

Language abuse in the digital age

in-person course on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday (all day) by
Isobelle Clarke

Short CV: Isobelle Clarke is a Leverhulme Trust Early Career Research fellow in the Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science at Lancaster University, where she is investigating anti-science narratives across websites known to promote pseudoscience and conspiracy. Isobelle is interested in the analysis of short texts and has developed three new methodologies for this task, including a version of Multi-Dimensional Analysis for short texts and a new approach for corpus-assisted discourse analysis called Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis. These two novel methods are also very useful in another of Isobelle's fields of interest: in the abuse of language online, including the spread of misinformation, trolling, and hate speech.



Course description:

<i>Day</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Language Abuse in the Digital Age</i>	<i>Description</i>
Tue, July 23	14- 16.30	What is language in the digital age?	Before we can understand what language abuse in the digital age is, we firstly need to understand what language in the digital age can comprise. Thus, in this first part of the course, we will cover what language in the digital age is. We will explore different facets of online communication, register and text types.
Wed, July 24	9- 10.30	What is language abuse?	In this part of the course, we will cover what language abuse is and can comprise including (1) the linguistic acts of inflicting harm and abuse, and (2) the linguistic acts of talking about abuse (i.e. disclosures, witness statements, legislation and legal language, etc.).
	11- 12	What is language abuse in the digital age?	<p>In this part of the course, we will cover what language abuse in the digital age is, focusing on some of the new types of language abuse and new ways to talk about abuse that occur digitally, as well as focusing on what technology enables for language abuse. We will cover what the common research aims and objectives are regarding language abuse and how linguists can help to facilitate this task.</p> <p>As a case study, I will present my research which sought to uncover and compare the major patterns of linguistic variation across Twitter and Twitter trolling. We will cover how sometimes existing methodologies are not well suited for the analysis of online data and so new approaches need to be developed. For the analysis of linguistic variation across tweets, I developed a short text version of Multi-Dimensional Analysis (MDA). We will cover the steps involved in completing an MDA and a short text MDA.</p>

	14-16.30	Discourses across anti-science	In this part of the course, we will cover the abuse of language online through the spread of misinformation. I will present my research which has explored the discourses across websites known to promote pseudoscience and conspiracy across 5 topics: vaccination, stem cells, evolution, genetically modified organisms, and climate change. We will learn a new corpus-assisted discourse analytical approach called Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis.
		Interpreting dimensions	One of the hardest parts of Multi-Dimensional Analysis and Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis is dimension interpretation. So, in this final part of the course, we will interpret a dimension from each type of analysis in relation to the topics of language abuse.

Preparatory reading

- Clarke, I. (2022) A multi-dimensional analysis of English tweets. *Language and Literature Online First*: 1—26.
- Clarke, I. (forthcoming) The discourses of climate change across conspiracy and pseudoscience websites. In S. Maci, M. Demata, P. Seargeant and M. McGlashan (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Disinformation*. Routledge.
- Clarke, I., Brookes, G. and McEnery, T. (2022). Keywords through time: A study of representations of Islam in the British press. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 27(4): 399—427.
- Clarke, I., McEnery, T. and Brookes, G. (2021) Multiple correspondence analysis, newspaper discourse and subregister: A case study of discourses of Islam in the British press. *Register Studies* 3(1): 144—171.
- Jones, R. H. Chik, A. and Hafner, C. A. (2015) *Discourse and Digital Practices: Doing Discourse Analysis in the Digital Age*. Routledge.
- Phillips, W. and Milner, R. M. (2017) *The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online*. Wiley.
- Shuy, R. (1993) *Language crimes: The Use and Abuse of Language Evidence in the Courtroom*. Blackwell.