

Bös, B., Kleinke, S., Mollin, S., & Hernández, N. (Eds). (2018). The Discursive Construction of Identities On- and Offline. Personal—Group—Collective (Vol. 78). John Benjamins.

Giaxoglou, K., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2021). A Narrative Practice Approach to Identities: Small Stories and Positioning Analysis in Digital Contexts. In M. Bamberg, C. Demuth, & M. Watzlawik (Eds), The Cambridge Handbook of Identity (pp. 241–261). Cambridge University Press.

Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2001). Multimodal Discourse. The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication. Arnold.

Westberg, G. (2021). Affect as a multimodal practice. Multimodality & Society, 1(1), 20–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/2634979521992734

Palina Salei

Vytautas Magnus University

Agency and responsibility in food sustainability discourse: A comparative analysis of American and British online news sources

The influence of news media on the public perception of socially relevant issues is undeniable. One of such issues is food sustainability, as its meanings are constructed through language and communicated in different news sources. In this sense, news articles become a crucial space where different actors negotiate what is considered "sustainable" food, which forms of food consumption are considered desirable, and who is responsible for enabling and/or obstructing more sustainable food systems. The focus on American and British quality online news sources is therefore important, as they both shape public understandings within their national contexts and circulate influential narratives related to the topic of food sustainability worldwide. To conduct the study, two online news outlets were selected: an American source, "The New York Times", and a British one, "The Guardian". Given that the topic of sustainability is broad, as it is observed in various fields, such as economics or ecology, the focus is merely on the news articles of food sustainability discourse. The articles from January 2020 till August 2025 from the dedicated sections on both online news sources are selected for the analysis. In terms of methodology, the study relies on Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995, Wodak and Meyer 2009) to examine the representation of social actors, the attribution of responsibility, and the discursive construction of legitimacy within food sustainability online news articles. The analysis depicts that both online news sources frame sustainability as a socially necessary transition, yet there are noticeable differences in how they construct responsibility and agency related to food sustainability. "The Guardian" perceives food sustainability as a personal responsibility, with the focus on care for one's health and the environment. "The New York Times" depicts food sustainability as a war and a technological notion and as a collective process that requires action from all participants. The findings reveal considerable differences between the two online news sources in the distribution of agency and responsibility, which leads to different public perceptions of the matter in these two media discourse environments.

KEY WORDS

Agency; critical discourse analysis; media discourse; responsibility; food sustainability.

REFERENCES

Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London, England: Longman.

Wodak, Ruth, and Michael Meyer. 2009. "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory, and Methodology." In *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 1–33. London: Sage.

Giuseppina Scotto di Carlo

University of Naples 'L'Orientale'

Why do 'incels' default to men? Gender, agency, and hate speech in femcel discourse

This study investigates how gendered identities and antagonistic relations are discursively constructed in Femcel online communities, addressing the broader question of how polarisation operates through language in marginalised digital spaces. Drawing on a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework (Fairclough, 2013; Wodak, 2015) combined with Bahador's (2023) hate speech intensity model, the paper examines how Femcels linguistically represent men and women across five categories: negative characterisation, negative action, dehumanisation, violence, and death. The dataset consists of approximately 340,000 words collected from three now-defunct Femcel platforms and analysed using Sketch Engine. Quantitative findings reveal a marked asymmetry in agency: men are overwhelmingly constructed as agentive perpetrators of harm, while women—particularly self-identified Femcels—are more frequently positioned as targets. However, this pattern is complicated by a strong reflexive dimension in Femcel discourse. Qualitative analysis shows that hostility is not only outwardly directed towards men but also internally reproduced through self-deprecating and hierarchical representations of women (e.g., "Stacies" and "Beckies"). This produces a layered configuration of identity in which femininity is simultaneously associated with vulnerability, competition, and constrained agency. Importantly, the study argues that Femcel discourse does not simply invert Incel ideology nor consistently consolidate into polarised "us vs. them" antagonism. Rather, it operates as a diagnostic and affective register through which exclusion, desirability, and gendered power are negotiated. While instances of extreme rhetoric (e.g., violence and death) are present, they remain episodic and coexist with broader patterns of grievance articulation and social critique. By situating Femcel discourse within debates on polarisation, identity, and digital subjectivity, this paper contributes to Critical Discourse Studies by highlighting how marginalised groups engage in both the reproduction and contestation of gendered hierarchies. It further suggests that polarisation in such contexts is less a stable ideological division than a fluctuating discursive process shaped by vulnerability, invisibility, and constrained agency.

KEY WORDS

Critical Discourse Analysis; femcels; hate speech; gendered identity; online discourse.

REFERENCES

Bahador, Babak (2023). "Monitoring Hate Speech and the Limits of Current Definition", Soars *86272,* 12: 291-298. https://doi.org/10.48541/dcr.v12.17

Fairclough, Norman (2013). Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language. London: Routledge.

Wodak, Ruth (2015). The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Jaspal Naveel Singh

Open University

The struggle is real: Navigating the metapolitics of Palestine/Israel discourse

Contemporary Palestine/Israel discourse frequently transforms political disagreement into a metapolitical struggle over what may be said, by whom, under which conditions and with what consequences. This paper examines how such constraints are experienced and negotiated by individuals whose political positionalities develop within polarised discursive environments. Drawing on critical sociolinguistics, autoethnography and hiphopography, the study analyses the author's shifting political positionality. The empirical material comprises reflexive accounts of conversations with family members, friends, and academic colleagues; participation in academic and public discussions; experiences of online interaction; engagement with news, scholarship, and documentary media; and Hip Hop-related creative and scholarly practice. These materials are examined as situated communicative encounters through which broader metapolitical dynamics, affective attachments and boundaries of legitimate expression become visible. The analysis does not treat personal experience as representative of wider publics, but as a site where discursive constraints, political repositioning and possibilities for re-articulation can be critically investigated. The paper develops the real as a reflexive communicative ethics for navigating metapolitical discourse. The concept brings together Hip Hop's normative commitment to "keeping it real" with the strategic pragmatism associated with Realpolitik. This approach maintains solidarity with oppressed groups while suspending immediate opposition, treating others' positions as situated articulations rather than fixed identities, and working within the constraints of polarised discourse. The paper argues that the real does not resolve political antagonism or require consensus. Instead, it offers a means of inhabiting polarised discourse reflexively, maintaining normative commitments while keeping open possibilities for questioning, engagement and political re-articulation.

KEY WORDS

Metapolitics; Palestine/Israel discourse; critical sociolinguistics; autoethnography; hiphopography; communicative ethics.

Alexandra Shaitan

Chuo University

Contesting belonging and 'Japaneseness' in Japan

Over recent decades, the issues of Japan's multi-racial identity and society have piqued both lay and academic interest. Whilst the majority of studies have focused on early life stages: childhood/adolescence (Kamada, 2010; Nakamura, 2020; Seiger, 2019) and young adults (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008; Oshima, 2014; Yoshida & Oikawa, 2012), research on haafu adults – the so-called first generation of mixed-race Japanese – is comparatively limited (e.g., Kich 1982; Shaitan & McEntee-Atalianis, 2017). This thesis addresses this lacuna by investigating the small stories participants tell about their biracial identity/identification (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Drawn from ethnographically-informed semi-structured interviews, - their small stories reveal how haafu adults construct, contest and navigate their identities in interaction when discussing dominant discourses circulating in Japanese society about being 'half.' The study seeks to extend Bakhtin's (1981) concept of chronotopes (literally, "time space") to an empirical analysis of narratives told by 15 self-identified haafu adults (eight female and seven male). It illuminates the connectedness of temporal and spatial relationship of any discursive event and how "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). In addition, the notion of chronotopes foregrounds the inseparability of time and space between the narrated (story) and narrating event (storytelling) where participants address and at times coalesce the past with the present, thereby framing instances of discursive expressions, deictic indices, and agents described in the story from a distant 'there-and-then' to the 'here-and-now' storytelling event, as if the events were occurring at present (Perrino, 2007; 2015). Analysis found that informants oriented to three developmental stages as they described turning points in their identity formation. Parallels to Kich's (1982; 1992) stages of biracial/bicultural identity development were found. Informants described: an enforced awareness by society of being different (relayed as being experienced most keenly in childhood), a struggle for acceptance/ a declared 'identity crisis' (most salient in adolescence/youth) and a conscious movement in adulthood to self-acceptance and a preferred assertion of interracial identity. Based on the data, we extend Kich's framework by adding a fourth stage articulated by all in their tellings, i.e., identity as life-long navigation, as unresolved and forever mobile and fluid. We found informant accounts resonated with Turner's (1969) notion of liminality, i.e., haafu individuals described living between fixed and "floating worlds", accompanied by "statuslessness" at various stages in life. In addition, some participants whose phenotypical makeup did not mark them as different from the majority of Japanese and/or the country of their non-Japanese parent, displayed a 'chameleon ability' to negotiate a temporary sense of freedom (where they could pass as a Japanese) from the restrictions and ambiguities of being "both", "neither" and/or "between" and "betwixt"- of being neither fully Japanese nor 'other'.

KEY WORDS

Mixed-race identity; haafu; Japan; ethnicity; belonging.

REFERENCES

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). The dialogic imagination: Four essays (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Eds. & Trans.). University of Texas Press.

Bamberg, M., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis. Text & Talk, 28(3), 377-396.

Kamada, L. D. (2010). Hybrid identities and adolescent girls: Being 'half' in Japan. Multilingual Matters.

Kich, G. K. (1982). Eurasians: Ethnic/racial identity development of biracial Japanese/white adults (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Wright Institute, Berkeley, CA.

Kich, G. K. (1992). The developmental process of asserting a biracial, bicultural identity. In M. P. P. Root (Eds.), Racially mixed people in America (pp. 304-317). Sage Publications.

Murphy-Shigematsu, S. (2008). "The invisible man" and other narratives of living in the borderlands of race and nation. In D. B. Willis & S. Murphy-Shigematsu (Eds.), Transcultural Japan: At the borderlands of race, gender and identity (pp. 282-304). Routledge.

Nakamura, J. (2020). Language regrets: Mixed-ethnic children's lost opportunity for minority language acquisition in Japan. Multilingua, 39(2), 213-237.

Oshima, K. (2014). Perception of hafu or mixed-race people in Japan: Group-session studies among hafu students at a Japanese university. Intercultural Communication Studies, 23(3), 4-22.
Perrino, S. (2007). Cross-chronotope alignment in Senegalese oral narrative. Language & Communication, 27(3), 227-244.
Seiger, F.K. (2019). 'Mixed' Japanese-Filipino identities under Japanese multiculturalism. Social Identities, 25(3), 392-407.
Shaitan, A., & McEntee-Atalianis, L. J. (2017). Haafu identity in Japan: Half, mixed, or double? In Z. L. Rocha & F. Fozdar (Eds.), Mixed race in Asia: Past, present and future (pp. 82-97). Routledge.
Turner, V. W. (1969). The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure. Aldine Publishing Company.
Yoshida, T., & Oikawa, S. (2012). Differing reactions to growing up biethnic in Japan and what predicts them. Journal of Intercultural Communication, 15(1). 15-32.

Demetrios Mitres Sioupis[1] & Athina Sioupi[2]

[1]Charles University; [2]Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Securitizing migration in German elite political discourse

Recent migration policies reflect a shift in the conceptualization of migration and security within German political discourse. The study aims to investigate the social representations and ideological framing constructed by political elites. Based on securitization theory (Buzan et al., 1993), which conceptualizes security as a speech act, the study hypothesizes that the perception of migration as a security issue and threat (Afsar & Tuncer, 2024) leads political actors to mobilize negative representations of displaced individuals in order to legitimize stricter, exclusionary policies (Lemay, 2024: 118). The research applies the theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk, 2009) and focuses on the period from 2024 to 2026, encompassing the Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) 2024/2025 federal election campaign and Friedrich Merz's first year in office as Chancellor. The corpus consists of elite political discourses on migration, including CDU campaign documents, official statements and speeches published on the Federal Government's website. Document coding is supported by QDA software. Building on Wodak's (2008: 57) observation that the concepts 'migrant', 'refugee' and 'asylum-seeker' have been used to label all 'foreigners who are not welcome' (Wodak, 2008: 57), the study examines the rhetoric of exclusion that involves positive-self and negative-other presentation. Particularly, it focusses on linguistic features such as inclusive/exclusive pronouns for the discursive constructions of 'Us' and 'Them', promoting a struggle narrative. Furthermore, the analysis examines lexical units ideologically charged (with negative connotations), constructions that position 'Them' as a source of threat, metaphors that contribute to a "biased, polarized model of events" (van Dijk, 2009: 71), and framings to historical continuity that appeal to nationalistic sentiments. The findings indicate that linguistic choices shape political elites' self- and other positioning.

KEY WORDS

Migration; securitization; identity; threat; polarization.

REFERENCES

Afsar, O. A., & Tuncer, O. S. (2024). The migration problem in Eastern Europe as a security issue in the context of Russia's attacks on Ukraine: An assessment within the framework of the Copenhagen School. Security Studies, 4(2024), 127–150. https://doi.org/10.33067/SE.4.2024.6

Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. (1998). Security: A new framework for analysis. Lynne Rienner.

van Dijk, T. A. (2009). Critical discourse studies: A sociocognitive approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis (2nd ed.), 62-84. SAGE.

Wodak, R. (2008). Us and them: Inclusion and exclusion. In G. Delanty, R. Wodak, & P. R. Jones (Eds.), Identity, belonging and migration, 54–77. University of Liverpool Press.

Eleni Siouti

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Mediterranean College

Towards a "decoupled" European identity? Contesting Europe-as-authority while embracing Europe-as-values in Tsipras's founding parliamentary address

Despite growing research on European identity during the economic crisis (Lialiouti, 2017; Kitis & Serafis, 2020; Wodak & Boukala, 2015), the discursive strategies through which radical left politicians contest European institutional authority, while, simultaneously, embrace European values remain largely unexplored. Being part of a broader comparative study, this paper examines Alexis Tsipras' (former Greek Prime Minister) parliamentary speech of 8 February 2015 and it argues that "Europe" functions as a "floating signifier" (Laclau, 1996) strategically rearticulated to the present day. Drawing on four frameworks complementarily, such as the DHA (Discourse Historical Analysis) (Wodak, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2005), the post-structural theory of hegemonic articulation (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1996), Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), and the concept of constitutional patriotism (Habermas, 1992, 1994), the study analyzes how European identity is simultaneously constructed, contested, and rearticulated through specific discursive and linguistic strategies. Methodologically, it combines qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative examination of code frequencies and co-occurrences, via systematic coding in MAXQDA across 193 coded segments. The findings reveal legitimation as the dominant discursive strategy, primarily realized through moral evaluation rather than institutional authority (van Leeuwen, 2008). Constructions of Otherness (van Dijk, 1998; Mouffe, 1999) are overwhelmingly internal, indicating that the primary antagonistic frontier lies within the domestic political space. Europe appears in 15 qualitatively distinct representations, suggesting that it functions as a "floating signifier" (Laclau, 1996) whose meaning is continuously rearticulated. Linguistically, the transitivity analysis reveals an asymmetry of agency between Greece and Europe. This encodes, at the level of syntax, the power asymmetry Tsipras contests at the level of discourse (Fairclough, 1989). The exclusive usage of deontic modality in references to Europe (Hodge & Kress, 1979) encodes European obligations as universal moral necessities, pointing to the linguistic manifestation of Habermasian constitutional patriotism. Taken together, these patterns point to a discursive logic that might be described as "decoupled European identity": Europe-as-authority is systematically contested while Europe-as-values is embraced, without either dimension being abandoned. During economic crisis, the Greek case illuminates how identities are constructed under conditions of polarization. This speech prefigures the polarizations that followed — and provides the foundation of how competing visions of Europe are constructed through discourse across different countries by different political actors.

KEY WORDS

European identity; discourse-historical approach; hegemonic articulation; floating signifier; political polarization.

REFERENCES

Fairclough, N. (1989). Language and power. Longman.

Habermas, J. (1992). Faktizität und Geltung. Suhrkamp.

Habermas, J. (1994). Citizenship and national identity. In B. van Steenbergen (Ed.), The condition of citizenship (pp. 20–35). Sage.

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. (2013). Halliday's introduction to functional grammar. Routledge.

Hodge, R., & Kress, G. (1979). Language as ideology. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Kitis, E. D., & Serafis, D. (2020). Legitimizing austerity in crisis-hit Greece: (Re-) articulating 'social-democracy'in political discourses of the socialist and left-populist parties. Journal of Language and Politics, 19(4), 691-711.

Laclau, E. (1996). Emancipation(s). Verso.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). Hegemony and socialist strategy. Verso.

Lialiouti, Z. (2017). From national consensus to a new cleavage? The discursive negotiation of Europe in the Greek public debate during the economic crisis, 2010–2015. In C. Karner & M. Kopytowska (Eds.), National identity and Europe in times of crisis: Doing and undoing Europe (pp. 177–205). Emerald Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78714-513-920171008

Mouffe, C. (1999). Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism? *Social Research*, *66*(3), 745–758.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2005). Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism. Routledge.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. SAGE.

van Leeuwen, T. (2008). Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis. Oxford University Press.
Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis (pp. 63–94). Sage.
Wodak, R., & Boukala, S. (2015). European identities and the revival of nationalism in the European Union: A discourse historical approach. Journal of language and politics, 14(1), 87-109.

Gabija Skucaite

Vilnius Business College

Chronotopes of the threshold: Liminal temporality, identity and polarisation in public discourse

Public discourse often represents social and political life as taking place "in between": between crisis and recovery, reform and stabilisation, rupture and renewal, an exhausted past and an anticipated future. This paper offers a theoretical reflection on such in-between temporalities by conceptualising them as forms of liminal time. Rather than approaching transition as an empirical phase of social change, the paper asks how transition becomes meaningful as a discursive and semiotic category. The central concept of the paper is the chronotope, understood as the meaningful articulation of time and space in discourse. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope and Turner's theory of liminality, the paper argues that public discourse frequently organises collective experience through threshold temporalities: moments, stages or conditions in which an old order is suspended, while a new one has not yet been fully established. These temporal configurations are not neutral descriptions of reality. They provide symbolic forms through which uncertainty, waiting, urgency, hope, crisis and historical direction become collectively intelligible. The paper focuses on the theoretical category of "in-between time" and its recurring figurative forms: the threshold, the break, the path, the window of opportunity, the waiting period, the turning point and the new beginning. Such figures organise public meaning by establishing distinctions between past, present and future, but also between actors who are imagined as moving forward, remaining behind, blocking transition or guaranteeing renewal. In this sense, liminal temporality may also contribute to identity formation and polarisation, since groups can be positioned according to their relation to a projected future or a rejected past. The contribution of the paper is conceptual rather than empirical. It proposes liminal temporality as a useful category for discourse analysis and suggests that public discourse does not merely speak about time; it actively organises time as a field of meaning, expectation and collective orientation. By theorising the chronotopic structure of in-between time, the paper contributes to broader discussions of discourse, identity and polarisation.

KEY WORDS

Liminal temporality; chronotope; in-between time; public discourse; polarisation.

REFERENCES

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). The dialogic imagination. University of Texas Press.

Polynczuk-Alenius, K., & Hartikainen, I. (2024). Disentangling time-spaces of migration: Chronotopes and racist subjectivities in "identity journalism" in Poland and Czechia. Journalism, 25(1), 81–99.

Turner, V. (1969). The ritual process. Aldine.

Rainer Stummer

University of Bremen

Discourse analysis and infrastructure: Protesting mobility policy in the Run-up to the Vienna municipal elections 2020

Despite the Essex School of discourse analysis having produced many empirical studies investigating the (social) materiality of identity formation and antagonism (Smith 1994; Griggs & Howarth 2000; Nonhoff 2006; Marchart 2013), recent criticisms informed by new materialist theory have nonetheless attested a lack of susceptibility for (non-human) materiality in the Essex School approach (e.g. Carpentier 2017; van Eeden 2017; De Cleen et al. 2021). In my paper/talk I turn to a climate protest actor (Platz Für Wien) being active in the run-up to the municipal elections in Vienna, Austria in 2020 and their specific relation to the infrastructure of the built urban environment. I will argue that contrary to the criticism mentioned, the Essex School toolkit is well suited to address such non-human, infrastructural influences in identity formation, if it is applied in its original radicality. The paper/talk will thus provide insights into polarization in the policy area of climate- and mobility politics, and address methodological challenges regarding the materiality of discourse, surfacing in recent debates informed by the situation of the climate crisis.

KEY WORDS

Essex School; materiality; climate protest; infrastructure; socio-ecological transformation.

REFERENCES

Carpentier, Nico. 2017. The Discursive-Material Knot: Cyprus in Conflict and Community Media Participation. New York: Peter Lang.

De Cleen, Benjamin, Jana Goyvaerts, Nico Carpentier, Jason Glynos, und Yannis Stavrakakis. 2021. “Moving Discourse Theory Forward: A Five-Track Proposal for Future Research”. Journal of Language and Politics 20(1): 22–46. doi:10.1075/jlp.20076.dec

Griggs, Steven, und David Howarth. 2000. “New Environmental Movements and Direct Action Protest: The Campaign Against Manchester Airport’s Second Runway”. In Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change, hrsg. David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval, und Yannis Stavrakakis. Manchester/New York: Manchester UP, 52–69.

Marchart, Oliver. 2013. Die Prekarisierungsgesellschaft. Prekäre Proteste. Politik und Ökonomie im Zeichen der Prekarisierung. Bielefeld: transcript. doi:10.26530/OAPEN_579941.

Nonhoff, Martin. 2006. Politischer Diskurs und Hegemonie: Das Projekt »Soziale Marktwirtschaft«. Bielefeld: transcript.

Smith, Anna Marie. 1994. New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

van Eeden, Pepijn. 2017. “Materializing Discourse Analysis with James, Schmitt and Latour”. Palgrave Communications 3(1): 1–19. doi:10.1057/palcomms.2017.39

Arina Sydorkina

Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce

American dream, Russian world, and Japanese harmony as mythologemes of national identity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of political speech

This paper is situated within a broader doctoral research examining how national identity is discursively constructed in Japan, Russia, and the United States. Drawing on the Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak, 2001, 2021), it investigates how value systems embedded in public discourse shape models of national subjectivity – with particular focus on mythologemes as instruments of polarization. Specifically, this paper examines how political leaders in the three countries deploy the American Dream, Russkiy Mir (Russian World), and Japanese Harmony (wa) to discursively construct national identity and organise social divisions. The concept of mythologeme is understood here in the functional-pragmatic sense developed by Leszczak and Stefański (2024), drawing on Losev's (1990) foundational account of myth as a transcendentally necessary category of collective life and thought. Drawing on Mouffe (2005), the paper argues that mythologemes function as hegemonic devices that naturalise one vision of the common good as universal, while constructing those who do not conform as threats to the national body. Each mythologeme transforms contingent political choices into ontological necessities – to question the American Dream is to be un-American, to resist Russkiy Mir is to betray civilisation, to deviate from war is to rupture social harmony – thereby converting antagonism into a naturalised identity boundary and foreclosing the agonistic recognition of legitimate difference. Analysing a corpus of political speeches, the paper examines: (1) the rhetorical strategies through which mythologemes are invoked and recontextualised; (2) the Us/Them oppositions that operationalise polarisation as a hegemonic force (Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2021); and (3) the epistemic configurations that naturalise each mythologeme as self-evident (Foucault, 1966). By comparing three culturally specific discursive formations, the paper advances a cross-cultural CDA framework for analysing mythologemes as instruments of identity politics – and proposes that polarisation, far from being a natural consequence of cultural difference, is an effect of hegemonic discourse that can, under different political conditions, be otherwise.

KEY WORDS

Mythologeme; national identity; critical discourse analysis; political speech; polarisation.

REFERENCES

Foucault, M. (1966). The order of things. Routledge.
Leszczak, O., & Stefański, R. (2024). Modele (systemy) kulturowo-cywilizacyjne: Vol. 1. Wydawnictwo UJK.
Losev, A. (1930/1990). Dialektika mifa. Pravda.
Mouffe, C. (2005). On the political. Routledge.
Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. SAGE.
Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse analysis (pp. 63–94). SAGE.
Wodak, R. (2021). The politics of fear (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Inesa Šeškauskienė[1], Jurga Cibulskienė[2] & Virginija Masiulionytė[3]

[1]Vilnius University; [2]Vilnius University; [3]Vilnius University

Irony in polarised discourse. The Belarusian crisis from "our" and "their" perspectives

Irony is often defined through the notion of discrepancy, incongruity or shift between what is known to different participants of a situation, or between what is said and what is intended (Gibbs & Colston 2007; Gibbs & Izett 2013; Colston & Athanasiadou 2017). Discrepancy may be identifiable in the propositional content and in evaluation, or between the valence (positive or negative) of a linguistic expression and its intention (Colston 2000; Burgers et al 2012; Burgers & Steen 2017). In public discourse dealing with poignant events, evaluation is inevitably linked to polarisation, or social division between in-groups, "us", and out-groups, "them" (Peterssen & Da Silva 2024). Irony is one of cognitive mechanisms rendering polarisation between positively conceptualised in-groups and negatively treated out-groups. The paper focuses on irony employed in media texts dealing with the Belarusian crisis in 2021 ensued after a forced landing of a plane in Minsk. The migrant crisis at the EU border aroused the attention of many Western countries leading to sanctions imposed on Belarus. The research data comes from four languages: English, German, Lithuanian, and Russian. The corpus has been collected from major news portals of the USA, Germany, Lithuania, and Russia and covers the period between May 2021 and January 2022. Each sub-corpus consists of ca 30,000 words. The methodology relies on the model proposed by Burgers and Steen (2017) whereby irony is investigated in the three-dimensional model: language, thought and communication. The latter involves the construction of polarised attitudes, often through the selection of particular targets. The results suggest that irony mostly carries negative evaluative load. The targets include specific people, nations, country/regional governments and institutions. However, in each dataset preference is given to a different target: the Lithuanian government in Lithuanian, EU institutions in German, countries and people in English. In Russian, irony demonstrates the most straightforward polarisation targeting specific people of the Belarusian opposition and the West.

KEY WORDS

Irony; public discourse; the Belarusian crisis; polarisation; evaluation.

REFERENCES

Burgers, Christian, Margot van Mulken & Peter Jan Schellens. 2012. Type of evaluation and marking of irony: The role of perceived complexity and comprehension. Journal of Pragmatics 44: 231–242.

Burgers, Christian & Gerard J. Steen. 2017. Introducing a three-dimensional model of verbal irony: Irony in language, in thought, and in communication. In: Angeliki Athanasiadou & Herbert L. Colston, eds. Irony in Use and Communication. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins Publishing. 87–108.

Colston, H. L. 2000. On necessary conditions for verbal irony comprehension. Pragmatics & Cognition, 8 (2): 277–324.

Colston, Herbert L. & Angeliki Athanasiadou. 2017. Introduction. The irony of irony. In: Angeliki Athanasiadou and Herbert L. Colston, eds. Irony in Use and Communication. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins Publishing. 1–15.

Gibbs, R. W. Jr. 2000. Irony in talk among friends. Metaphor & Symbol 15 (1&2): 5–27.

Gibbs, Raymond W. Jr. & Herbert L. Colston. 2007. The future of irony studies. In: Raymond W. Jr. Gibbs & Herbert L. Colston, eds. Irony in Language and Thought. A Cognitive Science Reader. London and New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 581–593.

Gibbs, Raymond W. Jr. & Christin D. Izett. 2013. Irony as persuasive communication. In: Herbert L. Colston & Albert N. Katz, eds. Figurative Language Comprehension. Social and Cultural Influences. London and New York: Routledge, 131–151.

Peterssen, Silvia & Augusto Soares da Silva. 2024. Polarising metaphors in the Venezuelan Presidential Crisis. Journal of Language and Politics 23 (4): 588–616.

Sabina Tabacaru

Paris 8 University

Non-verbal markers of humorous stance: The case of political debates

Recent studies on humor emphasize the role of multimodality in interaction (Tabacaru, 2019; Priego-Valverde, 2023), bringing into focus the elements allowing the shift through different discourse spaces. Using elements that are made available by their interlocutors, speakers try to divert the meanings already created in discourse, through the use of humor and incongruity (Raskin, 1985). Speakers will particularly use facial expressions (such as raised eyebrows) in order to make their intentions salient to the audience. This is central in the case of political debates where opponents have to make their positions known to the audience; humor, in this case, will play a fundamental role in the process of persuasion. The present paper explores such exchanges, as used by the candidates to the American presidential elections of 2016 and 2020 (Hillary Clinton vs Donald Trump; Joe Biden vs Donald Trump) and the French presidential elections of 2022 (Emmanuel Macron vs Marien LePen). The corpus allows to explore the use of key elements (Brône, 2008) on which meanings are construed and then shifted by their opponent in order to persuade the public in their favor. This is linked to humorous stance (see also De Vries, Oben, Brône, 2021) by the way the opponents have to highlight their divergent viewpoints and the way speakers have to coordinate with each other's intentions and behaviors. These nonverbal elements play a crucial role in intersubjectivity as the speakers need to constantly coordinate their meanings and expectations (Schelling, 1960). In both types of data (English and French), the two candidates discuss issues that are of central importance in the present socio-cultural contexts (such as military strategy for the US and state secularism for France) and on which the two have polarizing viewpoints, emphasized through humor and multimodality. This underlines the pervasiveness of humor in all kinds of interactions, which further reinforces its complexity, both from a mental and emotional perspective.

KEY WORDS

Humor; facial expressions; political debates; stance-taking; multimodality.

REFERENCES

De Vries, Clarissa M., Oben, Bert and Brône, Geert. 2021. Exploring the role of the body in communicating ironic stance. Languages and Modalities, (1), pp. 65-80.

Priego-Valverde, Béatrice. 2023. Interactional Humor: Multimodal Design and Negotiation. Berlin & Boston: Mouton de Gruyter.

Raskin, Victor. 1985. Semantic mechanisms of humor. D. Reidel: Dordrecht.

Schelling, Thomas C. 1960. The strategy of conflict. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tabacaru, Sabina. 2019. A multimodal study of sarcasm in interaction. Series Applications of Cognitive Linguistics 40. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Nataliia Talavira

Nizhyn Mykola Gogol State University

Volodymyr Zelenskyy's mediated identity: A case of speeches to foreign parliaments

Since the beginning of the full-scale war in 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has addressed almost four dozen parliaments to garner support from foreign countries. Given the importance of the speeches and the wide audience to which the President appeals, the question arises of how he positioned himself in this specific setting. Generally, politicians construct their identities through organizational contexts, drawing on personal biographies, national, regional, and local histories (Wodak, 2012, p. 530). Mediated identity as the product of discursive performance through linguistic units (Sclafani, 2018) is directly connected to media that transmit narratives via traditional and digital platforms to a mass audience. Our hypothesis is that Zelenskyy's mediated identity can be investigated drawing on CDA with the application of the cognitive-constructionist approach. Besides lexical units, it combines morphosyntactic constructions, i.e. pairings of form and meaning fixed in long-term memory (Hoffmann, 2022) with image schemas and metaphors. The research material consists of English versions of the Ukrainian President's addresses published on his website (https://www.president.gov.ua/en). The critical cognitive-constructionist investigation of Zelenskyy's mediated identity reveals three representations: a symbol of national resistance, a leader, and a patriot. As a symbol of resistance, the President is depicted by constructions positioning him and the nation as a powerful source of BLOCKAGE, e.g., We all took up arms. The representation of Volodymyr Zelenskyy as the leader has two perspectives: opposing the aggressor by providing alliance, which is expressed by metaphors NATIONS ARE FAMILY MEMBERS and NATIONS ARE PARTNERS, and as a source of request-COMPULSION, e.g., do not stop helping Ukraine, support every Ukrainian. Portrayal of the President as a patriot relies on constructions, designating his pride and admiration for the citizens, e.g., heroic border guards, have become unbreakable, great Ukrainians. Thus, Volodymyr Zelenskyy's mediated identity is represented as a symbol of national resistance to the enemy, a leader who provides international support and assistance, and a patriot that praises and respects Ukrainians' resilience.

KEY WORDS

Mediated identity; speech; Volodymyr Zelenskyy; morphosyntactic construction.

REFERENCES

Hoffmann, T. (2022). Construction Grammar. Cambridge University Press.

Sclafani, J. (2018). Talking Donald Trump: A Sociolinguistic Study of Style, Metadiscourse, and Political Identity. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315276885

Wodak, R. (2012). Politics as Usual. Investigating Political Discourse in Action. In J. P. Gee, & M. Handford (Eds.), The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis (pp. 525-540). Routledge.

Ellen Thorisaen

University of Ghent

Subnational identity and polarisation: Representation of the other linguistic community in sensationalist popular news

Sensationalism, marked by exaggerated language and emotional, dramatic storytelling, increasingly shapes news (Hauttekeete, 2004). While often criticized for fostering polarizing narratives that divide audiences, it can also positively shape engagement and trust (Lehaff, 2026; Barnes, 2022). In Belgian's linguistically divided context where the Dutch- and French-speaking communities have little contact and separate media systems, knowledge of each other is mediated through news (Lits, 2015). Research (Sinardet, 2008; Hiligsmann et al., 2011) indicates limited cross-community reporting that often relies on conflict and othering strategies, leading to polarizing and stereotypical portrayals that shape in/outgroup perception. These claims rest on limited older empirical studies, offering little insight into the recurrence of these patterns from a quantitative perspective and echoing critiques of Critical Discourse Analysis that highlight issues of representativeness and selection bias. Moreover, while popular media rely more heavily on sensationalist discourses how this shapes the representation of the other subnational group remains unexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining how the other linguistic community is represented in popular news through topics, sources and representational image, with the othering patterns guiding the quantitative operationalization. A quantitative content analysis of +/-. 280 articles (from January till July 2026) from the most widely read popular news sites of the linguistic communities, i.e., La Dernière Heure and Het Laatste Nieuws is performed. The results provide a quantitative lens on how sensationalist discourse shapes outgroup representations.

KEY WORDS

Subnational identity; othering; popular news; representation; polarisation.

REFERENCES

Barnes, R. (2022). Fandom and Polarization in Online Political Discussion From Pop Culture to Politics. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14039-6

Hauttekeete, L. (2004). De tabloidisering van kranten: mythe of feit? De ontwikkeling van een meetinstrument en een onderzoek naar de tabloidisering van Vlaamse kranten [Doctoral thesis, The University of Ghent]. The University of Ghent.

Hiligsmann, P., Rasier, L., & Stoffel, S. (2011). De invloed van tabloidisering op het wederzijdse beeld van Vlamingen en Franstaligen. In S. Vanasten & M. Sergier (Eds.), Literaire Belgitude littéraire (pp. 165-175). UCL Presses Universitaires De Louvain.

Lehaff, J. (2026). Evoking Emotion. In M.T. Soto-Sanfiel & V. Salojärvi (Eds.), The Handbook of Journalism and Emotion (pp. 63-72). Wiley.

Lits, M. (2015). The francophone media in Belgium: A question of identity. Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies, 4(1), 117–130. https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms.4.1.117_1

Sinardet, D. (2008). Vlaamse en Franstalige media over Franstaligen en Vlamingen. Wederzijdse mediarepresentaties van de 'andere' in politieke debatprogramma's. In A. Dhoest & H. Van den Bulck (Eds.), Media, cultuur en identiteit (pp. 51–69). Academia Press.

Bilyana Todorova

South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

'WAR IS CONTAINER' metaphors in contemporary Bulgarian media discourse: A corpus-based study

War metaphors have been extensively studied, yet in the current geopolitical situation war is no longer merely a connotative resource but a lived reality in many parts of the world. Consequently, the linguistic concepts used to represent war in the media have become an especially relevant subject of analysis. In this study, I examine the conceptual metaphor "War is Container" (Lakoff & Johnson 2003) in contemporary Bulgarian media, applying a corpus based discourse analysis approach (Baker 2006, Mair 2019, Flowerdew 2023, etc.). To conduct this analysis, I use the Bulgarian CLASSLA-web.bg 2.0 corpus (Kuzman Pungeršek et al., in submission) with the support of the NoSketch Engine software to extract occurrences of expressions that instantiate this metaphor. A total of 6,093 instances are examined in their immediate context (for example, „хвърлям във война" –'throw in war'; „влизам във война" – 'enter a war', etc.). The study outlines the literal meanings of the collected uses and demonstrates how these meanings interact with the metaphorical interpretation to convey the author's viewpoint. Because a container is conceptualized as a closed, restrictive, and potentially inescapable space, the metaphor typically carries negative connotations and is used effectively for polarisation and division. Our preliminary analysis therefore suggests that Bulgarian media frequently employ this metaphorical framing as a discursive strategy for constructing and reinforcing anti war attitudes (for example, toward the Russian-Ukrainian war), positioning war not only as dangerous but as a space one is trapped within. In this context, the metaphor also might function as a means of strengthening euroscepticism and antiliberal attitudes.

KEY WORDS

War; container; corpus; metaphor; polarisation.

REFERENCES

Baker, P. (2006). Using corpora in discourse analysis. Continuum.

Flowerdew, L. (2023). Corpus-based discourse analysis. In Routledge handbook of discourse analysis (2nd ed.). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003035244-11

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). Metaphors we live by. The University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226470993.001.0001

Mair, C. (2019). Brexitiness: The ebbs and flows of British Eurosceptic rhetoric since 1945. Open Library of Humanities, 5(1), 50, 1–26. https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.424

Kuzman Pungeršek, T., Rupnik, P., Suchomel, V., & Ljubešić, N. (in submission). The growing gains and pains of iterative web corpora crawling: Insights from South Slavic CLASSLA-web 2.0 corpora.

Piotr Topolski

University of Gdańsk

Corpus analysis of Polish media discourse concerning the Ukrainian refugee crisis in 2022-2025

This presentation is based on research conducted in 2025, which analyses media discourse surrounding the refugee movement from Ukraine following the Russian invasion of 24 February 2022. It examines twenty most influential Polish news outlets (including online news websites, daily newspapers, and weekly magazines) over the three years since the invasion. Drawing on agenda-setting theory (McCombs et al., 2014), the study investigates whether shifts in media attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees contributed to the gradual deterioration of Polish public opinion towards Ukrainians (Staniszewski, 2025). The analysis employs corpus-based discourse analysis using the SketchEngine tool. A total of 4,595 articles were collected and divided into three annual periods, resulting in 60 subcorpora (three per news source). This structure enabled an examination of changes over time in media attention, thematic focus, refugee framing, and the ways in which the topic was combined with other discourses. The findings indicate several changes in media coverage that may have affected Polish attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees, including reduced coverage in the second and third years and a decline in messages encouraging assistance. What changed immediately after the Russian invasion in 2022 was some publications' use of prepositions with the word "Ukraine" - from mostly using "na", which is commonly used with regions, islands and countries historically close to Poland, to "w" more commonly used with independent countries (Council for the Polish Language, 2022), highlighting Ukraine's agency. However, most conservative publications kept the traditionally common "na" preposition. Other significant differences between conservative and liberal media were also observed. Conservative outlets frequently portrayed Ukrainian refugees as "good migrants" in contrast to "unwelcome migrants" from the Middle East and Africa. While seemingly positive, this framing reinforced broader anti-migration narratives that may have indirectly influenced how Ukrainians themselves were perceived by Polish audiences.

KEY WORDS

Migration; media discourse; Ukraine; corpus analysis; agenda-setting.

REFERENCES

Council for the Polish Language. (2022). Opinia Rady Języka Polskiego w sprawie wyrażeń „w Ukrainie" / „do Ukrainy" i „na Ukrainie" / "na Ukrainę". https://rjp.pan.pl/opinia-rady-jezyka-polskiego-w-sprawie-wyrazen-w-ukrainie-do-ukrainy-i-na-ukrainie-na-ukraine/ accessed 1.06.2026.

McCombs, Maxwell., Shaw, Donald L. and Weaver, David H. (2014). New Directions in Agenda-Setting: Theory and Research, Mass Communication and Society, 17(6), p. 781-802.

Staniszewski, Robert. (2025). Społeczna percepcja uchodźców z Ukrainy, migrantów i działań podejmowanych przez polskie oraz ukraińskie państwo. Warszawa: University of Warsaw.

Geremia Trinchese

Sapienza University of Rome

Platform-emplacement: @eyeonpalestine and the construction of Palestinian collective identity online

Social media platforms have profoundly transformed the conditions under which communities sustain and reimagine collective identity. In the contemporary digital environment, platforms function as what Gilbert Simondon terms technogeographic milieus: hybrid spaces where technology and geography converge to enable new forms of cultural and political belonging (Lindberg, 2019). Yet this space is not neutral: platform governance mechanisms systematically privilege certain voices while marginalising others along geopolitical and economic lines (Fatawta, 2021; Lewis, 2023). This paper examines how Palestinian online communities navigate these conditions on Instagram, asking how collective identity is discursively constructed within, and against, platform capitalism, in a context of intensifying political polarisation. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and platformed activism (Poell, Nieborg & Duffy, 2022), the study focuses on @eyeonpalestine as a strategic case, an account structured around two analytically distinct discursive registers: an outward-facing register of political contestation directed at international audiences, and an inward-facing register of communal identity production through which Palestinian voices construct what Hamid Nacify theorises as discursive emplacement; a sense of being-in-place produced through digital narrative (Nacify, 1999). The analysis draws on two complementary datasets. First, a broader corpus of 851 Instagram posts gathered through keywords-based sampling across ten languages, used to map the general discursive field and develop the analytical codebook. Second, a purposive corpus collected manually from @eyeonpalestine (13.5 million followers), selecting exclusively first-voice content: posts in which a Palestinian person speaks directly to camera, or in which an identified Palestinian voice is quoted or interviewed. This criterion shifts the focus from representation to self-representation within platform constraints, foregrounding voice as both theoretical category (Couldry, 2010) and empirical object. CDA is applied through a structured codebook, enabling systematic comparison between the broader discursive field and the identity strategies deployed through direct Palestinian voice. The paper proposes constrained visibility as an analytical concept describing how Palestinian communities produce collective identity and political demands within platform governance inequalities.

KEY WORDS

Platformed activism; Palestinian digital identity; discursive emplacement; constrained visibility; Critical Discourse Analysis.

REFERENCES

Couldry, N. (2010). Why voice matters. SAGE.
Fatawta, M. (2021). Digital colonialism and Palestinian resistance. Coding Resistance.
Lewis, K. (2023). Colonising the narrative space. Information, Communication & Society.
Lindberg, S. (2019). Being with technique. Philosophy & Technology.
Nacify, H. (1999). Home, exile, homeland. Routledge. Poell, T., Nieborg, D., & Duffy, B. E. (2022). Platforms and cultural production. Polity.

Simona Uksaitė

Vilnius University

Localising hegemony: Regional war discourses in Russia's domestic information environment

Contemporary Russian information governance reflects enduring colonial logics rooted in the management of peripheral and ethnically diverse regions. While studies of Russian war communication often focus on central narratives, domestic audiences are frequently treated as homogeneous, overlooking how state-aligned media address regional populations through differentiated discursive practices. This study examines how Russia's war against Ukraine is represented in regional media and explores how centrally promoted war narratives are adapted within Russia's domestic information environment. The study is grounded in Hegemonic Discourse Theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) and supported by Media Representation Theory (Hall, 1997). It conceptualises war representation not as the transmission of a fixed narrative but as a process of hegemonic meaning-making through which identities, loyalties and political subjectivities are constructed and negotiated. The study asks how centrally promoted war narratives are articulated across different regional contexts and how these articulations contribute to the maintenance of hegemonic discourse within Russia's domestic information environment. Methodologically, the research combines thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022) with a discourse-oriented analytical framework. The empirical material consists of 1,045 media items published by regional branches of VGTRK and systematically collected using the keyword "special military operation" (SMO). The dataset covers two stages of the war: the first year of the full-scale invasion and its latest phase in 2025. The analysis focuses on Bashkortostan, Buryatia and Chechnya, three ethnic republics occupying distinct positions within Russia's federal structure and experiencing different levels of wartime mobilisation and loss. The findings suggest that centrally defined war themes are reproduced across analysed regions but articulated through distinct discursive logics, reflecting Russia's differentiated domestic information environment. Rather than signalling fragmentation, these differences constitute a structural condition of hegemonic functioning, through which internal variation sustains rather than weakens discursive stability. These differences constitute a systematic pattern of domestic governance through differentiated legitimation strategies. From a regional security perspective, this analysis helps explain how Russia absorbs and normalizes prolonged war internally by demonstrating how internal diversity can be incorporated into a broader framework of state legitimation and ideological stability.

KEY WORDS

Hegemonic discourse; war representation; regional media; Russia's war against Ukraine; domestic information environment.

REFERENCES

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. SAGE Publications.

Hall, S. (1997). The work of representation. In S. Hall (Ed.), Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices (pp. 13–74). SAGE Publications.

Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. (1985). Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics. Verso.

Mehmet Recai Uygur

Vilnius Business College

Selfish democracy and the communication of exclusion: Discursive boundaries of "the people" in polarised democratic debate

Democratic discourse often speaks in universal terms: the people, rights, equality, freedom, and public interest. Yet in polarised settings, these universals are frequently narrowed through communicative distinctions between deserving and undeserving subjects. This paper develops the concept of selfish democracy to examine how democratic language can authorise exclusion while preserving the appearance of universalism. The central question is: how are the boundaries of "the people" discursively constructed when democratic actors defend equality in principle but restrict recognition, solidarity, or protection in practice? Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies and work on ideology and populism (Laclau, 2005; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 2015), the paper treats polarisation not only as disagreement between camps, but as a discursive process through which moral hierarchies, threat categories, and political subjectivities are produced. It focuses on recurring strategies such as conditional universalism, moral disqualification, securitising nomination, affective boundary-making, and the opposition between "ordinary people," "elites," "outsiders," and "enemies." These strategies transform democratic inclusion into a selective communicative regime: rights remain affirmed as abstract principles, while particular groups are represented as burdens, dangers, manipulators, or illegitimate claimants. The paper's theoretical contribution is to connect populist identity construction, ideological boundary work, and the communication of exclusion through the notion of selfish democracy. Rather than treating exclusion as external to democracy, the paper shows how exclusion may be articulated from within democratic vocabularies themselves. The argument is developed through a conceptual-analytical reading of polarised democratic debate, with illustrative attention to migration, security, welfare, and cultural identity as policy fields in which "the people" is repeatedly redefined. The paper contributes to debates on discourse, identity, and polarisation by explaining how democratic universalism becomes unstable when collective identity is organised around resentment, fear, and selective entitlement.

KEY WORDS

Critical Discourse Studies; selfish democracy; exclusion; populism; polarisation.

REFERENCES

Laclau, E. (2005). On populist reason. Verso.
van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. SAGE.
Wodak, R. (2015). The politics of fear: What right-wing populist discourses mean. SAGE.

Lorella Viola

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

#ClimateCult, #ResistTheReset, #Agenda2030 and other climate change frames for Collective Agency and Belonging on X

This presentation examines how climate-related disinformation on X functions not simply as false or misleading information but as a participatory resource for social identity construction (Wintterlin et al. 2023). Drawing on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 2004) and the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (van Zomeren et al. 2008), the study analyses multilingual posts associated with hashtags such as #Agenda2030, #ClimateScam, #ClimateCult, #NewWorldOrder and #ResistTheReset. Combining embedding-based topic modelling with Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk 1993), the presentation shows that conspiratorial climate narratives repeatedly combine claims of elite manipulation, epistemic distrust, moral injury and collective action language. However, building on prior evidence that such mobilisation language does not necessarily produce higher engagement (Viola 2026), the article argues that the significance of collective action discourse lies less in its capacity to trigger measurable mobilisation than in its role as a symbolic grammar of agency and belonging. Disinformation is therefore best understood as a hyperconnective social structure in which users, platforms, algorithms and group dynamics co-construct shared realities and identities.

KEY WORDS

Social Identity; social media; collective action; disinformation; hashtags.

REFERENCES

Dijk, Teun A. van. 1993. “Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis.” Discourse & Society 4 (2): 249–83. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006.

Tajfel, Henri, and John C. Turner. 2004. The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior. Political Psychology: Key Readings. Psychology Press. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505984-16.

Viola, Lorella. 2026. “Identity Without Action: Rethinking Collective Action Models in Disinformation Research.” Proceedings of the 10th Joint SIGHUM Workshop on Computational Linguistics for Cultural Heritage, Social Sciences, Humanities and Literature 2026, 36–47. https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2026.latechclfl-1.5.

Wintterlin, Florian, Tim Schatto-Eckrodt, Lena Frischlich, Svenja Boberg, Felix Reer, and Thorsten Quandt. 2023. “‘It’s Us against Them up There’: Spreading Online Disinformation as Populist Collective Action.” Computers in Human Behavior 146 (September): 107784. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107784.

Zomeren, Martijn van, Tom Postmes, and Russell Spears. 2008. “Toward an Integrative Social Identity Model of Collective Action: A Quantitative Research Synthesis of Three Socio- Psychological Perspectives.” Psychological Bulletin (US) 134 (4): 504–35. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.134.4.504.

Johannes S. Vogel[1] & Daniel Bultmann[2]

[1]Humboldt University of Berlin; [2]Humboldt University of Berlin

Frictional discourses, polarized elites: International development and identity formation in Cambodia's field of power

Cambodia has been described as an "intervention society" (Bonacker 2010) and "donor playground" (Fforde & Seidel 2015), shaped by successive and overlapping international development discourses—from French colonial mise en valeur and Cold War modernization through 1990s liberal peacebuilding to contemporary infrastructure-led development. These discourses have not simply been imposed; they have been complied with, adopted, adapted, co-opted, resisted, and rejected (Björkdahl & Höglund 2013) by Cambodian elite groups whose identities crystallized in and through these frictional encounters. Complementing an extensive literature on marginalized communities in the global South, we therefore critically 'study up' by examining these (trans)national hegemonic elites. Combining a discourse-historical reconstruction of successive development regimes with biographical-narrative interviews among members of Cambodia's post-1979 hegemonic elite, we argue that international development discourses operate as a central axis of identity formation and polarization within the elite field. Different elite factions articulate distinctive grammars of engagement, anchored in a habitus shaped by mistrust. Drawing on selected factions—including technocrats who appropriate donor-aligned reform agendas through a Weberian-bureaucratic ethic of procedural restraint; non-party oligarchs who convert refugee biographies and UN-mission opportunity structures into insulated, paternalistic corporate micro-orders; and successors who recode dynastic inheritance through a vocabulary legitimizing hereditary succession as neoliberal-meritocratic selection—we show how the same circulating discourses (rule of law, entrepreneurship, meritocracy) are mobilized in incommensurable ways across the field. Mistrust, toward institutions, competing factions, and external solutions, functions here not as a deficit but as a productive grammar: it differentiates elite identities and generates the polarizations through which Cambodia's authoritarian order stabilizes. We trace internal polarization within the elite field, where incommensurable rationalities coexist rather than converge, and paternalistic polarization vis-à-vis ordinary Cambodians, who appear in elite narratives simultaneously as victims of structural violence and as collectives requiring tutelage. The presentation contributes to debates on the discursive constitution of identity and polarization by tracing how circulating development discourses are refracted through historically sedimented elite positions, generating durable, politically consequential differences in how power is imagined, justified, and reproduced.

KEY WORDS

Development discourse; elite formation; friction; polarization; Cambodia.

REFERENCES

Björkdahl, Annika and Kristine Höglund (2013) 'Precarious peacebuilding: friction in global–local encounters', Peacebuilding 1(3): 289–299.

Bonacker, Thorsten (2010) 'Die Gesellschaft der Anderen: Kambodscha und die Interventionskultur der Weltgesellschaft', in Thorsten Bonacker, Michael Daxner, Jan H. Free, and Christoph Zürcher, eds, *Interventionskultur:* Zur Soziologie von Interventionsgesellschaften, 189–218, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Fforde, Adam and Katrin Seidel (2015) 'Cambodia – donor playground? Defeat and doctrinal dysfunction in a hoped-for client state', South East Asia Research 23(1): 79–99.

Mark Winston Visonà

Hofstra University

Enhancing polarization via evaluation, graduation, and chronotopic contrasts in newsbites from Trump email newsletters

While researchers have called for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding crises and practices of manufacturing normality (Krzyżanowski et al., 2023), no scholars have yet adopted useful tools from systemic functional linguistics to explore how polarization occurs via newsbites (hyperlinked headlines accompanied by ledes or images) (Knox, 2007). Past research using the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005) has identified how linguistic resources for expressing evaluation are used by journalists and opinion writers to persuade and align with their audience. However, this framework has not yet been applied in studies of how newsbites create and manage communities of shared values about certain topics (Belmonte & Porto, 2020). The current study addresses these gaps by analyzing discursive strategies of evaluation and chronotope (timespace) contrasts (Blommaert, 2015) in lists of newsbites sent in emails by the The White House during the first administration of U.S. President Donald Trump (2017-2020). Building on previous research on how evaluative language constructs power and organizes sociality in mediated texts, I use the Appraisal framework to identify how news events are interpreted via specific linguistic strategies in newsbite texts. Findings suggest that newsbites' evaluations align readers with partisan and polarized notions of 'real news' via indexing chronotopes of an idealized American present and past that reframe events like impeachments, social unrest, and a global pandemic. By arguing that graduated meanings reinforce such alignments, this study contributes to scholarship on the discursive construction of polarization and identifies how evaluation in media genres enhances polarized group identities through evoking antagonistic representations of current, present, and future events.

KEY WORDS

Appraisal; chronotopes; newsbites; media discourse; nationalism.

REFERENCES

Belmonte, I. A. & Porto, M. D. (2020). Multimodal framing devices in European online news. Language & Communication, 71, 55-71.

Blommaert, J. (2015). Chronotopes, Scales, and Complexity in the Study of Language in Society. Annual Review of Anthropology, 44, 105-116

Knox, J. (2007). Visual-verbal communication on online newspaper home pages. Visual Communication, 6, 19-53.

Krzyżanowski, M., Wodak, R., Bradby, H., Gardell, M., Kallis, A., Krzyżanowska, N., Mudde, C., & Rydgren, J. (2023). Discourses and practices of the 'New Normal': Towards an interdisciplinary research agenda on crisis and the normalization of anti- and post democratic action. Journal of Language and Politics, 22(4), 415-37.

Martin, J. R. & White, P. R. R. (2005). The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English. Palgrave MacMillan.

Klaudia Wolniewicz-Slomka[1] & Adam Konopka[2]

[1]SGH Warsaw School of Economics; [2]University of Gdańsk

The rhetorics of demographic decline. A Discourse-Historical analysis of parliamentary debate on low fertility in Poland

Since the late 1990s, Poland has been classified as a low-fertility rate country, with one of the lowest fertility rates in the European Union. Despite extensive demographic research and the systemic introduction of family policy instruments, the problem remains unresolved. (Statistics Poland, 2025). This conference proposal argues that an important part of this persistence lies in how fertility is discursively constructed in public debate, especially in parliamentary debate, where social problems are defined, responsibilities allocated, and policy solutions legitimised. The presentation will discuss the initial results of a qualitative discourse analysis of selected parliamentary debates in the Polish Upper and Lower House (Sejm and Senat RP) devoted to fertility and demographic decline. The following research question were posed: How and why is fertility rate problematised in Polish parliamentary discourse? What causes of low fertility rate are constructed and how? Which social actors are discursively represented as responsible for the problem and its resolution? What policy solutions are legitimised through parliamentary argumentation, and which are marginalised or silenced? Empirically, the study analyses a small corpus of selected parliamentary documents from the Upper and Lower House (Sejm and Senat). The analysis is conducted within the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis, which enables the systematic examination of discursive strategies in relation to their historical, institutional and political contexts. The analysis applied five discursive strategies as presented by Reisigl & Wodak (2001). The presentation contributes to research on demographic discourse, parliamentary communication, and public policy, and illustrates the analytical value of the Discourse-Historical Approach for studying population-related debates in contemporary Europe.

KEY WORDS

Discourse-historical approach; fertility discourse; demographic decline; parliamentary discourse; Poland.

REFERENCES

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. (2001). Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and antisemitism. Routledge.

Reisigl, M., & Wodak, R. E. (2015). The discourse-historical approach (DHA). In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), Methods of critical discourse studies (3rd ed., pp. 23–61). Sage.

Rocznik Demograficzny GUS (2024). Statistics Poland [Główny Urząd Statystyczny]. https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/roczniki-statystyczne/rocznik-demograficzny-2024,3,18.html [access April, 30, 2026]

Ozan Deniz Yalçınkaya

Dicle University

Identity construction and discursive polarization in Turkish parliamentary debates following the 2023 earthquakes: A corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis

In democratic societies, the way collective identities are put together through discourse is key to how political positions are formed and challenged. When a country is in crisis, parliamentary debates become important arenas where political actors negotiate group memberships, define collective interests, and construct symbolic boundaries between “we” and “they.” This study investigates how political identities are discursively produced and how polarization is generated in parliamentary debates in the wake of the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye. The study adopts a two-stage analytical procedure in which corpus evidence is used to identify recurrent linguistic patterns before these patterns are interpreted from a critical discourse perspective. The corpus is composed of speeches delivered in the Turkish Grand National Assembly during parliamentary debates concerning the earthquake. Frequency, keyword, collocation, and concordance analyses are employed to identify salient patterns of identity construction and ideological differentiation. These patterns are subsequently examined through a critical discourse analytical perspective focusing on social actor representation, collective identification, evaluative language, and discursive boundary-making. Van Dijk's (1998) concept of ideological polarization, Koller's (2012) approach to constructing collective identities, and Mouffe's (2005) concept that political identities emerge through distinctions between "we" and "they" constitute the foundation for the paper's theoretical framework. During a period of crisis and political responsibility, the present study concentrates on how parliamentary actors characterize themselves and others, construct a sense of common identity, identify boundaries between allies and opponents as well, and react to opposing viewpoints. The present study investigates how parliamentary debates function as discursive venues in which political actors assign responsibility, make sense from crises, and establish societal understandings rather than merely viewing them as official reactions to catastrophes. It is projected that outcomes will reveal how national unity appeals can coexist with differentiation approaches reinforce ideological divisions and exacerbate political fragmentation. The analysis contributes to the current discussions in Critical Discourse Studies on collective identities, political communication, and democratic debate during periods of crisis through investigating how parliamentary discourse concurrently promotes political polarization and produces collective identities.

KEY WORDS

Political identity; discursive polarization; parliamentary discourse; corpus-assisted CDA; collective identity.

REFERENCES

Koller, V. (2012). How to analyse collective identity in discourse. In C. Hart (Ed.), Critical discourse studies in context and cognition (pp. 19–38). John Benjamins.

Mouffe, C. (2005). On the political. Routledge.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach. Sage.

Lara Su Yaman[1] & Audronė Šolienė[2]

[1]Vilnius University; [2]Vilnius University

Constructing girlhood across cultures: A critical appraisal and multimodal analysis of femininity in Lithuanian and American teen magazines

Media aimed at teenage audiences plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of gender and identity. Teen magazines, in particular, function as influential sites where cultural norms, values, and expectations concerning femininity are communicated and reproduced. As Gonick (1997, p. 72) argues, a teen magazine constitutes "a system of messages, a signifying system, and a bearer of a certain ideology which deals with the construction of teenage femininity." This paper compares advertisements published in the Lithuanian teen magazine Justė and the American teen magazine American Girl in order to investigate how femininity and girlhood are discursively constructed across different cultural contexts. The corpus comprises 100 advertisements published in the magazines' issues in 2016-2019, including 50 from each magazine. The analysis draws on Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, focusing in particular on the Attitude system, to identify the linguistic resources used to influence, position, and persuade readers. To account for the visual dimension of advertising discourse, the study further employs the multimodal framework developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2001) and Breeze (2014), examining features such as gaze, composition, framing, salience, and participant representation. Preliminary findings suggest that femininity is constructed through recurring evaluative and multimodal patterns that both reflect and reproduce broader cultural ideologies. While both magazines address the definition of feminine beauty, Justė focuses more on romantic relationships and fashion, whereas American Girl deals with domesticity, female empowerment, and friendships. By integrating Appraisal Theory and multimodal analysis, the study contributes to research on media discourse, gender representation, and identity construction, offering insights into the ways contemporary youth media participate in shaping gendered subjectivities across cultures.

KEY WORDS

Teen magazine; Appraisal Theory; Multimodal Analysis; femininity; identity.

REFERENCES

Breeze, R. (2014). Multimodal analysis of controversy in the media, in G. Thompson and L. Alba-Juez (eds.) Evaluation in Context. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. pp. 303–319.

Gonick, M. 1997. Reading selves, re-fashioning identity: teen magazines and their readers. Curriculum Studies. 5(1), pp. 69–86.

Kress, G. and T. van Leeuwen. 1996. Reading images. London: Routledge.

Kress, G. and T. van Leeuwen. (2021). Reading images: The grammar of visual design. Abingdon: Routledge.

Martin, J.R. and P.R. White. (2005). The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yiting Yan

University of Glasgow

Constructing British Muslim women politicians as outsiders: Identity, polarisation and online hostility on X

This paper examines how hostile comments on X discursively construct racialised Muslim women politicians as outsiders in the polarised British digital public sphere. Existing research has shown that women politicians are frequently abused and discriminated in cyberspace (Esposito & Breeze, 2022). Drawing on intersectionality, which analyses how gender and other axes of subordination interact to produce distinct forms of marginalisation (Crenshaw, 1989) and on polarisation as involving the discursive construction of oppositional "us" and "them" group relations (van Dijk, 1997), this study investigates how online hostility operates not only as intersectional abuse, but also as a form of identity-based polarisation , positioning these politicians as illegitimate, unwelcome, or unfit for political participation. The dataset comprises 500 manually collected hostile comments targeting women politicians on X. Drawing on Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993), this study adopts a three-stage qualitative framework. First, it identifies recurring patterns of hostile discourse by classifying comments into three broad categories, including "overt online abuse", "everyday sexism, Islamophobia and othering", and "poltical delegitimisation", adapted from Harmer and Southern's (2021) study. Second, it examines how these hostile meanings are linguistically realised through Appraisal resources, with particular attention to Judgment and Graduation. This stage is informed by Sikorskii and Carrió-Pastor's (2026) research, which demonstrates the value of Appraisal for analysing evaluative and exclusionary hostile political replies on X. Third, it analyses how gender hostility intersects with race, religion, nationality, national belonging and political belonging, and how these intersections contribute to racialised, religious and nationalised forms of boundary-making. By combining thematic categorisation with fine-grained linguistic analysis, this study shows that hostile comments can produce polarisation through a repeated opposition between an national-political "us" and a racialised, Muslim, female "them". More broadly, it argues that hostile replies to racialised Muslim women politicians function as a discourse of political exclusion, reproducing normative assumptions about who is entitled to belong within the British political field. By connecting intersectional discourse analysis with the study of polarisation, the paper shows how digital hostility contributes to the discursive production of social division, not only by attacking individual politicians, but by contesting the legitimacy of marginalised subjects in public and political space.

KEY WORDS

Digital discourse; political hostility; polarisation; intersectionality; identity construction.

REFERENCES

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1(8), 139–167.

Esposito, E., & Breeze, R. (2022). Gender and politics in a digitalised world: Investigating online hostility against UK female MPs. Discourse & Society, 33(3), 303-323.

Fairclough, N. (1995). Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language. Longman.

Harmer, E., & Southern, R. (2021). Digital microaggressions and everyday othering: An analysis of tweets sent to women members of parliament in the UK. Information, Communication & Society, 24(14), 1998-2015.

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English. Palgrave Macmillan.

Sikorskii, S., & Carrió-Pastor, M. L. (2026). Appraising impoliteness on X: A case study of isabel díaz ayuso. Journal of Pragmatics, 254, 149-166.

van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. Discourse & Society, 4(2), 249-283.

van Dijk, T. A. (1997). What is political discourse analysis? In J. Blommaert & C. Bulcaen (Eds.), Political linguistics (pp. 11–52). John Benjamins.