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Title

Exploitation of formulaic language for humorous purposes: casual racism subverted

Abstract

In his essay 'Vegetarians', the journalist and food critic A.A. Gill takes aim at pandas to create a humorous and ironic text drawing heavily on the everyday language of casual racism. The formulaic language typical of right-wing discourses is subtly subverted through parody, hyperbole and irony, and successfully 'defanged'. How this is achieved is the focus of this talk, which illustrates the CADS methodology used to analyse Gill's text with reference to a corpus of casual racist discourse gleaned from reader comments to newspaper articles about migrants and asylum seekers published on *The Daily Mail* website.

The methodology used consists of trawling the corpus data for formulaic sequences in the form of n-grams of varying lengths. The strings that are echoed in Gill's text are then analysed via KWIC concordances to identify and schematise the contextual patterns, to identify the phraseological regularities beneath the rich superficial variation (Sinclair 1991: 121), particularly with reference to semantic preference (Sinclair 1996). The wordings in Gill's essay are compared to these findings in order to demonstrate how he has exploited the norms of usage (Hanks 2013) found in the corpus data, subverting them for humorous effect.

References

Hanks, P. 2013. *Lexical Analysis: Norms and Exploitations.* Cambridge, MA: MIT press

Sinclair, J.M. 1991. *Corpus Concordance Collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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