

New media as a new empirical resource in discourse studies and applied linguistics

Jūratė Ruzaitė

Vytautas Magnus University | Kaunas

jurate.ruzaitė@vdu.lt

CLARIN-PLUS workshop “Creation and Use of Social Media Resources”

Kaunas | 18-19 May 2017

Social media resources for practical purposes

Attitudes / Public opinions

- 1) Language attitudes
- 2) Hate speech

(1) Public attitudes in public on-line discourse

- In general

- Important strategic site to disseminate ideologies and shape public opinions
- Empirical evidence to study public attitudes and language ideologies

- In this study

- The whole spectrum of discourses operating within Lithuanian digital media to perpetuate attitudes towards English and the values associated with it

Ruzaitė, J. 2017. Diversity of attitudes to English in non-professional public discourse: A focus on Lithuania. *English Today* 33/1: 1-10, CUP.

- Aim

- Show how the phenomenon of Englishisation is framed in public discourse in Lithuania by non-professionals

- Objectives

- Explore the narratives constructed in public debates about English by different social actors and identify the dominant patterns of their argumentation
- Identify if the power of English is associated in public discourse with any specific domains of its usage, e.g. academic settings or science

Ruzaitė, J. 2017. Diversity of attitudes to English in non-professional public discourse: A focus on Lithuania. *English Today* 33/1: 1-10, CUP.

Methodological framework: new media as a new empirical resource for studying attitudes

- Traditionally, attitudes to languages have been studied through:
 - Questionnaires
 - Interviews
 - Experimental matched guise technique
 - Autobiographic and fictional accounts
- Limited research on attitudes expressed in public debates by language users themselves

Ruzaitė, J. 2017. Diversity of attitudes to English in non-professional public discourse: A focus on Lithuania. *English Today* 33/1: 1-10, CUP.

Data used: 3 categories of online texts on the topic of English

- Texts published on regional and national news portals, blog posts, and comments written in response to these texts
- Different social actors (or ‘voices’) and different levels of formality
 - Texts in news portals
 - The most formal public stance
 - Mainly written by journalists, intellectuals, and some politicians
 - Blogs
 - Mostly the opinions of intellectual and socially active citizens
 - Comments
 - The most immediate community attitudes
 - The widest array of community attitudes is expressed
 - A larger diversity of opinions?

Composition of the dataset

	Number of texts	Number of words	Number of comments	Number of words
National news portals	100	49,553	132	7,210
Regional news portals	25	11,839	126	4,389
Blog posts	7	4,766	223	12,200
Total:	132	66,158	481	23,799

Argumentation schemes in TEXTS published on news portals and blogs

Topoi	News Portals								Blogs	
	Delfi		Lrytas		15min		Kdiena			
Opportunity	24	52%	18	62%	15	60%	17	68%	3	43%
Resentment against EN	1	2%	4	14%	-	-	-	-	1	14%
Threat	-	-	-	-	3	12%	2	8%	-	-
Direct confrontation between approaches	1	2%	1	3%	1	4%	1	4%	-	-
Educational issues	15	32%	7	24%	11	44%	9	36%	1	14%

Argumentation schemes in COMMENTS

Topoi	News portals		Blogs		Total	%
	Number of texts	%	Number of texts	%		
Opportunity	22	9%	13	6%	35	7%
English spread is natural	15	6%	4	2%	19	4%
Resentment against EN	37	14%	1	0.4%	38	8%
Threat	25	10%	-	-	25	5%
Puristic attitudes	13	5%	25	11%	38	8%
Language as an ideological tool	5	2%	6	3%	11	2%
Educational issues	8	3%	18	8%	26	5%
Official language policies are unacceptable	1	-	24	11%	25	5%
Community as experts	1	0.4%	137	61%	138	⁹ 29%

Main outcomes of the study

- Active civic participation of non-specialists in public online debates have started changing the repertoire and dominance of linguists' discourses
 - Non-academic discourses: neoliberal attitudes to EN
 - National-romanticist rhetoric in professional linguists' discourse – not that pervasive in the discourse of non-specialists
 - Commentators: exaggerate professional attitudes, adopt extremist rhetoric, and employ a highly expressive style
 - The discourses of resentment and English as a threat have been countered by those who promote a reconciling and less essentialist view
 - The changes in the attitudes to foreign language influences are closely related to the processes of democratization in a relatively young state; changing linguistic attitudes reflect ongoing societal developments

(2) Hate speech in public discourse

- Collaboration with the Office of the Inspector of Journalist Ethics in Lithuania
 - Assessing public information with regard to hate incidents
 - Social Media forensics
 - Linguist as an expert
 - Advisory role
 - Linguistic criteria necessary to determine cases of hate crimes
 - Pragmatics as an interpretative framework
 - Speech Acts
 - Politeness Theory

Public hate speech as a type of hate crimes

- Public hate speech
 - e.g. by politicians

- Cyber hate
 - i.e. hate speech channelled via the internet and social media

SOME of the challenges

- What are bias indicators?
 - No uniformity – variation across jurisdictions
- Suppressing information vs. over-reporting
- Hostile expressions can change over time (diachronic data!)
- Genre conventions and degree of tolerance towards hostile language across genres
 - Metal music
 - Satire

Example 1

LT

Pabaigai – ar galima užmušti mokytoją? Be abejo, jeigu to reikalauja būtinas reikalingumas ir viešas interesas.

EN

To finish it off – can you kill the teacher? Of course, if this is required by the absolute necessity and public interest.

Example 2

LT

- Pizdinti tuos babajus lauk is Lietuvos!'!!! Nereikia jiems jokiu Integraciju!!! Patys ubagai esame.. tai dar juodasikniais reikiai rupintis??!!!!

EN

- Fuck those Muslim immigrants out from Lithuania !'!!! They don't need any integration!!! We are beggars ourselves.. so will we also have to take care of those niggers??!!!!

Solutions?

- Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS)
- Reference sources!
 - Corpora
 - More fine-grained search possibilities are necessary
 - Diachronic data
 - Genre-specific features
 - LITIS ([Amilevičius, Darius](#); [Petkevičius, Mažvydas](#), 2016)
 - Corpus of user-generated comments collected from two Lithuanian portals: www.delfi.lt and www.lrytas.lt
 - Comments from www.delfi.lt (17,909 comments), date: 2014
 - Comments from www.lrytas.lt (182,000 comments), date: 2010-2014

Thank you!