***The Language of Hate:
A Corpus Linguistic Analysis of White Supremacist Language*
By A. Brindle (2016)
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Brindle's book is listed as the eighteenth volume in the 'Routledge Advances in Corpus Linguistics' series, edited by Tony McEnery and Michael Hoey. In this monograph, Brindle sets out to examine how member-posters on the white supremacist forum 'Stormfront' write about homosexuality; in particular how they write about people who are homosexual in relation to the white, often self-reportedly Christian, heterosexual cis-men most Stormfront members are or purport to be. To do so, Brindle collected a relatively small (950,000 words), specialised corpus of posts from Stormfront's News-subforum, where only members may post and which contains numerous threads about homosexuality. He further selected two threads from this corpus and examined two posts in depth, with the rest of these threads as direct context. A strength of his approach is its being explicitly iterative; Brindle firstly uses traditional corpus linguistic methods (e.g. frequency and key word lists) to examine the corpus as a whole, allowing the corpus to speak for itself in the corpus-driven approach outlined by Tognini-Bonelli (2001).

Brindle begins by offering a very useful overview of relevant literature on discourse, identity, masculinity and homophobia in the first chapter, referring to Seargeant and Tagg's (2014) definition of discourse communities to

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determine whether Stormfront can, in fact, count as one, with the caveat that one must not assume that a particular position held by a particular Stormfront member is indicative of positions held across the Stormfront community. It is this acknowledgement of the potential for heterogeneity in opinion within a discourse community that is an important strength of Brindle's study. Through the iterative method used by Brindle, he shows, in later chapters, that the Stormfront community holds a surprisingly broad, almost nuanced range of positions on homosexuality and gay men.

Interestingly, towards the end of this first chapter, Brindle refers to Merton's (1949) 'strain theory' of crime, which suggests that (some) criminal behaviour is a response to a lack of ability/opportunity to reach status-markers through non-criminal and legitimate(d) means, implying that homophobia could be a response to a sense of diminished privilege that some white, heterosexual cis-men may have. However, Brindle also suggests that homophobia among these Stormfront members may also, perhaps more simply, be part of a prejudice held more widely across (Western) society. As Brindle is 'without further ethnographic details of the Stormfront members,' 'the testing of such a hypothesis would be problematic' (p. 18), and indeed the reader is generally left to their own interpretation of why Stormfront members write the way they do.

The second chapter, which is relatively brief, predominantly lists existing research on discourse, language, masculinity/gender, homophobia and internet communities, and thus justifies Brindle's study by noting that there is (at the point of Brindle's writing) no existing research that already examines homophobia (in relation to masculinity) on Stormfront.

The third chapter offers an overview of corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis and corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis. It must be pointed out that in some places, in these introductory chapters, the overviews of literature that are offered are little more than lists of relevant works with one- or two-sentence summaries. For instance, towards the end of Chapter 3, Brindle lists prior studies using critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, referring simply to researchers and the researched topic. However, where necessary, Brindle does explain some aspects of the method very clearly and in detail; for instance, Brindle's explanation of Mutual Information scores, and the potential for issues with MI-scores, will be extremely helpful for those unfamiliar with (or perhaps daunted by) this aspect of corpus linguistics.

As Brindle's writing is lucid and accessible, this book is especially suitable for researchers focusing on discourse, identity, masculinity and/or homophobia who may not necessarily have any prior knowledge of (corpus) linguistic methods. As a corpus comprises a larger body of text

than can reasonably be examined through traditional qualitative methods, this particular study will be a valuable contribution to existing research on masculinity and homophobia.

Brindle details his findings in what is functionally the second half of the book, again in three chapters (followed by a conclusion), each of which corresponds with part of the iterative method; Chapter 4 examines findings from the corpus as a whole, Chapter 5 examines findings from two posts studied in depth, and Chapter 6 revisits the corpus with questions generated by the previous two analyses.

Brindle finds that, in general, people who are homosexual are constructed as the other, an out-group in relation to the in-group of (supposedly) heterosexual Stormfront members. Stormfront members furthermore link gay men to 'other out-groups, who are viewed as collaborating (either consciously or not) in order to harm the white race' (p. 121). These other out-groups include Jewish and black people. The focus of many of these posts is on gay men who are, as presumed on these fora, white. These Stormfront members further support their white supremacist argument by assuming that white gay men do not reproduce. Furthermore, white supremacists appear to view gay men as actively threatening, through the assumption that gay men also have a greater tendency than straight men to be paedophiles (thus 'perverting white youths by recruiting them to their lifestyle' (p. 123)), and through blaming HIV/AIDS on gay men.

Brindle then examines, as noted, two forum posts in depth in the context of their threads, finding again a preoccupation with the presumed non-reproduction of white gay men, but also a link between homophobia and fear of change, with the social acceptance of homosexuality being linked to an upsetting of the status quo in which white, heterosexual men are privileged. Brindle again notices a preoccupation with 'protecting young men and boys, not only from sexual assault, but also from information that might influence their sexual orientation' (p. 167), which, according to Brindle, suggests that some of these white supremacists may view homosexuality as 'deeply seductive, even addictive' (p. 167), suggesting that, for some, homophobia is a response to homosexual or homoromantic feelings and the fear of being seen as less than masculine.

Lastly, he returns to the corpus as a whole, to confirm or qualify some of the findings from the in-depth analysis, revisiting the question of who is in the in-group and who is in the out-group(s), and exploring some argumentation strategies (including fallacious reasoning and the use of modality). It is this revisitation of the corpus that allows Brindle to fully articulate his overall argument that while the Stormfront community as a whole is homophobic, within that community exists a continuum of homophobia.

In his conclusion, Brindle notes that a larger corpus could have been more representative of Stormfront as a whole if he had been less strict about whether a thread would qualify, it would also have made the analysis less precise. Other problems that Brindle notes are to do with the quality of the data. For instance, multimodal features are generally lost; it can be hard (and impossible using the corpus methods Brindle used) to account for the intertextuality within the thread of individual posts, and contributors to a thread may not, in fact, be who they imply to be or say they are. While the anonymity of members of an online community will, presumably, remain a recurring issue for researchers, an examination of how multimodal features such as emoticons enhance or negate the verbal content in these Stormfront posts would also have been valuable, albeit perhaps not possible or practical as part of this specific study.

One point of criticism relates to Brindle's organisation of findings, in particular in Chapter 5. Brindle tends to present his findings in this chapter line by line, resulting in a repetition of findings, rather than grouping his findings in a way that would present the overall set of arguments communicated through these posts more clearly.

In short, as noted, by using this iterative, corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, Brindle is able to uncover a range of homophobic attitudes, ranging from relatively indifferent, to the view that (white) homosexual men could be useful to the white supremacist cause given their supposed abundance of time and material resources, to the extremely hateful notion that homosexual men are an abomination to God and deserve to be the victim of violence. As such, this can be a difficult read. However, while the finding that white supremacists are, in general, homophobic is perhaps far from surprising, the merit of Brindle's work lies in noting precisely that spectrum of attitudes, the various ways in which this homophobia is linguistically expressed, and in detailing a useful method to adopt in future corpus-assisted critical discourse analyses.

References

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