

Colloquium on Pragmatics, Discourse, and Society

Booklet of Abstracts

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Mashael Assaadi (Cardiff University)

“The Functions and Meanings of Hijazi Non-Lexical Sounds”

Everyday speech in Hijazi Arabic is full of non-lexical sounds (NLSs) such as afa, youh, wah etc., which have the potential to stand as utterances by themselves to express appropriate contextually bound meanings. This study employs theories of pragmatics (Ward 2002, 2004, 2006; Fischer 2000) and social-semiotics (Saussure 1916; Peirce 1931) that provide a theoretical explanation to examine the forms, functions and meanings of such linguistic phenomena. These tokens illustrate the interaction between the cultural and intrapersonal aspects of communication in Hijazi society (Wharton 2003). Consequently, this part of the study investigates the mapping between the Hijazi NLSs forms and meanings through their functions. These types of linguistic items are similar to primary interjections, and hence we adopt the division of their functions of language provided by Wierzbicka (1992) who divided them into two categories. First, the expressive NLSs that refer to those that express feelings, and hence their meanings are mapped onto Parrott’s (2001) emotions classifications who grouped a list of emotions in a hierarchical tree structure with three levels of emotions: primary, secondary and tertiary. Secondly, the conative NLSs that refer to those that function as directives or commands, and hence their meanings are mapped onto Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) speech functions. They propose that speakers adopt two specific speech roles: giving and demanding either goods-&-services or information (p. 135). In the current study, thirty-four NLSs have been collected through the method of observation, while the meanings of these NLSs have been checked through an open questionnaire elicited from 321 Hijazi speakers’ with differing ages, genders, educational backgrounds and dialects (tribal, urban, in between) to examine if those various social variables affect the usage or the understanding of NLSs.

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Maria Atmania (Manchester Metropolitan University)

“Communicating through Music: A Critical Stylistic Approach to Lyrical Protests and Public Chants during the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt.”

In 2011, the world watched a movement of political protests, namely the Arab Spring (AS), rippling so rapidly through North Africa and the Middle East, which aimed at overthrowing the dictatorial regimes and raising social consciousness of the masses. Protest against the ousted presidents was organized in different forms among which protest music, which can be conceptualized simply as lyrical statements of social dissent, constituted a part. The current research observes that texts of rap, rock and folk depicted Arab youth musicians particularly in Tunisia and Egypt as politicians embracing the ideology of resistance that was advanced by Foucault (1991) as a necessity to power. Musicians seem to have reflected a certain type of discourse to dialogue with the public on social illnesses towards very particular ends. The public too, through their chants and YouTube comments, seem to have responded to the songs with a particular discourse. Though in Foucauldian terms (1991) the relationship between language and power is bidirectional in that language as power can be used either to dominate or to resist dominant groups, contemporary practitioners of critical theories have focused almost entirely on the ideology of dominance in their attempts to establish the language/power relationship. The present research will be focused on a period of political unrest in which the previously banned movements of Arab youth music turned to become oppositional forces to the dominant powers through enacting ideologies of resistance to instantiate social change by dialogically energizing text consumers in the face of dictatorial leaders. Through stylistic and critical discourse analyses across songs, public chants and YouTube comments at the stages of production, reception and interpretation, the current proposal will attempt to demonstrate how musical and public discourse have been interacting during the AS, in what ways, towards what ends and how successful it was.

Halima Benzdira (Manchester Metropolitan University)

“Investigation of Politeness Patterns in Email Requests: Case Study of Algerian Ph.D. Female Students at UK Universities”

This research seeks to explore the effects of addressees’ gender and ‘expert power’ on the use of politeness strategies within email requests in an asymmetrical context.

Research into speech act realization has revealed that using politeness strategies in requests is influenced by factors like the addressees’ gender (Kuriscak, 2015), power (Song, 2017), language proficiency level (Al Masaeed, 2017), L1 transfer (Zarepour and Saidloo 2016). Requests have been defined as directives, where the speaker impose on the listener (Searle, 1979; Reiter, 2000), thus politeness has been conceived as a way to soften the imposition. Evidently, requests have generated considerable attention, whereas, email requests have received a little.

The objective of this study is to elucidate the students’ perception of ‘*politeness*’ coupled with how they employ its strategies in relation to the supervisor’s gender and ‘power expert’ (French and Raven, 1959). Furthermore, the study investigates how the use of particular strategy might affect the response, be it an acceptance or a refusal.

Data collection tools are threefold (triangulation): first, online surveys to trigger the students perception of what is the appropriate email behaviour. Second, Written Discourse completion tasks (DCTs) along with real request emails collection. Finally, unstructured interviews to see the underpinning reasons behind the use of certain strategies; according to the two dimensions tested (gender of the addressees, their expert power).

The study will pertain to the body of data in interlanguage pragmatics; though its results might not provide generalization to the whole population. Nevertheless, it can pace the ground for further studies; thus it might help construct good relationships between overseas students and their teachers/supervisors by avoiding misunderstandings occurrence. The results might also be beneficial to researchers interested in the classroom teaching of foreign language pragmatics, as they might be useful to universities' international offices and international partnership development offices.

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Martin Boyle (University of Kent)

“Measuring and Accounting for Taiwan’s Maintenance of its de facto Independence: A Linguistics-Driven Discourse Analytic Research Design.”

The Republic of China (ROC or Taiwan) has been claimed by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) since 1949, when the Chinese Nationalists (KMT) fled there at the end of the Chinese Civil War. Before democratisation in the early 1990s, the ROC was an authoritarian, Chinese settler regime that claimed sovereignty over the whole of China. Democratisation and Taiwanisation of the ROC state led to political divergence from (Nationalist) China, a decline in Chinese and a rise in Taiwanese national identity and a desire for a de jure Republic of Taiwan (ROT). This is expressed in partisan terms in a loose China-identifying (KMT) – Taiwan-identifying (DPP) divide. At the same time, intense economic convergence with the PRC, PRC power and Taiwan’s unrecognised status mean this desire is simply a pipe dream and that to maintain de facto independence and resist PRC power it must maintain the fiction that it is the ROC. It does this through a discourse of “ROC Independence” (*huadu*) as opposed to “Taiwan Independence” (*taidu*). Taiwan’s elites deploy a *huadu* discourse in their policy statements. However, it is obscured by diplomatic rhetorical conventions and is open to multiple (mis)interpretations.

Granted, explicit policy statements send important signals, but implicit linguistic signalling more effectively brings identity to bear in international relations because it is harder to fake. It is also harder for researchers to locate. Yet it provides more robust textual warrant for interpretive claims. A linguistics-informed discourse analytic research design resolves this by melding (post)positivist with interpretive approaches. For linguists, discourse analysis involves deriving discourses from text using co-text and context. Social-scientific and Critical (CDA) discourse analytic approaches analyse context, but often ignore the lexicogrammatical co-text, are highly interpretive or conflate text, rhetoric and discourse. The Linguistics sub-fields of Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Pragmatics resolve this by permitting the quantitative measurement of salient text and the qualitative analysis of text in context.

Linguistic universals (what is true of English is true of Chinese) invite straightforward discourse analytic techniques that locate firm textual warrant for interpretive claims around the meaning of political actors’ statements while raising questions about how and why listeners and researchers derive one and not another discourse from a text. My research design combines CL, CDA and (Gricean) Pragmatics in four steps: first, I constructed a 5 million word master corpus of Taiwanese political speech (TPS) in English covering the years 1992-2016; second, I used CL to identify salient language, themes and discourses in TPS; third, I analysed selected sub-corpora against the master corpus to locate, compare and

interpret the discourses of different Taiwanese actors; fourth, I carried out a pilot study using the 2015 China-Taiwan presidential summit to measure and account for the Taiwanese president's discourse in the context of broader discourses of Taiwanese identity. To do this, I used the CDA Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) and focused on the DHA's 'linguistic means of realisation' to examine the pragmatics of presupposition, implicature and pronoun use (deixis). Initial findings reveal a *huadu* discourse across the political spectrum and provide no textual warrant for a more China-identifying KMT discourse. Rather, what the Taiwan-identifying side perceives as a pro-China KMT discourse that threatens Taiwan's security is simply diplomatic and rhetorical framing.

Stefan Breitrück (Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen)

“Deleuze Reading Foucault: The Rhizomatics of Discourse and Power”

The topic of my presentation is Gilles Deleuze's analysis of Michel Foucault's concepts, figures of reflection, and methods, as presented and applied in *The Order of Things*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, and *Discipline and Punish*. Deleuze's elaboration can be considered as an explication of Foucault's theoretical implications, exploring, explaining and advancing his heuristics from a linguistic-philosophical and system-philosophical point of view.

In my presentation, I will focus first on Deleuze's work on statements, whom he regards as *the* fundamental semantic elements, logically prioritising them over phrases and propositions. He conceptualises them as virtual and manifold intensities, which unfold their semantic potential by being connected to other statements, thereby filling up or fulfilling, respectively, discursive territories in a – here, Deleuze's most important figure of thought – *rhizomatic* way. The collateral, correlative, and complementary relations between statements, Deleuze continues, define the specific form, structure, and topoi of discourses. In the second part of my talk, I move on to Deleuze's analysis of Foucault's conceptualisation of power, whom he characterises as an *abstract machine* that expands its reach in the political, economic, cultural, social etc. spheres in an equally rhizomatic manner, that is, through the application of specific power techniques and through the production of specific disciplines. Techniques and disciplines that interconnect the *Visible* and the *Sayable* – to address Foucault's main conceptual spaces –, thereby producing what is regarded as *Truth*. With my presentation, I would like to, first, cast a light on the micro-dimension of Foucault's theoretical apparatus and, second, offer an answer to the core questions 'What is a discourse?' and 'What is power?' Conceptual groundwork that could be of interest for the colloquium *Pragmatics, Discourse, and Society*, as clarification of these questions is a necessary prerequisite for building transdisciplinary bridges under the banner of discourse analysis.

Sakine Çabuk (Middle East Technical University)

“Discourse Particles in Kurmanjî Kurdish-Turkish Contact”

Exploring interaction among Kurdish speaking family members, this paper investigates the use of discourse particles in Kurmanjî-Kurdish in relation to the contact phenomena between the Kurdish and Turkish languages. Corpus analysis of the data obtained from audio and video recordings of family talk on the phone was carried out to examine the semantic-pragmatic properties of discourse particles. Although some particles in the corpus seem to be unique to Kurdish, some others appear to be borrowed from Turkish and integrated into Kurdish by undergoing some phonological changes. The findings suggest that Kurdish speakers borrow some lexical items and integrate them into Kurdish with some changes at the phonological level, or combine them with some Kurdish particles. Even though the Kurdish and Turkish languages have had close contact and a long-lasting coexistence in the linguistic setting of Turkey, which results in the borrowing of some particles from Turkish and their use in daily interaction by Kurdish speakers, it is hard to arrive at a conclusion about language change at this level.

Jacopo Castaldi (Canterbury Christ Church University)

“Critical Discourse Studies and Hegemony – A Gramscian Approach”

The concept of hegemony has often been called upon in the Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) literature, but primarily with the view that any discourse that attempts to represent dominant ideologies as natural or commonsensical is hegemonical (Machin and Mayr 2012: 24; Wodak and Meyer, 2016: 9).

In order to gain a clearer understanding of the concept of hegemony and to make it methodologically and theoretically applicable to the CDS enterprise, this paper looks at Gramsci’s conceptualization of hegemony and investigates two key aspects: the purpose of hegemonic discourse and how this is produced or reproduced. Firstly, it is argued that hegemony, as a socio-political concept, is neither negative nor positive. Secondly, it is suggested that discourses, from a Gramscian perspective, can only be categorised as hegemonic if they are produced by the civil, rather than political, society. Thirdly, while acknowledging the importance of analysing political discourses and genres, it is proposed that the analysis of mass mediated popular genres should be prioritised in order to understand how contemporary hegemony works.

Such an approach, for instance, may provide an argument against one of the criticisms raised by Chilton (2005: 27), namely that humans possess what has been called Machiavellian intelligence and should therefore be able, at least in principle, to recognise the tactical deception which is at the basis of mind manipulation. It is suggested that what hegemonic discourse does is to come in forms (e.g. genres) that would not necessarily alert the counter-deception mechanisms due to being perceived as non-threatening by the receivers. The wide reach of the mass mediated popular genres, finally, enables hegemonic discourse to spread ideologies on such a scale that it allows dominant powers to maintain their privileged position without using coercive means. A Gramscian approach to CDS can provide a framework to resist such discourses.

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Magdalena Maria Drewniak (Universidad de Granada)

“The high class discourse: the cultureme *cham* as a means of conveying the negative image of peasants in the Polish language”

The aim of this presentation is to discuss the negative image of peasants manifested in the contemporary Polish language in phraseological expressions employing the cultureme *cham* [*a boor]. In the Polish language *cham* maintains two meanings – the contemporary and the old one present from the 16th century. The contemporary meaning refers to a person who is rude and unmannered while the old one was used by high classes to disdainfully characterise a person belonging to a lower class, that is, a peasant. It will be demonstrated that metaphorical expressions employing the cultureme *cham* convey the negative connotation of peasants by making reference to certain features that can be related to the old meaning of *cham*. The features in question are: bad manners, insolence, avarice and egoism, drunkenness, ugliness, the status of an incomplete human being, filthiness, poor quality, the impossibility of change. The presentation aims to divide exemplary metaphorical expressions employing the cultureme *cham* that can be found in the contemporary Polish language into nine groups corresponding to the above-mentioned features. They evoke the image of peasants regarded as unmannered, rude, drunk and ugly and are used to form invectives in the contemporary Polish language. Since all of them are negative in nature, it can be observed that the image of peasants they evoke is unfavourable and the attitude towards peasants that is maintained in the contemporary Polish language is highly disrespectful.

Sousen Elbouri (University of Aberdeen)

“The Different Uses of ‘*la*’ as a Discourse Marker in Benghazi Arabic”

The subject of this study is discourse markers in the Arabic dialect spoken in Benghazi, Libya. Though spoken by nearly a million speakers, it has hardly been featured in recent studies of Arabic dialects. Benghazi Arabic is very rich with various linguistic markers which function in different ways such as ‘*yani*’ (I mean), ‘*bahi*’ (okay), ‘*arafti*’ (you know), and others. Speakers use ‘*la*’ on a social basis where culture and environment aid in perceiving the intended meaning. The focus of this paper is to exemplify and describe several senses of ‘*la*’ meaning ‘*no*’ as a discourse marker that have not previously been recognized. The discourse

marker 'la' carries different pragmatic meanings and functions according to the context in which it is used. The informants of this study are all natives from Benghazi. The data is collected from daily conversations. Although 'la' appears to be simple and straightforward, this paper will demonstrate that this is not the case in conversation. After establishing the categories of the uses of 'la', it can be argued that 'la' has a core meaning. Instances of 'la' were also used to express denial, disagreement, disbelief, approval, doubt, misunderstanding, emphasis, sarcasm, rejection, expectation, and turn-taking. Additionally, 'la' was found to have special interpretations than its basic meaning when used in answering greetings. In fact, it can be used to fulfil various discourse functions. The interesting phenomenon, as can be seen from the conversations, is that each time it was used, it had a different communicative intent.

Beatrice Fagan (University of Kent)

“The Medicalisation of Maternal Discourses in Nineteenth Century France: A Case Study.”

Towards the latter half of the nineteenth century, a depopulation crisis developed in France. The popularity of Neo-Malthusianism and degeneration theory, combined with a low birth-rate and high infant-mortality rate, prompted politicians and physicians to attempt to influence and reshape the practices and discourses surrounding reproduction and the family. Through the rhetoric utilised in politics, journalism and literature, depopulation was transformed into an illness, frequently described as a disease which was causing France to sicken. The pathological vocabulary utilised in these discourses further emphasised the attempts to bring depopulation under the jurisdiction and influence of medical professionals. Within this larger discursive medicalisation, Mothers were specifically targeted as key to the issue of infant mortality. The development of puericulture – the science of rearing children – allowed physicians to bombard mothers with advice and guidance on how to be ‘une bonne mère’ and resulted in a proliferation of quasi-medical books, pamphlets and advice manuals on childcare.

Previous academic literature has focused on the historical and social aspects of depopulation, relying heavily on statistics to speculate on the changing practices of French mothers. This paper will shift to a more textual approach and demonstrate the transformation, medicalisation and pathologisation of depopulation and populationist discourses in nineteenth century France. This will be achieved through a case study of the quasi-medical paper *La Jeune Mère* (1873-1905) by Dr André-Théodore Brochard. This publication was aimed directly at mothers and contains a blend of medical articles on child care with illustrations, poems and correspondence.

Thus, taking inspiration from Foucaultian discourse analysis and Susan Sontag’s *Illness as Metaphor* (1978), this paper will illustrate the importance of textual analysis in understanding depopulation in France, and through the use of previously unexamined quasi-medical texts it will highlight how medical and pathological language was utilised by physicians to influence and ‘cure’ depopulation.

Recep Onursal (University of Kent)

“Hegemony and the logics of Kurdish Conflict in Turkey”

Despite its violent history, Turkish Republic has seen a movement towards peace with the inception of negotiation-like talks between the state and Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK (Kurdistan Worker Party), since 2009. Especially, the last attempt called 'Resolution Process' (December 2012- July 2015) was widely considered as the best chance for lasting the Kurdish Conflict that had become a Gordian knot. However, this attempt was also failed in July 2015 and conflict has escalated again. Taking the Kurdish Conflict as a theoretical and empirical object of investigation, my research aim to understand why there has been no political solution to the conflict.

This paper develops the main theoretical framework and argument of the research project. It suggests that a discourse-theoretically informed analysis of the Kurdish Conflict and Resolution Process can shed light on and indeed help explain the resistance to the settling of the conflict. Accordingly, drawing on post-foundational theory of hegemony, discourse and meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), post-foundational theory of subject/subjectivity (Lacan 1977) and the Logics of Critical Explanation (Glynos and Howarth 2007), it aims to examine the political discourses of the conflicted parties on Kurdish Conflict since 2009.

Overall, this paper demonstrates the way in which I aim to analyse the discursive struggles between conflicted parties in Kurdish Conflict to not only map the different understanding of the Kurdish Conflict and its resolution but also examine the social, political and fantasmatic logics underpinning constructions of the relationship between conflicted parties.

Bartosz Pietrzak (Jagiellonian University, Krakow)

“What about peace in pre-Islamic Arabic society? An example of lexical-conceptual analysis on the lexicon of the pre-Islamic Arabic poetic *koiné* dialect”

Pre-Islamic Arabic society seemed to be constantly torn apart by wars. The limited resources of the homeland of Arabs drove them to endless conflict over dominance and survival, which must have had an immense impact on their way of thinking about peace.

The main objective of the paper is to present how the situation of *peace* has been conceptualized in the intertribal Arabic poetic *koiné* dialect (PIAPK). Consequently, it aims to compare English and pre-Islamic Arabic conceptualization of social and political activities related to the situation of *making peace* (*peace, truce, ceasefire* etc.) by providing the characteristics of the conceptualization of a relevant semantic field.

The main assumptions of the research methodology stems from the interpretation of Jackendoff's *Parallel Architecture* theory (Jackendoff 2002, 2009) and the cognitive approach to meaning as reflecting a kind of knowledge shared by the society of speakers (Geeraets 2006: 5).

In the analysis, a list of lexemes used in PIAPK in reference to the situation of *peace* was proposed based on - (medieval compilations of words used in a given context in Classical Arabic). The meaning of the selected lexical items was analyzed by means of the oldest Arabic dictionaries. Due to an extent of vagueness of the dictionaries' explication, the

meaning was specified on the basis of the observation on PIAPK corpus (context and collocation of the selected items). In order to precisely characterize the meaning of the lexemes, in some cases, a hypothetical etymological specification was provided. Subsequently, explication of meaning of the selected items was postulated, and based on it, the semantic field of *making peace* situation was characterized.

The research results suggest that the pre-Islamic Arabic concepts of *making peace* differ from their English equivalents, accenting different features, which reflect the specifics of life in the given social circumstances.

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Farwa Qazalbash (Riphah International University, Lahore Campus)

"A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Construction of 'Honor' in Chinoy's 'A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness'"

This study investigated how the notion of honor has been constructed in Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy's Oscar Winning documentary: *A Girl in the River: The Price of Forgiveness*. Through its script, the researcher has investigated how various linguistic strategies have been used to construct the issue of honor killing in a Pakistani society. With the help of tools offered by CDA practitioners e.g. Fairclough (1992), Van Dijk (2006), Gee (2011) and Reisigl and Wodak (2000), the researcher has found that 'honor' seems to be a metaphor for social approval and women are objectified as mere carriers of this idea. The discourse the documentary has collectivized two groups, one which favors the protagonist (Saba) in her decision to marry according to her will by eloping with Qaiser and the second which is against Saba's decision and paint her as an agent of disrespect and attempt on her life in the name of honor. The findings show that the documentary it kept its focus upon discussing honor killing in various ways. Choice of lexicon of Saba's father unearths society as a driving force. The honor as such was not a personal matter as it was a social one. Personally, it would have been sufficient for Saba's father to let her go after her decisions and boycott her socially, but that wouldn't have restored his honor. From its definition to its loss, honor is a social construction, and hence can be restored only through socially acceptable ways. It was important to study the construction of honor and its implication because 'honor killing' is a very grave issue in Pakistan. A recent report by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2016) reveals that in the past three years more than twenty-three hundred women have been killed in Pakistan in the name of honor.

Lorraine Ramos (University of California, Merced)

“Spanish Heritage Language Students' use of Metaphor in University Level Writing”

The question of heritage language learners in foreign language classrooms has been widely debated in second language education, especially with Spanish in a U.S. Professors like Guadalupe Valdés has brought pedagogical focus to Spanish heritage language students in order to retain, develop and maintain their first language. While previous research has concentrated on advanced Spanish students and writing development, few have examined students use of conceptual metaphors within autobiographical linguistic narratives. Pairing genre theory from Systemic Functional Linguistics with metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson, my paper will examine the metaphors used by 3rd and 4th year university Spanish students within the narrative genre from a corpus of 16, 091 words. I argue that heritage language students use a variety of bicultural metaphors, transferred from both languages to conceptualize their linguistic development, in addition to using metaphor in specific narrative stages as a literary strategy. The use of conceptual metaphors in heritage language learners has yet to be studied and can be connected to second language learning.

In conclusion, this study, by closely examining the function of student discourse through their multicultural metaphoric competence will provide instructors important insights on how to further students' writing development in the target language.

Katrin Renkwitz (University of Bonn)

“Showing Patterns in the Intonation of Apologies Based on the Severity of the Offense”

It is indisputable that the intonation applied to each utterance we produce serves an important function in bringing across our intended message. From an intercultural perspective, studying and understanding this interplay of what and how something is being said can help in preventing misunderstandings between e.g. L1 and L2 speakers of a language (cf. Wichmann 2015). Furthermore, it can help to improve Text-to-Speech software (cf. e.g. Hirst 2005) and synthetic speech in general, which increasingly contributes to our societal landscape.

Although these points are certainly true for the more practical aspects of language as well, research on the interface of Pragmatics and Prosody is still scarce. Besides the finding that intonational mistakes can lead to misunderstandings, studies so far suggest that intonation plays a role in upgrading and downgrading politeness (cf. Gili Fivela & Bazzanella 2014) and can even be used to strategically convey impoliteness (cf. Culpeper 2005). For speech acts, results demonstrate a connection between the multiple functions of *Thank you* and the *please* in *please-requests* and the produced intonation pattern in their respective contexts (cf. Aijmer 1996, Wells 2006; Wichmann 2004).

As a further contribution, this study focuses on the speech act APOLOGY and investigates the applied intonation patterns and functional strategies, by looking at their dependency on the severity of the previously committed offense (low – medium – high). In a fashion typical of pragmatics studies, the presented study falls back on data gathered through Oral Discourse Completion Tests (ODCTs), which explicitly asked the informants to formulate apologies in six different situations. Based on a pilot study (n=25 informants) dependencies

between the intonation pattern and the relevant factors are discussed and substantiated by using examples from an auditory and acoustic analysis.

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“DISEASE Metaphor in Chinese Real Estate Discourse: a CDA Approach”

This study investigates the use of DISEASE metaphors in the discourse surrounding the Chinese housing crisis. The premise of this study, in accordance with the CDA orientation, is that language has the ability to shape social circumstances, a potential which is often exploited by those in power (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1995). This study pays specific attention to metaphor, which frequently carries an ideological charge in public discourse (Musolff, 2017).

First, the socio-economic context is explained, setting out the principles for the corpus analysis. The compiled corpus contains 689,123 words and comprises data from two sources: the official newspaper of the ruling Communist Party (People’s Daily), and its reader comments. The corpus analysis employs a protocol of metaphor identification that incorporates on previous studies (e.g.: Semino et al., 2017), which singles out DISEASE metaphors.

It is found that DISEASE metaphors (CRISIS IS DISEASE in Conceptual Metaphor Theory terms) represent a large proportion of the metaphor data, which is in line with previous research. However, unlike previous relevant studies (e.g.: Peckham, 2013), the present study reveals that the “contained vs pandemic” distinction is less prominent than other distinctions, which have to do with the type of diagnosis and prognosis, namely “treatable vs. untreatable”, “curable vs. fatal”, and “chronic vs. acute”. Besides, some of these distinctions are culture-specific, where DISEASE metaphors are embedded in the knowledge of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which subscribes to a holistic approach

(Liu and Henkle, 2002). The metaphorical use of TCM terms also reflects ideological differences between pro-government and anti-government language: the former use TCM terms more widely and more frequently, portraying the handling of the crisis as a smooth process. Overall, it is shown that although DISEASE metaphors are used by both sides, pro-government rhetoric favours positively charged notions relating to treatment, recovery, and sustained health.

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