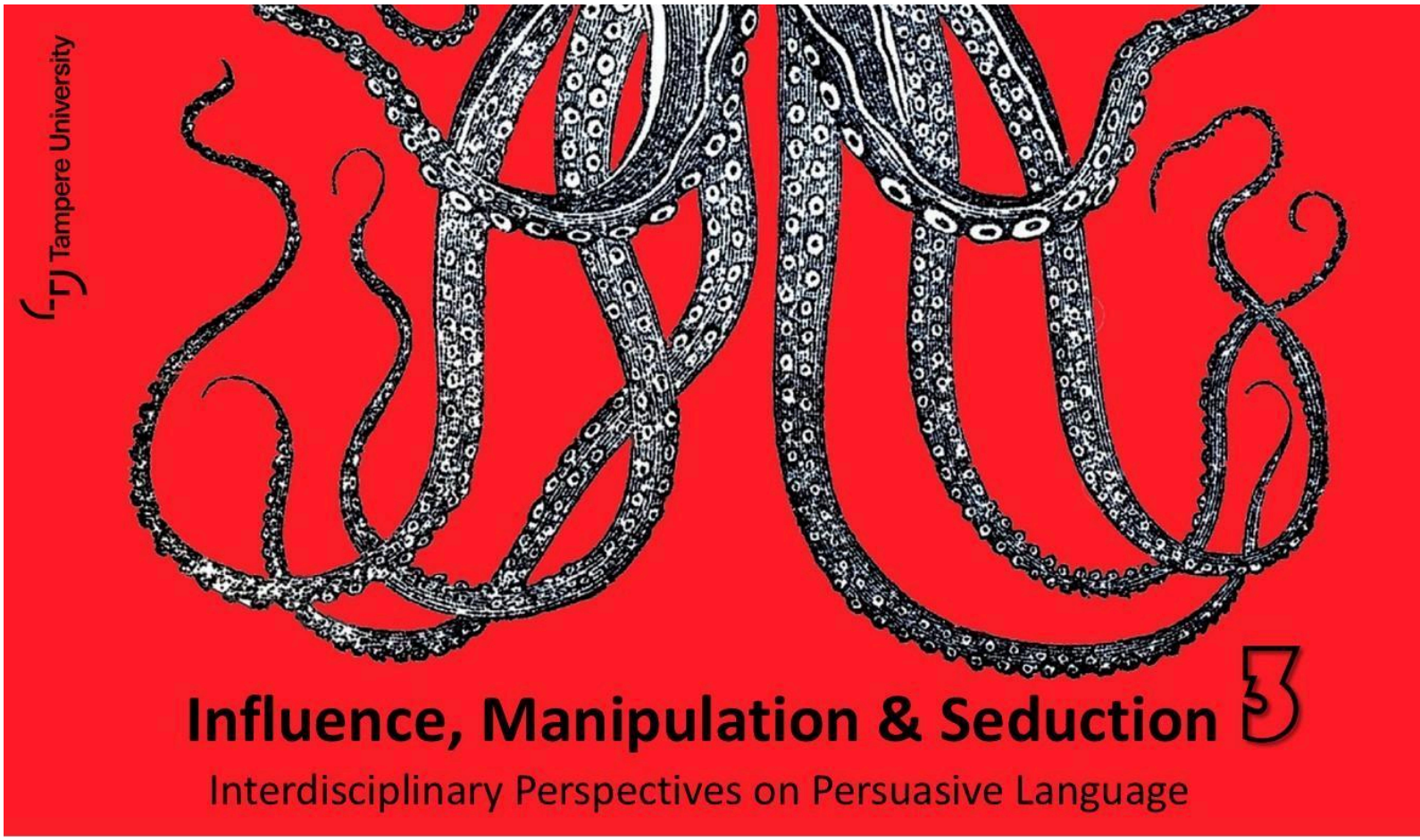


November 19–20, 2026

Tampere University, Finland

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Organizers

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Thursday, November 19

From 8:30	**Registration**
9:00-9:15	**Conference Opening**
9:15-10:15	**Keynote 1** **Chair: Sofia Rüdiger** **Charlotte Taylor** (University of Sussex) *Nostalgia and Persuasion*
10:15-10:30	**Coffee Break**
10:30-12:00	**Full Paper Session 1: Environmental Discourses** **Chair: Theresa Neumaier** **Daria Evangelista** (University of Amsterdam) **Corina Andone** (University of Amsterdam) *An Alternative Path to Manipulation: Awareness-Raising as a Function of Argumentation in Climate Crisis Discourse* **Maria Cristina Paganoni** (Università degli Studi di Milano) **Julia Mary Scilabra** (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) *From Tourist to Steward: Website and Instagram Persuasion in Nordic Regenerative Tourism* **Laura Ascone** (CNRS) *Claiming the Truth About Climate Change: Enunciative Strategies of Influence and Manipulation in* Telegram *"Re-Information" Channels*
12:00-13:00	**Lunch Break**
13:00-14:30	**Full Paper Session 2: Gender & Persuasion** **Chair: Frazer Heritage** **Eva Triebl** (University of Vienna) **Johann Wolfgang Unger** (Lancaster University) *Seduction by Proxy: Multimodal Persuasion and the Calibration of Desire in Spicy BookTok* **Letizia Paglialunga** (University of Turin) **Angela Zottola** (University of Turin) *Called to Feminism: Influence, Intimacy and Digital Activism on Instagram* **Benjamin Nangle** (KU Leuven) *Gendered Narratives and Reactionary Newsjacking in Far-Right Communication*
14:30-15:00	**Coffee Break**

15:00-16:30	**Full Paper Session 3: The Dark Side of Persuasion** **Chair: Isabel Picornell** **Amy Brown** (Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics) *When Persuasion Becomes Coercion: Linguistic Strategies of Manipulation in Stalking Discourse* **Dawn Archer** (Manchester Metropolitan University) *Does Notoriety Make Some Influencers Immune to "Cancel Culture"?* **Damien Lenoir** (Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (UPPA); ALTER) *Modal Auxiliaries as Tools of Persuasion: Interlocutive Strategies in US Anti-Vaccine Discourses*
16:30-16:45	**Coffee Break**
16:45-17:45	**Keynote 2** **Chair: Dominika Beneš Kováčová** **Massimiliano Demata** (University of Catania) *From the Great Replacement to Remigration: The Political Recontextualisation and Legitimation of Conspiracy Discourse*
17:45-18:00	**Short Break**
18:00-20:00	**Lightning Talks & Poster Reception**

Friday, November 20

From 8:30	**Registration**
9:00-10:30	**Full Paper Session 4: Religion & Politics** **Chair: Justina Urbonaitė** **Theresa Neumaier** (TU Dortmund University) *Persuasive Language in Discourse of Exorcism and Deliverance* **Ursula Lutzky** (Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien) *"Fast, Transparent, and Trustworthy": How UK Financial Institutions Are Tempting Customers Into Debt* **Frazer Heritage** (Manchester Metropolitan University) *From Headlines to Hansard: The Discursive Legitimation of Transphobic Hate Groups and Their Evaluation in Parliamentary Discourse*
10:30-11:00	**Coffee Break**
11:00-12:00	**Keynote 3** **Chair: Daria Dayter** **Katarina Pettersson** (University of Helsinki) *The Seduction of Victimhood: Persuasion, Identity, and Polarisation*
12:00-13:00	**Lunch Break**
13:00-14:00	**Full Paper Session 5: Influencers** **Chair: Svetlana Filon** **Hanna Limatius** (University of Helsinki) *Eyeshadow and Equality: Social and Political Messaging in Beauty and Fashion Influencers' Instagram Posts* **Dominika Beneš Kováčová** (Masaryk University) *'Where's Your F*cking Fight?!': The Performance of Face-Threatening Speech Acts by Manosphere Influencers*
14:00-14:30	**Coffee Break**
14:30-15:30	**Full Paper Session 6: Persuasion & AI** **Chair: Ursula Lutzky** **Sonja Tastula** (Tampere University) *Machine-Made Persuasion: A Genre-Based Approach to AI-Generated Cover Letters* **Thomas C. Messerli** (University of Reading) *Persuading the Other: Directives in Human-AI Interaction*

15:30-16:00	**Coffee Break**
16:00-17:30	**Full Paper Session 7: Culinary Persuasion** **Chair: Sonja Tastula** **Martina Irsara** (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano) *More than a Menu: Values as Persuasive Resources on Michelin Chefs' Websites* **Justina Urbonaitė** (Vilnius University) *"It's Like Having a Huge Car Battery to Run on Versus a Little AAA Battery": Metaphor as an Implicit Argumentative Resource in YouTube Nutrition Discourse* **Mariya Hristova** (Bielefeld University) *Metaphor and Persuasion in Wine Advertising*
17:30-17:45	**Conference Closing**
19:00-21:00	**Conference Dinner**

List of Lightning Talk Presenters (alphabetical order)

Olga Andreevskikh (Tampere Universities)
"It's As If You Can't Go a Day Without Making Life Worse for Women in Russia": Discursive Resistance Against Anti-Gender Politics in Contemporary Russophone Media

Caroline Willum Bech (Syddansk Universitet; University of Southern Denmark)
Influencing Young Danes' Nicotine Use by Fostering Open Dialogues: A Digital Conversational Card Game

Lucrezia Davitti (University of Florence)
Maria Graziano (Lund University Humanities Lab)
Alessandro Panunzi (University of Florence)
Persuasive Implicitness in Italian Political Rallies: A Multimodal Perspective

Svetlana Filon (Tampere Universities)
Persuasive Discursive Practices on BlueSky and X

Jana Hallová (Masaryk University)
"Grok, Is This True?": Examination of AI-Driven Disinformation and Chatbot Manipulation on Twitter (X)

Isabella Martini (University of Florence)
Persuading Public Opinion: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis of the Midwives Act Campaign in Edwardian Letters to the Editor

Jana Pelclová (Masaryk University)
A Multimodal Conceptualization of Voice in Advertising Discourse

Ruben Peralta-Rivera (Universidad Autonoma de Baja California)
Pedro Fernández-Ruíz (Universidad Autonoma de Baja California)
Pause Behavior and Discourse-Marker Variation in Publicly Scrutinized Discourse

Hanna Rautajoki (Tampere University)
Political Poetics as a Means of Persuasive Opinion Formation

Konstantin Sulimenko (Charles University in Prague)
Persuasion by Style: Detecting Anti-Establishment Media through SVM-Based Grammatical Classification

Isabelle Suremann (Zurich University of Applied Sciences)
Fake News, Cancel Culture, and the Limits of the Sayable: Towards a Theory of Discourse on Discourse

Lea Johanna Wagner (Saarland University)
A Linguistic Analysis of Declarations of War from the Early Modern Period to the Modern Era

Aikaterini Xerovasila (University of Amsterdam)
Menno Reijven (University of Amsterdam)
Corina Andone (University of Amsterdam)
Jean Wagemans (University of Amsterdam)
Persuasion through Institutional Identity Appeals

Poster

Aurora Tervahauta (University of Turku)
Debating Medical Identity and Authority in Early Modern English Polemical Texts

Keynotes

Nostalgia and Persuasion

Charlotte Taylor (University of Sussex)

Legitimation lies at the heart of discursive persuasion because, as Van Leeuwen (2007: 93) put it, legitimation essentially "adds the answer, sometimes explicitly, sometimes more obliquely, to the question 'Why' – 'Why should we do this?' and 'Why should we do this in this way?'". In this plenary paper, I discuss nostalgia as a powerful rhetorical device which can orient social actions through a) *mythopoetic legitimation*, understood as "a form of legitimation through history or, more specifically, through narratives of history that are taken as truth and accepted as canonical stories that are the bedrock of social groupings" (Bennett 2022: 371), and b) *affective legitimation* which recognises that "emotions are key in the legitimization process, because they condition and prepare the audience to receive proposals and courses of actions. Emotions skew the audience towards accepting and supporting the proposal of the social actor, who has triggered the emotions in the first place" (Reyes 2011: 785). I argue that the power of nostalgia comes from this dual legitimatory function, and the dual nature of nostalgia itself. Existing research on nostalgia is largely split between positive views of the individual nostalgia as a coping mechanism which generates positive affectivity, enhances self-regard and strengthens social bonds (Wildschut et al. 2006), and more negative views relating to the impact of collective nostalgia, as for instance in Smeekes (2015) who finds national nostalgia correlates with out-group prejudice.

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From the Great Replacement to Remigration: The Political Recontextualisation and Legitimation of Conspiracy Discourse

Massimiliano Demata (University of Catania)

Conspiracy theories are often considered false beliefs circulating at the margins of rational political or scientific debate. Yet they have long been regarded as inherently political because of their anti-systemic character and have frequently been exploited by populist parties and leaders (e.g., Bergmann 2025). More recently, however, some have acquired a new political significance as they are transformed and recontextualised within apparently legitimate programmes of political action.

This plenary examines this transformation through the Great Replacement conspiracy theory (Demata 2025b) and its relationship with the growing prominence of 'remigration' in European far-right politics. Drawing on a corpus of recent public texts issued by European right-wing parties and politicians, it explores how deliberate demographic substitution is constructed as a key existential problem to which remigration is presented as a reasonable, even necessary, solution. The conspiracy does not disappear: its assumptions are selectively reformulated through seemingly pragmatic language about national survival and demographic management. This shift from conspiratorial diagnosis to political prescription gives exclusionary ethnonationalist objectives the appearance of policy rationality and common sense.

The plenary builds on research into the mainstreaming of far-right narratives (Ekman 2022, Hernández Aguilar 2026, Langer et al. 2026) and on an understanding of conspiracy theories as self-sustaining discourses constructing alternative accounts of social reality (Demata et al. 2022). It investigates how conspiratorial claims are recontextualised within party-political discourse and remediated across media environments. Central to this process is *epistemic masquerade* (Demata 2025a), through which conspiratorial claims assume the appearance and authority of legitimate knowledge. The talk explores how framing demographic change as an existential threat makes exceptional measures seem defensible, while linguistic moderation obscures continuities with more openly extremist formulations.

Finally, the plenary addresses the relationship between conspiratorial discourse and political violence. Great Replacement narratives have figured in ideological justifications of racist terrorist attacks (Davis 2025). Although their circulation cannot be equated with a direct cause of violence, conspiratorial constructions of threat may facilitate radicalisation and widen the boundaries of politically acceptable exclusion. The danger, I suggest, is not simply that conspiracy theories persuade believers, but that their recontextualisation can make conspiratorial assumptions persuasive within apparently ordinary democratic debate.

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The Seduction of Victimhood: Persuasion, Identity, and Polarisation

Katarina Pettersson (University of Helsinki)

How does persuasive language move from influence to polarisation? This talk argues that victimhood can be a powerful persuasive resource because it offers groups innocence, moral authority, and entitlement to act. Rather than treating persuasion primarily as the transmission of arguments, I approach it as identity work accomplished through language.

Drawing on Reicher et al.'s (2008) Social Identity Model of Collective Hate, I trace five processes through which intergroup divisions can escalate: defining an ingroup, defining an outgroup, constructing the outgroup as a threat, representing the ingroup as uniquely good, and representing harm to the outgroup as a virtue.

I illustrate these processes across a discursive ecosystem encompassing political elites, social media influencers, everyday discourse, and radical online communities, drawing particularly on contemporary debates around gender, misogyny, and polarisation. Examples include political rhetoric, manosphere discourse, incel communities, and interviews with young adults.

I argue that persuasion is not simply about changing what people think, but about who they are persuaded to become. Across different levels of discourse, victimhood can transform individual grievances into collective identities, reshape moral boundaries, and make hostility appear reasonable or necessary. The talk illuminates how victimhood can provide a pathway from persuasion to polarisation.

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Full Papers

Full Paper Session 1: Environmental Discourses
Chair: Theresa Neumaier

Daria Evangelista (University of Amsterdam)
Corina Andone (University of Amsterdam)
An Alternative Path to Manipulation: Awareness-Raising as a Function of Argumentation in Climate Crisis Discourse

Maria Cristina Paganoni (Università degli Studi di Milano)
Julia Mary Scilabra (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
From Tourist to Steward: Website and Instagram Persuasion in Nordic Regenerative Tourism

Laura Ascone (CNRS)
Claiming the Truth About Climate Change: Enunciative Strategies of Influence and Manipulation in Telegram *"Re-Information" Channels*

An Alternative Path to Manipulation: Awareness-Raising as a Function of Argumentation in Climate Crisis Discourse

Daria Evangelista (University of Amsterdam)
Corina Andone (University of Amsterdam)

The present study explores how argumentation employed in public discourse has the potential to raise awareness as an alternative path to manipulation. Climate crisis communication offers a particularly revealing field to explore this function of argumentation, as it frequently seeks not only to defend claims, but also to make audiences aware of environmental risks, their implications, and the urgency of intervention.

The study has a two-fold aim. First, following a functional approach to argumentation (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984: 7), we conceptualise and explain awareness-raising as a distinct function of argumentation and identify and explain its constituent subfunctions of informing the audience and prompting action on the part of the addressees. Second, with a linguistic approach to argumentation (see van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck Henkemans 2007), we investigate the linguistic realisation of the awareness-raising function in public climate crisis discourse on a corpus of Italian-language climate crisis texts drawn from institutional websites, environmental campaigns, and online newspapers from Italy and Switzerland (ClimIta; Evangelista 2026).

The research shows that awareness-raising argumentation is realised through four means: knowledge dissemination, questioning established opinions or political decisions, suggesting decision-making, and guiding behaviour through best practices. The linguistic characteristics aimed at reaching these goals suggest that, instead of leveraging on manipulation or resulting in polarisation, argumentation aimed at awareness-raising could be a viable option in order to create a common ground in public discourse without depleting it of its critical reflections.

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From Tourist to Steward: Website and Instagram Persuasion in Nordic Regenerative Tourism

Maria Cristina Paganoni (Università degli Studi di Milano)
Julia Mary Scilabra (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

Regenerative tourism has recently emerged as a transformative paradigm that extends beyond the principles of sustainable tourism. Rather than merely minimising the negative impacts of travel, it seeks to generate positive social, cultural, and environmental outcomes by encouraging visitors to contribute actively to the well-being of local communities and ecosystems (Fusté-Forné & Hussain 2025). Achieving this shift depends not only on the tourism practices promoted as regenerative but also on the persuasive communication through which these practices are presented and the tourist's role is redefined from consumer to steward.

Building on recent analyses of platform-specific persuasive strategies to construct destination imaginaries and influence travel behaviour (Mattei 2026), this paper examines how the official websites and Instagram accounts of Nordic National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) frame regeneration. Against the backdrop of overtourism, environmental protection, and Indigenous rights, it explores how tourists are discursively encouraged to move from passive consumers to responsible stewards while local and Indigenous communities are represented as key actors in the co-creation of resilient destinations.

The multimodal corpus comprises webpages and Instagram posts from *Visit Finland*, *Visit Norway*, and *Visit Sweden*, together with communication produced by the *Saami Council*, all collected between May and September 2026. Drawing on corpus linguistics and digital pragmatics (Rüdiger & Dayter 2020, Scott 2023), the study identifies and compares persuasive strategies deployed across the two platforms to promote regenerative tourism and its values. More specifically, evaluative language, stance, audience engagement, and multimodal resources are examined for their role in constructing a rhetoric of regeneration.

The paper contributes to research on digital persuasion by extending previous work on tourism communication to the emerging paradigm of regeneration. More broadly, it advances understanding of how different digital genres shape visitor identities and communicate values of responsibility, stewardship, and meaningful engagement with local communities.

Data

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Claiming the Truth About Climate Change: Enunciative Strategies of Influence and Manipulation in *Telegram* 'Re-Information' Channels

Laura Ascone (CNRS)

Framed within digital communication and its pragmatic peculiarities (Marcoccia 2016), this study examines how *Telegram* – as a participatory framework (Goffman 1981) – serves as a fertile ground for the seduction and influence of audiences. Since 2013, *Telegram* has become a primary hub for users who perceive mainstream media as deceitful, facilitating the proliferation of 're-information' channels, where content creators position themselves as the exclusive revealers of 'the real truth' (Stephan & Vauchez 2021). By distorting climate-related information to align with specific ideological frameworks, these channels employ subtle strategies of influence to delegitimise scientific consensus. We argue that the 're-information' label functions as a seductive tool, inviting users to believe they are joining a truth-seeking community while being exposed to orchestrated disinformation.

While the circulation of disinformation is a well-documented phenomenon across all major social networks, the mechanisms of its propagation differ on *Telegram*. Unlike profile-based platforms where identity acts as a vector for trust, *Telegram*'s affordances such as technical opacity and lack of public directories, create an environment where these narratives circulate without the friction of platform-wide moderation or the traceability typical of centralised social networks.

This study examines the enunciative devices characterising climate-skeptical discourses. Our analysis focuses on 1,285 comments across 61 discussion threads from six *Telegram* channels identified via the European project AI4TRUST. Drawing on argumentation theory (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1988, Amossy 2010) and enunciative linguistics (Ducrot 1980, Maingueneau 1991, Charaudeau 1992), we demonstrate how these channels leverage rhetorical seduction and discursive manipulation to claim the 'truth'. Integrating technodiscursive (Paveau 2017) and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015), we map how users appropriate and manipulate information to craft a compelling, counter-hegemonic identity, revealing how *Telegram*'s specific affordances influence the pragmatics of climate change misinformation.

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Full Paper Session 2: Gender & Persuasion
Chair: Frazer Heritage

Eva Triebl (University of Vienna)
Johann Wolfgang Unger (Lancaster University)
Seduction by Proxy: Multimodal Persuasion and the Calibration of Desire in Spicy BookTok

Letizia Paglialunga (University of Turin)
Angela Zottola (University of Turin)
Called to Feminism: Influence, Intimacy and Digital Activism on Instagram

Benjamin Nangle (KU Leuven)
Gendered Narratives and Reactionary Newsjacking in Far-Right Communication

Seduction by Proxy: Multimodal Persuasion and the Calibration of Desire in Spicy BookTok

Eva Triebl (University of Vienna)
Johann Wolfgang Unger (Lancaster University)

In 'Spicy' BookTok short-form videos, female-presenting consumers of erotic fiction position themselves as experientially authoritative readers who mediate between erotic fiction and communities of readers (Carr 2010). They accomplish this by deploying linguistic, embodied and platform-afforded semiotic resources to constitute 'spicy' fiction as an object of embodied experience (Gibson 2020) while enacting multimodal affective stances toward it (Zima et al. 2025), thereby performing expertise for social media audiences (Zappavigna 2019). The paper conceptualizes recurrent multimodal affective stances as metapragmatic calibration practices (Hübler & Bublitz 2007, Haugh 2018) through which creators model and reflexively frame appropriate ways of experiencing and evaluating erotic fiction.

The persuasive work performed by these creators is ideologically and commercially consequential. Although Spicy BookTok is often associated with liberal and progressive communities, many of the texts it celebrates reproduce highly hierarchical, cis-heteronormative relationship dynamics while simultaneously functioning as marketable cultural commodities. The study proposes that these recurrent multimodal packages constitute evaluative registers that render questions of gender, sexuality and power interactionally peripheral while implicitly normalizing constructions of desire, sexual relationships, and appropriate reader identities.

To identify recurrent evaluative registers across videos and examine the tacit constructions they presuppose, the study draws on a manually annotated multimodal dataset of 20 Spicy BookTok videos. Based on systematic coding and retrieval of linguistic, embodied and platform-specific resources, the analysis identifies and functionally categorizes recurrent

multimodal calibration practices, including scalar evaluations, fiction–reality calibrations, and embodied contrasts in affective response. The findings suggest that persuasion in Spicy BookTok operates through the metapragmatic normalization of appropriate reader responses. By repeatedly invoking the boundary between fantasy and reality, creators render particular constructions of desire legitimate forms of shared enjoyment while simultaneously managing their moral accountability. In this sense, persuasion emerges as the interactional cultivation of recognizable ways of feeling, evaluating and engaging with erotic fiction.

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Called to Feminism: Influence, Intimacy and Digital Activism on Instagram

Letizia Paglialunga (University of Turin)
Angela Zottola (University of Turin)

Digital feminism has become one of the key ways in which feminist politics is made visible, circulated and contested in contemporary public discourse (Jouët 2018). At the same time, social media have consolidated forms of influence based on authenticity, intimacy and relatable self-presentation, making influencer culture a central site for studying everyday forms of persuasion (Riboni 2020). This paper explores how self-identified feminist influencers from Italian, UK and US contexts communicate feminism and how their audiences position themselves in response.

Research on digital feminism has shown that online activism is both performative and multimodal, relying on storytelling and visibility to challenge dominant media narratives (Clark 2016). At the same time, this visibility is also produced through the linguistic and discursive practices by which activists promote their causes and popularise emancipatory discourses online (Zottola 2024). Building on work on digital feminist activism and activist discourse, the paper asks how feminist influencers construct influence and persuasion around feminist issues.

Methodologically, the study combines Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA; Lazar 2007) with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL; Halliday & Matthiessen 2014) to examine captions. Posts are coded for event categories, process types, participant roles and feminist positioning, tracing how influencers represent themselves and their audiences. A sample of audience comments is analysed through Appraisal theory (Martin & White 2005), drawing on Inwood and Zappavigna's (2021) model of ambient affiliation in YouTube comment discourse, to

examine how commenters align, affiliate, resist or negotiate the stance proposed by each post.

Preliminary findings suggest that digital feminist influence is produced through three main strategies: educational, personal and political. The comments allow us to observe which of these strategies generate agreement or contestation. The paper argues that Instagram feminism persuades not only by presenting feminist claims but by inviting audiences to feel addressed, take a position and recognise feminism as a lens for interpreting everyday life and social structures.

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Gendered Narratives and Reactionary Newsjacking in Far-Right Communication

Benjamin Nangle (KU Leuven)

This study examines reactionary newsjacking (the strategic appropriation of viral events to lock interpretation into pre-existing ideological frames) as a persuasive mechanism through which far-right actors deploy gendered narratives to manufacture affective urgency and ideological coherence. Drawing on multimodal discourse analysis of 2,602 Instagram Reels collected via an event-centred research persona method, the study identifies how stable gendered archetypes (the endangered woman, the racialised predator, the warrior-protector, the feminised traitor) are rapidly attached to emergent incidents involving migration, violence, and cultural conflict, converting disparate events into emotionally resonant 'proof' of civilisational threat. A three-tier coding framework, applied across a focal subset of 33 prominent newsjacked cases (including the 'Scottish Axe Girl' hoax, the murder of Iryna Zarutska, and 'grooming gangs' narratives), traces the persuasive techniques through which gendered affect, platform affordances, and memetic repetition combine to manufacture credibility, urgency, and resistance to correction. The analysis foregrounds the manipulative logic underpinning this process: newsjacking functions as a form of attention-hacking that exploits algorithmic amplification and the 'cognitive openings' created by breaking news, while gendered framing supplies ready-made moral clarity that renders fact-checking ineffective and even counterproductive. The study situates these tactics within a longer history of fascist persuasion, arguing that contemporary digital gendered scripts constitute a post-fascist inheritance whose manipulative force is intensified (rather than diminished) by platform-native aesthetics, plausible deniability, and recommender-system reinforcement. Theoretically, the

article refines newsjacking as a gendered persuasion strategy operating through repetition, affective intensity, and recursive feedback rather than argumentation. The findings carry implications for understanding how manipulation campaigns exploit emotionally charged social categories to evade scrutiny, suggesting that effective counter-strategies must attend to the entanglement of gender, virality, and algorithmic visibility rather than treating disinformation correction as a purely factual exercise.

Full Paper Session 3: The Dark Side of Persuasion
Chair: Isabel Picornell

Amy Brown (Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics)
When Persuasion Becomes Coercion: Linguistic Strategies of Manipulation in Stalking Discourse

Dawn Archer (Manchester Metropolitan University)
Does Notoriety Make Some Influencers Immune to "Cancel Culture"?

Damien Lenoir (Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (UPPA); ALTER)
Modal Auxiliaries as Tools of Persuasion: Interlocutive Strategies in US Anti-Vaccine Discourses

When Persuasion Becomes Coercion: Linguistic Strategies of Manipulation in Stalking Discourse

Amy Brown (Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics)

Research on persuasive language has traditionally focused on institutional domains such as politics, advertising, and media communication, often conceptualising persuasion as a neutral or strategic attempt to influence beliefs and behaviours. However, less attention has been paid to contexts in which persuasion becomes coercive, harmful, and psychologically driven. This paper addresses this gap by examining stalker communications as a form of interpersonal persuasive discourse, characterised by manipulation, control, and the erosion of autonomy.

This study analyses a corpus of written and spoken stalker communications using Appraisal Analysis (Martin & White 2005) to systematically identify patterns of evaluation and stance. These linguistic features are then mapped onto the DSM-5 Alternative Model for Personality Disorders (AMPD) to explore how persuasive strategies may be shaped by underlying psychopathic traits and personality pathology. In doing so, this research bridges linguistic and psychological approaches to offer a more integrated account of manipulative discourse.

Findings indicate that stalker communications are underpinned by recurring persuasive strategies, including the construction of pseudo-intimacy, the reframing of reality, and the use of threats and emotional pressure to influence behaviour. These strategies function not simply to persuade, but to override resistance and assert control, blurring the boundary between persuasion and coercion. The analysis further demonstrates how specific linguistic patterns correlate with traits associated with antagonism and disinhibition, suggesting that personality structure plays a role in shaping persuasive behaviour.

By situating stalking discourse within the broader study of persuasion, this research extends existing models to account for harmful and pathological forms of influence. It contributes to interdisciplinary discussions at the intersection of forensic linguistics and interpersonal

communication, and highlights the importance of recognising coercive persuasion as a distinct and socially significant communicative phenomenon.

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Does Notoriety Make Some Influencers Immune to "Cancel Culture"?

Dawn Archer (Manchester Metropolitan University)

In the past few years, several prominent influencers have faced serious criminal charges including (but not limited to) human trafficking. Some – like Brazil's Kat Torres – have subsequently been found guilty and imprisoned. Others – like the UK's Andrew Tate (and his brother, Tristram) – are currently facing legal investigations, criminal and civil, in Romania, the UK and the USA. Following her conviction, in July 2024, Torres's Instagram profile was deleted from the platform. Major social media networks have taken steps, over the years, to ban Andrew Tate too. In his case, though, it has been for violating their policies on things like hate speech (Miranda 2022), rather than him being the victim of 'cancel culture' or because of being found guilty of a crime. Tate nonetheless remains extremely active on the 'anti-cancel culture' streaming platform Rumble (Elms 2022) and has a presence on several internet platforms. They include X, thanks to Tate's account being reinstated by Elon Musk in 2022; Instagram, thanks to fan pages, archive pages, etc.; and YouTube, thanks to fan-run channels (Goodness 2026). In this presentation, I ask two inter-related questions. First, whether it is Tate's *notoriety* (Archer & Heritage 2026) that helps him to avoid the kinds of cancel culture discussed by Blitvich (2024): namely, being reduced to a single perceived moral failing and negatively branded as 'bad'; becoming the target of 'moral' emotional responses, especially outrage and indignation, in consequence; and ultimately being ostracised, resulting in (in- as well as out-)group exclusion. Secondly, what part (if any) is also played by Tate's ability to manipulate his fans' perceptual lens, aka 'reality paradigms', especially (Archer & Heritage 2026)?

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Modal Auxiliaries as Tools of Persuasion: Interlocutive Strategies in US Anti-Vaccine Discourses

Damien Lenoir (Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (UPPA); ALTER)

This study examines how modal auxiliaries interact with the positioning of the addressee to legitimize controversial claims and contribute to the construction of speaker authority in vaccine-skeptical discourse. This study shows how grammatical forms are not neutral vehicles of meaning but active agents in the persuasion process.

Focusing on "the listener role in the sense-making process" (Douay 2001: 80) and interlocutor agreement on what is said, I draw on Douay and Roulland's (2014) *Theory of the Interlocutive Relation* (TIR) to analyze a self-compiled corpus of English-language anti-vaccine texts (blog/website posts; 6+ million words). Three persuasive strategies rooted in modal configurations emerge:

> 1) 'An alternative truth': modals in this configuration are used to introduce polemical theories, presented as plausible yet debatable, thus constructing 'relative and alternative truths'.
>
> 2) 'A necessary alternative' (see U. Eco's 'the necessity of the possible'): modals in this configuration do not present the speaker as the source of judgement/epistemic evaluation (contrary to what is usually admitted), and present the theory as the only rational option, thereby closing debate.
>
> 3) 'The obvious necessity': in this configuration, modals frame claims as self-evident truths, indicating immediate consensus between the interlocutors.

These strategies ascribe a different place to the addressee in the sense-making process, but they are all used to persuade the addressee and, ultimately, construct or reinforce group identity against the 'elite' or mainstream discourses.

By analyzing modals as interlocutive markers, I take a side step from some of the common views about modals. For example, it is argued that *may* does not express uncertainty and does not open up debate by recognizing that alternative views are possible (contrary to *can*) but closes it by cancelling those views. In addition, all of the past forms of the modals are not attenuated forms, quite the contrary in fact.

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Full Paper Session 4: Religion & Politics
Chair: Justina Urbonaitė

Theresa Neumaier (TU Dortmund University)
Persuasive Language in Discourse of Exorcism and Deliverance

Ursula Lutzky (Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien)
"Fast, Transparent, and Trustworthy": How UK Financial Institutions Are Tempting Customers Into Debt

Frazer Heritage (Manchester Metropolitan University)
From Headlines to Hansard: The Discursive Legitimation of Transphobic Hate Groups and Their Evaluation in Parliamentary Discourse

Persuasive Language in Discourse of Exorcism and Deliverance

Theresa Neumaier (TU Dortmund University)

In traditional religions and newly emerging religious movements alike, the recent years have witnessed an increasing demand for forms of ritual purification and deliverance. Videos of exorcisms are easily accessible online and highly popular with viewers, which leads to this type of content being produced more frequently. This, in turn, makes topics such as devils, possession, or demons more salient in discourse, which leads to a greater demand for exorcisms – the result is a self-accelerating feedback loop (Giordan & Possami 2018). Exorcisms can be made available online as recordings (e.g., via YouTube or Facebook) or they are streamed to a live audience, using platforms such as Zoom or Instagram. In any case, however, the motives underlying the exorcism are usually not limited to religious or spiritual purification but also include commercial and political aspects.

This paper examines how the language surrounding exorcism is used to link these motives. Using a discourse-historical approach (e.g., Wodak 2015), I analyse how US-based Catholic exorcists use persuasive language in online deliverance prayer sessions. The paper shows that, first, the act of conducting an exorcism itself is legitimised by being presented as both archaic and powerful as well as modern and medicalised (see Bower & Doole 2022). Further, discourses of exorcism and deliverance serve to reproduce not only conservative social norms but also right-wing ideologies and, thus, can be regarded an act of spiritual warfare against ideologies and institutions not corresponding to the norms set by Christian nationalists (e.g., Gunn 2004, O'Donnell 2020, Possami & Gower 2025).

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"Fast, Transparent, and Trustworthy": How UK Financial Institutions Are Tempting Customers Into Debt

Ursula Lutzky (Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien)

Financial communication is still an emerging field within the wider business communication landscape. Indeed, few studies have explored the language use of financial institutions and how they discuss lending, debt and the cost-of-living crisis through their own digital outlets. Studies in this field include, for example, Brookes and Harvey's (2017) research on the language of pawnbroker apps and Price and McIntyre's (2018) conference presentation on the language of predatory lending, which found that the language used by payday lenders could negatively affect borrowers.

Given the central importance of debt, finance and money management to people's day-to-day lives and recent financial pressures after the Covid-19 pandemic, this paper aims to gain further understanding about the persuasive communication of financial institutions in the UK. To this end, it engages in a corpus linguistic analysis of the Financial Institutions and Payday Lenders (FINPAL) corpus, a 1-million-word corpus comprising website data of two types of institutions in the UK: established financial advisors, such as banks, as well as payday lenders.

The results of the corpus linguistic analysis provide new insights into the way financial institutions advertise their products on their websites by sharing information on different types of loans and offering advice on financial challenges, such as debt and the cost-of-living crisis. They may inform future recommendations regarding the persuasive rhetoric employed, with a view to protecting the public from threats to their financial well-being. At the same time, the findings of this research can be used to improve stakeholders' financial literacy and assist them in making informed decisions regarding money, instead of being tempted into debt.

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From Headlines to Hansard: The Discursive Legitimation of Transphobic Hate Groups and Their Evaluation in Parliamentary Discourse

Frazer Heritage (Manchester Metropolitan University)

This paper examines how media representations of transphobic activist organisations legitimise transphobia and shape political debate surrounding the lives and rights of trans people in the UK. It is situated within the broader study of the transnational 'anti-gender' movement, a right-wing coalition that seeks to roll back protections relating to gender equality and LGBTQIA+ rights while promoting essentialist understandings of sex and gender (see

Butler 2024). Such ideologies have tangible consequences for women and LGBTQ+ people, with the mass media playing an important role in their circulation and legitimisation. Scholarship has long argued that the press functions as a form of 'soft power', influencing public opinion and manufacturing consent for dominant political agendas (e.g. Herman & Chomsky 1988, Fairclough 1992).

The study forms part of a collaboration with Amnesty International (Amnesty 2026). Drawing on a month-by-month dataset spanning January 2020 to April 2025, it analyses reporting in four major British newspapers (*The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Guardia*n, and *The Telegraph*) using methods associated with Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) (Gillings et al. 2023, Heritage & Taylor 2024). The analysis focuses on the discursive construction of *Sex Matters* and the *LGB Alliance*, examining how media coverage positions these organisations within public debate. It argues that both groups are routinely framed as credible human rights organisations and afforded authority to comment on issues affecting trans people, while trans-inclusive organisations are comparatively marginalised.

The findings are triangulated with data from *Hansard*, the official record of debates in the UK Parliament. Although parliamentary representations are more varied than those found in the press, favourable references frequently uncritically endorse these organisations' positions. The paper argues that such processes of discursive legitimisation operate across media and political institutions, with important implications for how transgender rights are enshrined, public understandings of transgender rights, and public policy.

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Full Paper Session 5: Influencers
Chair: Svetlana Filon

Hanna Limatius (University of Helsinki)
Eyeshadow and Equality: Social and Political Messaging in Beauty and Fashion Influencers' Instagram Posts

Dominika Beneš Kováčová (Masaryk University)
*'Where's Your F*cking Fight?!': The Performance of Face-Threatening Speech Acts by Manosphere Influencers*

Eyeshadow and Equality: Social and Political Messaging in Beauty and Fashion Influencers' Instagram Posts

Hanna Limatius (University of Helsinki)

This paper investigates how social media influencers incorporate social and political messaging into beauty and fashion content on Instagram. In particular, I am interested in how influencers combine self-portraits such as 'selfies' and 'outfit of the day' photographs with discussions on social and political issues. As previous research has illustrated, despite the common perception of selfies as 'frivolous', influencers' self-images are often carefully produced performances that can be both strategic and subversive (e.g., Abidin 2016, Murray 2021).

The data for the study consist of Instagram posts by six Finnish beauty and fashion influencers. Two datasets were collected from the Instagram accounts of the same group of influencers in 2020 and 2023. My analytical approach is qualitative, and I utilise methods of critical, multimodal discourse analysis, seeking to identify meanings constructed through the interplay of various linguistic and visual resources (e.g., Jäntti et al. 2018, Huang et al. 2020).

In my analysis, I view the influencers' social media communication through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) work on *heteroglossia*. Heteroglossia can be defined as the "coexistence, combination, alternation, and juxtaposition of ways of using the communicative and expressive resources language/s offer us" (Leppänen et al. 2009: 1082). My goal is to investigate how influencers "mobilize heteroglossic resources" to construct particular social positions related to gender, politics and commercial influencer culture (Leppänen & Westinen 2022: 134).

The results of the study show that influencers produce Instagram posts that feature distinct, even contradictory political and commercial discourses. Activist messages are often articulated indirectly, either through visual representations, or the incorporation of others' voices using elements such as quotes and hashtags. Through their carefully constructed posts, the influencers are able to engage in subtle persuasion, promoting specific values or political beliefs in ways that are consistent with their branding.

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'Where's Your F*cking Fight?!': The Performance of Face-Threatening Speech Acts by Manosphere Influencers

Dominika Beneš Kováčová (Masaryk University)

Previous research on the self-presentation of influencers demonstrates that influencers employ specific discursive practices that emphasize relatability and intimacy to build and maintain harmonious relationships with their followers (or the illusion thereof). These findings, however, seem to be contested by a specific group of influencers known as manosphere influencers who are also found to share content with potential rapport challenge orientation on their social media channels. To shed light on this form of self-presentation, this paper examines selected video-based social media posts that hold such rapport orientation and were shared by Andrew Tate, a controversial manosphere influencer, on his X account in 2025 and early 2026. Specifically, this paper draws on traditional speech act theory (Searle 1969) and previous research on speech acts performed by different manosphere groups (e.g., pick-up artists in Dayter & Rüdiger 2022, 2025; a manosphere discussion forum in Krendel 2023) to examine the speech acts performed in this material, the face aggravation and mitigation strategies that accompany them as well as their linguistic realisation. The analysis shows that face-threatening speech acts such as other-directed criticism, insults and threats play a central role in this content and that the influencer employs a relatively stable and recurrent set of formulations in their performance. Given their frequency and formulaicity, the performance of these speech acts is in this context understood to represent an act of strategic affective impoliteness. Additionally, the paper argues that this form of self-presentation exhibited by the manosphere influencer serves as 'locker room' talk (Gregory & Alsarve 2023) that fosters peer-group solidarity as well as employs narratives of hegemonic masculinities to attack and mock certain groups (e.g., men who fail to conform to the standards of 'alpha' masculinity, women, ethnic minorities).

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Full Paper Session 6: Persuasion & AI
Chair: Ursula Lutzky

Sonja Tastula (Tampere University)
Machine-Made Persuasion: A Genre-Based Approach to AI-Generated Cover Letters

Thomas C. Messerli (University of Reading)
Persuading the Other: Directives in Human-AI Interaction

Machine-Made Persuasion: A Genre-Based Approach to AI-Generated Cover Letters

Sonja Tastula (Tampere University)

Recent years have seen a rapid increase in AI-generated textual content. In the context of recruitment, such content has assumed the form of AI-generated cover letters, which have been discussed both in news media and recruitment agency reports. In this paper, I explore how large language models (LLMs) attempt to achieve the communicative purpose of a cover letter, i.e., to elicit an invitation to a job interview.

I approach this issue through the genre analysis framework where genres are regarded as communicative social actions used in particular situations to achieve a particular goal (Swales 1990). The analysis method is move analysis as proposed by Swales (1990), wherein a text is divided into moves, which are the rhetorical means that writers use to persuade the reader. Moves can further divide into steps, which are the strategies used to convey the message of a single move. The data comprises a total of 100 cover letters generated by GPT-5.4, Gemini 3, Opus 4.6, DeepSeek-V3, and Qwen3-Max.

The data suggests that AI-generated cover letters can consist of ten moves: *Greeting*, *Expressing intent*, *Providing justification*, *Expressing alignment*, *Referencing a CV*, *Soliciting contact*, *Offering additional information*, *Describing further actions*, *Building rapport*, and *Signature*. There is relatively little variation in the occurrence rates of these moves between the LLMs, and variation occurs only for a subset of the moves. This high degree of similarity and rigidity in the letters' rhetorical structures may contribute to their ineffectiveness as regards achieving their communicative purpose. Additionally, the results show that the rhetorical structure of the letters is linked to the position being applied for. LLMs may thus have different assumptions about the job-seeking cultures in different fields. This may indicate that the LLMs are unable to produce equally effective cover letters for different industries.

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Persuading the Other: Directives in Human-AI Interaction

Thomas C. Messerli (University of Reading)

To persuade is to attempt, by communicative means, to change another's beliefs, attitudes, or conduct (Lakoff 1982). Understood as a speech act, persuasion is prototypically directive, an effort by the speaker to get the addressee to do something (Searle 1976); in interaction, persuasion is a relational accomplishment ratified by the addressee (see, e.g., Dayter & Messerli 2022). Human-AI interaction (HAI) foregrounds the bidirectionality of this directive force. The obvious persuader is the user: prompting, insisting, and repairing are attempts to make the artificial persuadee produce a wanted outcome. Yet the model itself is also designed to persuade; as a voice box speaking on behalf of the company that operates it, it recommends, steers, and evaluates the user's contributions, at times sycophantically, aligning with rather than informing the user (Sharma et al. 2024).

The HAI-setting gives rise to three questions:

1) Who persuades whom: how are persuasive moves distributed between user and model, and which markers index human and AI persuasion?

2) How does the model's persuasion, including its sycophantic variants, vary across generations and systems?

3) What is the uptake of attempts at persuasion by both interactants in subsequent turns?

The study draws on two corpora of naturally occurring HAI: SPAWC (Speech Acts in WildChat), English ChatGPT conversations sampled across five model generations (GPT-3.5 to o1), and SPALMSYS, a comparison corpus of open-weight chatbots. Persuasion is approached through IFIDs targeting requests and repair ('please', 'no, what I meant') and recommendation formulae ('I recommend', 'how about'), by speaker role and across AI models.

Preliminary findings indicate that persuasion is bidirectional but asymmetric: the model employs recommendation and directive formulae while users perform re-prompting practices. By treating both moves as persuasive language, the paper offers an interactional account of who influences whom in human-AI discourse, extending pragmatics to conversations with artificial others.

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Full Paper Session 7: Culinary Persuasion

Chair: Sonja Tastula

Martina Irsara (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano)
More than a Menu: Values as Persuasive Resources on Michelin Chefs' Websites

Justina Urbonaitė (Vilnius University)
"It's Like Having a Huge Car Battery to Run on Versus a Little AAA Battery": Metaphor as an Implicit Argumentative Resource in YouTube Nutrition Discourse

Mariya Hristova (Bielefeld University)
Metaphor and Persuasion in Wine Advertising

More than a Menu: Values as Persuasive Resources on Michelin Chefs' Websites

Martina Irsara (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano)

Chefs' websites constitute a form of persuasive tourism discourse in which language is strategically employed to influence perceptions, keep consumer's appetites wanting (Hansen 2008), and ultimately convert them into customers (Dann 2022). Since values shape decision-making (Maci & Spinzi 2025), examining how they are discursively mobilised provides insight into persuasion in gastronomic tourism.

This study investigates how seven Michelin three-star chefs from Italy, Switzerland, and Slovenia (Mantoflex 2025) construct persuasive culinary identities on their English-language websites. It explores how values associated with environmental sustainability, nature, and tradition establish authenticity and differentiate culinary personas (Cesiri 2019). Informed by selected concepts from the appraisal framework (Martin & White 2005), the analysis addresses two research questions: (1) How are values linguistically constructed on Michelin chefs' websites? (2) How are these values realised through explicit and implicit persuasive strategies? Adopting a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach, the analysis combines keyword and concordance analyses in Sketch Engine with qualitative discourse analysis (Baker 2006). Particular attention is devoted to one chef whose self-presentation foregrounds mountainous environments, providing a revealing case of environmental value construction.

The findings reveal two complementary modes of value construction. In the focal dataset, environmental sustainability is explicitly foregrounded through a wider lexical range of nouns referring to the natural environment (e.g. *mountain*, *nature*, *biodiversity*) and evaluative adjectives such as *sustainable* and *ethical*. In the remaining datasets, references to natural settings are largely descriptive and rarely accompanied by sustainability-oriented vocabulary. Values are also communicated implicitly through lexical patterns associated with temporality, place, and production, together with adjectives such as *traditional* and *authentic* and verbs denoting gradual processes (e.g. *develop*, *grow*, *mature*). The study demonstrates how chefs' websites transform values into persuasive resources, constructing culinary identities that encourage audiences to associate gastronomic excellence with broader ethical and cultural commitments.

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"It's Like Having a Huge Car Battery to Run on Versus a Little AAA Battery": Metaphor as an Implicit Argumentative Resource in YouTube Nutrition Discourse

Justina Urbonaitė (Vilnius University)

Metaphor has long been recognised as a multifunctional device that can facilitate explanation and education (Brown 2003, Littlemore 2017) while simultaneously shaping evaluation, argumentation, and persuasion (Schmid 1998, Charteris-Black 2011). In contemporary digital environments, communicating health advice through social media frequently relies on figurative strategies that blur the boundaries between education and persuasion. This paper examines how English-speaking health and fitness influencers on YouTube employ metaphor to promote the ketogenic diet and intermittent fasting. Treating metaphor as a resource that can simultaneously serve several functions, the study asks how it operates as an implicit argumentative resource in the construction of dietary authority and alternative nutritional 'truths'. The analysis draws on a corpus of highly viewed videos from popular YouTube channels and combines Steen's (2008) three-dimensional model of metaphor with contemporary approaches to multimodal metaphor (Forceville 2016, 2024). Preliminary findings indicate that influencers systematically employ anthropomorphic metaphors alongside metaphors of machinery, transport, fuel, household cleaning, and finance to explain complex metabolic processes while simultaneously using them as covert argumentative and legitimising devices (Macagno 2020, Macagno & Rossi 2021). In doing so, YouTubers frequently discredit mainstream nutritional science. Conventional carbohydrate-rich diets are represented as unstable fuel systems, corrosive substances, and forms of financial or bodily mismanagement, whereas fat adaptation and fasting are conceptualised through metaphors of clean energy, metabolic repair, and disciplined resource accumulation. Such metaphorical representations encourage audiences to infer that mainstream dietary advice is inherently flawed while positioning keto and fasting as biologically self-evident and rational. The paper concludes that metaphor functions as a covert persuasive mechanism that transforms contestable nutritional claims into seemingly self-evident common sense. By embedding evaluation in familiar everyday imagery, influencers compress scientific uncertainty, naturalise ideological assumptions about health, and strengthen the epistemic authority of alternative nutrition narratives in digital health communication.

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Metaphor and Persuasion in Wine Advertising

Mariya Hristova (Bielefeld University)

Wine advertising is a particularly rich site for examining how language is used to influence potential customers. This study investigates the use of metaphors in German wine advertising and explores how metaphors are used strategically as persuasive communication tool in a domain where direct taste description is highly limited.

The analysis is based on a corpus of 30 German wine advertisements (Ebrosia 2019), representing wines from Germany, France, and Portugal, including red, white, and rosé varieties. Using a qualitative approach, metaphors are identified and classified according to word class (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) and conceptual domain, with special attention to metaphors that attribute human qualities to wine (personification).

The results reveal a high density of metaphorical expressions (280 instances), with 35.7% explicitly ascribing human characteristics to wine. Verb metaphors dominate and frequently construct wine as an active social agent that seduces, enchants, convinces, or triumphs. Noun metaphors position wine as a companion, body, or performer, while adjective metaphors evoke aesthetic pleasure, intimacy, and emotional resonance. These patterns demonstrate that wine is not primarily described but staged as an experience designed to emotionally engage the consumer.

The study argues that metaphors in wine advertising are used strategically as instruments of influence. They bridge lexical gaps in taste description while constructing emotionally charged imaginaries that encourage consumption. By transforming sensory absence into imaginative presence, metaphor becomes a key persuasive device in advertising discourse.

Lightning Talks

"It's As If You Can't Go a Day Without Making Life Worse for Women in Russia": Discursive Resistance Against Anti-Gender Politics in Contemporary Russophone Media

Olga Andreevskikh (Tampere Universities)

In recent years, the political influence of the transnational anti-gender "ideology" movement has increased exponentially (Graff & Korolczuk 2022), posing a considerable challenge to feminist and pro-LGBTQ+ forces and an existential threat to queer communities worldwide (Butler & Halberstam 2025, Lamble 2026). In the Russian Federation, the anti-gender movement has manifested itself in the heteronormative discourse coalition aggressively promoted by the Russian state since the early 2010s (Edenborg 2023). Initially the 'traditional values' discourses affected primarily the LGBTQ+ community, whose persecution grew from the notorious 2013 'gay propaganda' law (Wilkinson 2014) and to the 2024 legislation declaring LGBTQ+ communities and organisations extremist. But Russia's anti-gender politics has also affected non-normative people outside of queer communities: thus, there have been ongoing attempts at revoking women's reproductive rights and undermining the feminist movement in Russia (Krafft 2021), and in 2024 the propaganda of 'childfree ideology' was banned (Seunghyun 2025). At the same time, the top-down discourses of heteronormative oppression sustained by the Kremlin have been consistently challenged by subversive and transgressive bottom-up discourses driven by media producers, civil rights activists, and media prosumers (Andreevskikh 2024).

The proposed paper offers an in-depth nuanced qualitative analysis of anti-gender discourses in contemporary Russophone media and mediated reactions to those discourses. Applying Critical Discourse Analysis and multimodal discourse analysis and utilising media data sampled from mainstream media outlets (e.g., *Kommersant*), oppositional media in exile (e.g., *Meduza*), and social media influencers and microcelebrities operating on Instagram and Telegram, the paper aims to address the following research questions:

- What kind of attitudes to and views on gender, masculinity and femininity are represented by the selected media sources?
- What discursive strategies are applied by the selected media to communicate and promote those views and attitudes? Which visual and verbal tools are used in this process?

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Influencing Young Danes' Nicotine Use by Fostering Open Dialogues: A Digital Conversational Card Game

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More than a third of Danish adolescents and young adults use nicotine products, and especially the newer tobacco-free nicotine pouches and e-cigarettes have gained popularity. To address the issue, a digital behavior change intervention aimed at influencing nicotine use and attitudes among young Danes was designed, prototyped, and tested in a mixed-methods study. The technology was developed using a design thinking approach and based on theories of behavior, habits, and intervention design. First, qualitative data on young Danes' use, beliefs, and knowledge of nicotine products were collected through semi-structured interviews with 14 nicotine users and analyzed using thematic analysis. The themes that emerged provided insights into young users' lack of behavioral understanding, limited support and understanding from relatives, as well as a lack of knowledge on nicotine products, associated risks, and effective cessation among both nicotine users and their parents. Next, a co-design workshop with cessation counselors was conducted to brainstorm initiatives to facilitate nicotine cessation. To address a need expressed by cessation counselors, along with the qualitative findings from the interviews, a digital conversational card game was selected for conceptualization. The resulting prototype consists of questions designed to foster open dialogues on nicotine among young users and their friends, family, and cessation counsellors, and is expected to lead to behavior change among both nicotine users and their relatives. In addition, information on nicotine products, legislation, prevalence, and usage, as well as cessation methods, products, and sources for help and support, is incorporated as self-paced learning material to educate players. A small-scale quantitative evaluation shows that the game increased players' knowledge, understanding, and social support while also providing an engaging experience, which is expected to motivate long-term behavior change.

Persuasive Implicitness in Italian Political Rallies: A Multimodal Perspective

Lucrezia Davitti (University of Florence)
Maria Graziano (Lund University Humanities Lab)
Alessandro Panunzi (University of Florence)

Political discourse provides a privileged setting for investigating persuasion, especially public rallies, where speakers aim to influence voters' decisions.

Given the multimodality of spoken language, this study examines how persuasive implicits interact with hand gesture production. We analyse rally speeches by eight Italian politicians, balanced for gender and political orientation, from the multimodal corpus IMPAQTS (Cominetti et al. 2024, IMPAQTS Corpus n.d.).

Implicits (Sbisà 2007) were distinguished between content-related (implicatures, vagueness) and speaker-commitment structures (presuppositions, topicalizations) (Lombardi Vallauri 2019). Gestures accompanying implicits were coded as representational (representing an aspect of the referent), deictic, or pragmatic (expressing the speaker's stance or a speech act) (Lombardi Vallauri 2019).

Preliminary observations indicate that implicits are accompanied mainly by pragmatic gestures, used to parse, frame or offer the implicit to the audience. This provides evidence that speakers rely on the coordinated use of multimodal resources to achieve (persuasive) discourse goals. Further analysis will contribute to a better understanding of the multimodality of implicit persuasive strategies.

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Persuasive Discursive Practices on BlueSky and X

Svetlana Filon (Tampere Universities)

This study examines the discursive practices users employ to adopt particular stances and persuade their audiences within two similar yet diverging platform ecologies: X, characterised by algorithmic amplification, and BlueSky, whose designers explicitly reject such mechanisms of user engagement. Using a dataset of 800 posts (400 from each platform) containing the key words *actually* and *in fact* as discursive markers of an oppositional stance the analysis identifies the social issues that most frequently elicit emotional responses on the two platforms, as well as the most likely addressees of these posts. Drawing on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) framework for understanding identity construction in linguistic interaction and Norman Fairclough's (1992, 2003) model of critical discourse analysis, the posts are further examined

on three levels. (1) The micro level focuses on lexical choices, grammar and syntax, paralinguistic elements (e.g., emojis), agency, modality, sarcasm, and humour. (2) The meso level examines platform affordances shaping the creation and dissemination of posts, including interaction with the audience, intertextuality and the integration of other discourses, multimedia attachments, user verification, and the authors' political orientation. (3) The macro level considers broader societal narratives and discourses, social processes, and social change. At this level, Graham et al.'s (2013) Moral Foundations theory is operationalised to uncover the moral bases underlying emotional reactions to particular events or phenomena, as reflected in the persuasive discourse they generate. The study explores how persuasive practices vary across different platforms and how they can be linked to their respective affordances. The findings are expected to shed light on how the deliberate design of platform architecture influences the formation of online persuasive discourse and, in turn, shapes public opinion on socially significant issues.

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"Grok, Is This True?": Examination of AI-Driven Disinformation and Chatbot Manipulation on Twitter (X)

Jana Hallová (Masaryk University)

This study aims to explore the discourse with and about the AI chatbot Grok that is integrated into Twitter's platform affordances. Grok is, among other uses, often utilized on the platform as a tool for people to verify information, ask for clarifications or provide evidence for their claims and counter-arguments. This project examines the information which Grok provides to the users in order to observe the prevalence of potential misinformation, as well as the users' reactions to the responses and manipulations of the chatbot to provide the information they want it to present.

The study's dataset consists of comments exported from Twitter over the span of three months (March–June 2026), from popular pages focused on political matters, news, and controversial subjects. Within the exported comments, responses including the tag "@grok" are selected and subsequently analyzed qualitatively regarding their context and the chatbot's accuracy of information, as well as user reactions, further manipulations of Grok to provide a desired answer, and potential counter-arguments and corrections.

Additionally, the project includes a quantitative view of the "@grok" instances, classifying them based on the accuracy of information they provide, whether via misinformation spread by Grok, or manipulated by the human users, and any provided corrections. The quantitative part aims to provide insight into the prevalence of these phenomena, and to determine the scope of the

potential dangers of misinformation caused by the practices of the chatbot and the users manipulating it.

The findings deepen our understanding of manipulation of information on social media, specifically Twitter, both from human sources and from automated ones. The study demonstrates the prevalence of persuasive tactics in the debates taking place on the platform and how its AI chatbot can be used to promote disinformation and conflicting data for the audience, providing potential space for propaganda, false claims, and interference with user perception and understanding of the given topics.

Persuading Public Opinion: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis of the Midwives Act Campaign in Edwardian Letters to the Editor

Isabella Martini (University of Florence)

The implementation of the Midwives Act (1902) generated a sustained persuasive campaign in the pages of *The Times*, where letters to the editor sought to mobilise public opinion in favour of extending state responsibility for maternal healthcare (Brookes 2013). Rather than functioning as isolated expressions of opinion, these letters collectively promoted a shared vision of social reform by framing the Act as an essential but incomplete measure that required further public investment. Building on research on historical news discourse (Palander et al. 2017; Claridge 2010) and on letters to the editor as a participatory news genre (Brownlees 2021; Hobbs 2019), this paper investigates the linguistic strategies through which this campaign was constructed.

The study analyses a small specialised corpus of 74 letters to the editor published in *The Times* between 1900 and 1910, named BCPEP (Birth Control Practices in the Edwardian Press), using a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) methodology (Partington 2004, 2010, 2015; Partington et al. 2013). Quantitative corpus techniques are combined with qualitative discourse analysis to examine the recurrent lexical, collocational, and evaluative patterns surrounding *midwives*, *Midwives Act*, *training*, *supply*, and *birth* (Hunston & Thompson 2000; Bednarek & Caple 2019).

The findings suggest that persuasion emerged not through isolated rhetorical interventions but through the cumulative effect of recurring evaluative patterns across multiple letters. Contributors consistently portrayed shortages of qualified midwives, the economic barriers to professional training, and the unequal impact of the Act on rural and working-class communities as urgent social problems requiring state intervention. Editorial selection and discursive repetition transformed individual contributions into a coherent campaign that legitimised further reform as both socially necessary and morally desirable, distancing from a centuries-long tradition and embracing new healthcare practices. Thus, the paper highlights the linguistic strategies through which newspapers shaped public opinion and promoted social reform in early twentieth-century Britain.

Data

The Times and Sunday Times Online Archive https://www.thetimes.co.uk/archive

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A Multimodal Conceptualization of Voice in Advertising Discourse

Jana Pelclová (Masaryk University)

Advertising as a persuasive text blends different discourse features, genre characteristics, textual forms and language varieties, as well as semiotic resources (Cook 2001, Urbanová 2006, Bhatia 2014). This process of hybridization can also be observed in who speaks to whom and how. Following Bakhtin's (1981) concepts of heteroglossia and polyphony, the paper approaches advertising as an inherently multi-voiced dialogue between the persuader and the persuadee, in which multiple voices coexist, interact, and contribute to the persuadee's ideological positioning within particular social roles. Despite considerable research on narrative, intertextual, and multimodal aspects of advertising, voice remains insufficiently theorized as an analytical category. The paper seeks to address this gap by proposing a model of voice hybridization in advertising discourse. Drawing upon Perucha's (2009) idea that the narrative voice connects the fictional world with the real world of consumerism, the objective of the paper is to discuss the conceptualization of voice not as a fixed speaker category, but as a multimodal semiotic construct. The proposed model examines voice along three interrelated dimensions: discursive origin (e.g., institutional, social peer, platform or algorithmic, etc.), semiotic realization that encompasses the interaction of linguistic, visual and auditory resources, and discursive functions (e.g., storytelling, instructing, evaluation, affect and appeal, etc.). Methodologically, the study combines three complementary analytical frameworks. First, interdiscursivity (Bhatia 2014) captures how advertising appropriates voices from other domains of social practice. Second, multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2001) enables the examination of how voices are materially realized across semiotic modes. Third, resemiotization (Iedema 2003) provides a means for tracing how voices are

transformed and re-expressed across modes and contexts. The conceptualization will be demonstrated on several advertising texts from different periods and cultural settings.

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Pause Behavior and Discourse-Marker Variation in Publicly Scrutinized Discourse

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Pedro Fernández-Ruíz (Universidad Autonoma de Baja California)

This study proposes a corpus-driven protocol for examining pause behavior, hesitation phenomena, and segmental variation in the discourse marker and at the acoustic-prosodic and discourse-organizational levels. The marker was selected for its role in discourse organization. The analyses focused on final alveolar stop realizations /d/ as voiced [ænd] or devoiced [ænt], token frequency and subsequent pause behavior. The dataset comprises a purpose-built corpus of two YouTube videos featuring Elizabeth Holmes in distinct communicative settings: a public interview before live audience and a face-to-face interview. Acoustic analyses in Praat examined voicing patterns and identified pause intervals using waveform and spectrogram displays. The public interview presented 52 tokens of and: devoiced [ænt] represented 32.7% and frequently co-occurred with prolonged pauses—considering a >500 ms. threshold—and hesitation (Figure 1), while voiced realizations [ænd] represented 67.3%, typically clustered in fluent discourse (Figure 2). By comparison, the face-to-face interview yielded 11 tokens—[ænd] represented 63.6% and [ænt] indicated 36.4%—all followed by short pauses (<500 ms.), offering a contrastive context for the observed phenomena.

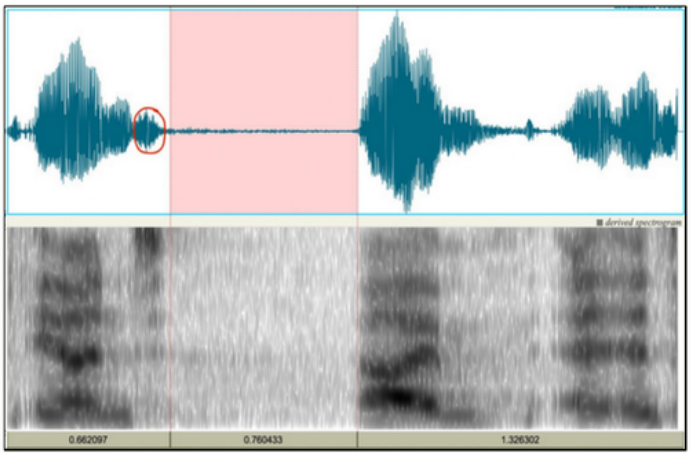


Figure 1. Elizabeth Holmes (2015, 01:27-01:30) "[...] *and*...I'm, i(s), is [...]". Voiceless stop-like realization ([t], red circle) characterized by absence of glottal pulses and a reduced spectrographic voicing bar, followed by a >500 ms. pause (0.760 s., shaded region) and hesitation.

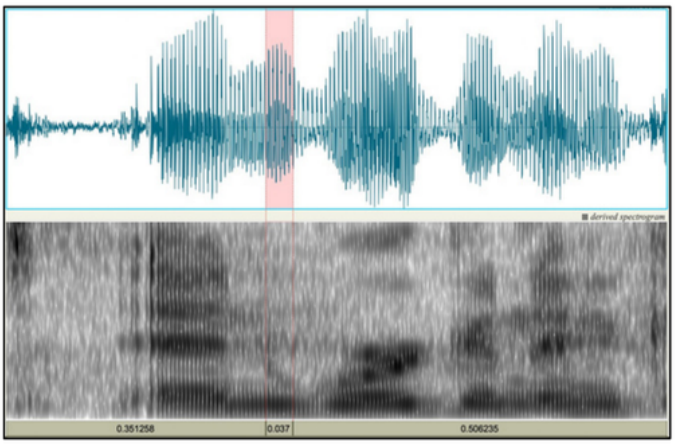


Figure 2. Elizabeth Holmes (2015, 06:44-06:46) "[...] it *and* we are gonna [...]". Voiced stop-like realization (shaded area), shown by glottal pulses and lower voicing bar, followed by fluent speech.

These patterns suggest systematic relationships among segmental realization, pause behavior, and discourse organization as paralinguistic correlates of discourse management. The findings illustrate how persuasive discourse may be supported not only by lexical and argumentative choices, but also on micro-level acoustic-prosodic features associated with function-word variation and pause behavior in contexts where speakers must publicly justify, defend or maintain positions.

Political Poetics as a Means of Persuasive Opinion Formation

Hanna Rautajoki (Tampere University)

Narrative resources operate as influential assets to organize identifications in political rhetoric. My study combines discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2008), membership categorization analysis (Sacks 1972) and narrative positioning (Bamberg 1997) to explore the interface of narrative, political persuasion and interaction. It highlights the interpretative procedure involved in any human action (Blumer 1969) and follows Kenneth Burke (1950) in placing dramaturgical identifications at the core of political rhetoric.

To define a socio-material situation of political concern one needs to identify the key actors involved and position them in the stream of ongoing events. The concept of 'moral casting' (Rautajoki 2012) refers to the practice of identifying and evaluating actors in a scene of political action at hand. Interpretations of the scene are managed through discursive formulations which build normative interrelations between actors while placing them in a timeline, thus producing a poetic portrayal of the political scene (Rautajoki 2024a). Audience is morally addressed and identified among others in the framework of shared 'participation field' (Rautajoki 2023). Argumentation operates on 'relational dynamic' (Rautajoki 2024b) to justify the claims and guide the inferences, aUiliations and activities of the recipients.

Discursive furnishing of the social landscape through moral casting and poetic portrayal of the scene mobilizes a set of multidirectional identifications and targets to preferred opinion formation among the audience (Rautajoki 2026). Political poetics is an applicable strategy for actors of post-factual politics (Rautajoki 2024a), yet, it can be used in many types of political contexts, from policy-making to current aUairs news and activism. My paper presents the conceptual foundation of a recently published book *Strategies of Moral Casting in Political Arenas* on persuasion through identifications (Rautajoki & Fitzgerald 2026).

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Persuasion by Style: Detecting Anti-Establishment Media through SVM-Based Grammatical Classification

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Anti-establishment movements are on the rise throughout Europe. Besides social networks, anti-system or anti-establishment media are among the leading voices in spreading alternative narratives and/or fake news, actively delegitimizing the current system (Holt 2018, Mayerhöffer 2021). In Czechia, this media group was identified using social network analysis of their readers and supporters (Šlerka 2018) which provides solid external validation for attributing specific websites to this category.

Typically, fake news or anti-establishment media research focuses on the content of the articles. However, there is a rising trend in analyzing also the grammatical or stylistic features,

either for automatic classification tasks (Pérez-Rosas et al. 2018) or for analyzing anti-establishment persuasion patterns (Grieve & Woodfield 2023, Sulimenko Under Review).

In our work, we employ support vector machines (SVMs) to predict the class of an article either as a mainstream (non-tabloid) or an anti-establishment based purely on 121 grammatical and stylistic features ranging from morphological to discourse level. Features were normalised and binarised where appropriate. For this purpose, 4,322 online articles were retrieved from the ONLINE2 corpus (Cvrček, Jeziorský & Henyš 2022) from January 2022, with 4,114 mainstream and 208 anti-establishment ones; aiming to copy the real proportion of available texts on the Czech internet. We achieved F1 = 0.774 (antisystem class) for our interpretable linear model, with AUC-ROC = 0.986. Our results also reveal that scores from multi-dimensional analysis (Biber 1988, Cvrček et al. 2021 for Czech dimensions) were unreliable predictors, F1 = 0.447.

Additionally, we found features holding the most predictive power for each category. Interpreting the results, we establish that anti-establishment media use simpler and more dynamic language (shorter sentences, fewer passive constructions), clearer discourse organisation (e.g., using appropriate particles) and fewer named entities (most notably toponyms).

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Fake News, Cancel Culture, and the Limits of the Sayable: Towards a Theory of Discourse on Discourse

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Metalanguage is a well-researched topic in linguistics with different, partly overlapping frameworks, such as metapragmatics (Spitzmüller 2014, Silverstein 2021), folk linguistics (Niedzielski & Preston 2010), or language ideologies (Vessey 2016). A newer focus lies on

statements about public discourse and its conditions; that is, statements about the role of language in mediating social reality and constructing *common sense*, (perceived) limits of what can be said, and power relations behind discourse. They include references to political correctness (Schroeter 2025), the limits of the sayable (Niehr 2018), truth and deception (Schürgers 2025), and access to discourse and *voice* (Schröter & Jung 2024). Despite the clear relevance of such statements for discourse studies, a comprehensive theory describing their function, relationship to discourse, and different discursive dimensions, has yet to be established.

Discourse and *discourse on discourse*, or metadiscourse, can be understood to be in a reciprocal and co-constitutive relationship (Spitzmüller 2019) that reinforces or transforms the order of discourse. Therefore, metadiscursive statements act as a self-regulating mechanism of discourse, and as such play a central role in the constitution of discursive facts, among others, the constitution of knowledge and truth.

While metadiscursive statements can therefore be understood as fulfilling an essential function to discourse, various actors also employ them strategically, particularly populists or conspiracy theorists. It can be assumed that using metadiscursive statements strategically works so well because of their deontic dimension: Beyond explicit statements about discourse, metadiscursive statements also indicate underlying normative expectations about discourse, imply idealised notions of discourse, and evoke values.

The presented project applies a mixed-methods approach combining logistic regression analysis with corpuslinguistic and qualitative analyses to examine the structural, semantic, pragmatic, and deontic dimensions of metadiscourse, focusing on metadiscursive statements within the vaccination discourse in German-speaking Switzerland from 2000 to 2025.

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A Linguistic Analysis of Declarations of War from the Early Modern Period to the Modern Era

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Declarations of war create a new world order and have a transformative effect on reality. Therefore, it is of great importance to examine documents of this kind to interpret their language and to understand them. The first study examines how language is used in declarations of war to legitimize acts of war. Four selected documents from the period between 1580 and 1917 were analysed.

The research approaches are based on speech act theory, which was established by Austin (2010) and Searle (1980a, 1980b, 1983), as well as on the illocutionary-logical developments proposed by Eckard Rolf (1997). These are supplemented by analyses of linguistic style, types of persuasion, and argumentative structure. In addition to a brief comparison of the argumentative patterns used with historical justifications for war, particular attention is paid to the function of speech act classes and rhetorical devices with regard to the legitimization of war.

The research results reveal a concentration of assertive speech acts, which constitute the most frequent speech act category in three out of four documents. Declarative speech acts are less common; in some cases, they are even the least frequently found. Based on Rolf's considerations regarding the "dominant illocution" (Rolf 1993: 147), it is still possible to classify these declarations of war as declarative texts. Further results show that the stylistic device of evidentia is becoming increasingly less significant, to cite just one example here. The analysed declarations of war exhibit a high degree of ethos, which is generated by the status of the respective author, who is a head of state in all cases.

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Persuasion through Institutional Identity Appeals

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Policies need to be carefully justified to influence various addressees to accept and ultimately implement them (Parkhurst 2017). Proper policy justification is especially challenging at the European Union (EU) level, due to the great diversity of addressees,

including highly concerned citizens (Andone 2022). The current EU policies to increase defense spending are a particularly illustrative case, demonstrating that public support is far from self-evident.

Previous research has acknowledged that policymakers often appeal to their institution's identities to justify policies (Marchetti 2024) and legitimize institutional roles (Von Billerbeck 2020). For instance, a close look at press releases by the European Commission in 2025-2026 reveals that the EU bases its argumentation for increasing defense spending among others on its identity as protector of citizens (in line with the TEU, 2009, Art.3(1)).

Despite the commonality and scholarly recognition of such identity appeals, their role within institutional argumentation has been underexplored. Policy justification and its connection to institutional identities should not be accepted as fixed, rather critically examined by analysts and citizens, and an argumentative approach makes them analytically visible and open to critical evaluation. Yet, it remains unclear how identity appeals are intertwined in argumentation, and how they can possibly increase public support through their strategic use.

Taking as a case the EU's policies to increase defense spending, we ask *how institutions strategically use their identities to influence public support for policies*. Drawing on the extended pragma-dialectical framework (van Eemeren, 2010) we first reconstruct institutional identity appeals explicitly or implicitly invoked in the argumentation to support a standpoint advocating a course of action. Subsequently, we explain how such appeals consist part of the institution's strategic maneuvering aiming to justify a need for action. In so doing, we demonstrate how institutions need to navigate a rather complex rhetorical situation to successfully defend their policies.

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Poster

Debating Medical Identity and Authority in Early Modern English Polemical Texts

Aurora Tervahauta (University of Turku)

This research focuses on medical practitioners' use of rhetoric and evaluative language in the late early modern period. I examine how medical authority and professional legitimacy were constructed and negotiated by practitioners seeking to establish a legal status within a competitive healthcare atmosphere. In this study I analyse polemical texts written by the three most influential medical occupations of the period, physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries. Using the Appraisal Framework (Martin & White 2005), I first analyse the instances of evaluative language. Secondly, I examine rhetorical strategies used through the classical categories of ethos, pathos, and logos. In the analysis I explore what is evaluated, how medical practitioners evaluate themselves and their rivals, and whether differences in educational background are reflected in their persuasive strategies. This study contributes to the understanding of those linguistic and rhetorical strategies through which professional identities and medical authority were constructed already in early modern England.

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