

## Research Project

### On power in blogs

#### **Project funded by own resources**

**Project title** On power in blogs

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#### **Organisation / Research unit**

Departement Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften / English Linguistics (Locher)

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**Status** Completed

This study focuses on language use and power in eight English-language personal/diary blogs. Working with a corpus of 48 posts and 841 comments (76,088 tokens) and with qualitative questionnaire data provided by the bloggers, it analyses how bloggers and readers use language when they interact in the comments sections following blog posts, and what the implications are for the exercise of power.

The study brings together research on conversational control (speakership, turn-taking and topic control) and on disagreements and agreements. To date, research on these subject matters is scant in computer-mediated contexts, and lacking for personal/diary blogs. In this sense, the study is exploratory. The novelty of blogs and of (socio)linguistic research on language use online coupled with the now- outdated view of the Internet as 'democratising' may well have prevented studies on language use and power in computer-mediated contexts. However, such research is warranted; language use is pervasive in text-based CMC and interpersonal concerns are equally as relevant as they are for offline contexts.

The results from a close qualitative content analysis and subsequent quantification of the corpus data show that bloggers are central participants in the personal/diary blogs. Their dominance as authors of the main entry type (the post) and controller of much of the blog's form is reflected in emergent interactional patterns; readers predominantly respond to bloggers and maintain topics raised by bloggers in their posts. Evidence of the bloggers' central role can also be found in how linguistic responsiveness is constructed in turns directed at the blogger (less explicit) compared with turns directed at other readers (more explicit).

Both agreements and disagreements are integral components of interactions in the comments sections of personal/diary blogs, a result which shows that they constitute appropriate and expected practice. However, the latter, along with criticisms, are strongly associated with departures from the predominant interactional pattern (in which readers respond to bloggers' posts). Blogger-reader and reader- reader interactions are coupled with disagreements and criticisms. Furthermore, instances of topic shift, while rare in the data, also emerge in disagreement exchanges. The fact that the voicing of a disagreement or criticism more readily triggers a response by a party who would otherwise not respond, suggests that an interlocutor who performs these moves gains heightened control over the developing interaction. For the researcher, it constitutes viable evidence that s/he has managed to exercise power through language use. The study thus shows that a combined analysis of interactional patterns with a close examination of language use is a fruitful means of analysing the exercise of power in personal/diary blogs.

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**Keywords** CMC, disagreement, power

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University funds

### **Add publication**

#### **Published results**

2171250, Bolander, Brook, Disagreements and agreements in personal/diary blogs: A closer look at responsiveness, 0378-2166 ; 1879-1387, Journal of Pragmatics, Publication: JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

2171259, Brook, Bolander, Language and power in blogs : interaction, disagreements and agreements, 978-90-272-5642-3 ; 90-272-5642-X, Publication: Authored Book (Verfasser eines eigenständigen Buches)

2171265, Bolander, Brook, On Language and Power in Blogs, Publication: Thesis (Dissertationen, Habilitationen)

### **Add documents**

### **Specify cooperation partners**