Institution: The University of Huddersfield

Unit of Assessment: UoA 29 English Language and Literature

Title of case study: Language Unlocked

1. Summary of the impact University of Huddersfield research into corpus stylistics has led to the development of Language Unlocked, a consultancy service that uses linguistic methodologies and interpretative procedures to help public, private, third-sector and non-governmental organisations. Language Unlocked has informed clients' strategic decision-making, communicated their organisational strategies and assisted them in realising long-term goals. Beneficiaries have included Britain's unions, which have reassessed their communications policies; the Green Party, which has revised its policies, manifestos and communications; and a major chemical company, which increased its visibility as a result of carefully worded advertising.

2. Underpinning research

A number of University of Huddersfield research projects in corpus-based critical stylistics have contributed to a developing methodology combining the advantages of corpus techniques and qualitative stylistic analysis. Professor Lesley Jeffries (joined Huddersfield in 1990; Professor of English Language, 2007-present), Professor Dan McIntyre (appointed Senior Lecturer 2004; Professor of English Language and Linguistics, 2012 – present) and Dr Brian Walker (appointed RA 2008; Lecturer, 2013) have led this work.

Jeffries' research during 2007-9 was concerned with refining a stylistic methodology which can be used systematically to uncover the naturalised ideologies in texts. This has included the analysis of newspaper reporting as well as other public documents such as women's magazines and political texts (e.g. Jeffries 2010) [1]. Jeffries and Walker (2012) combined corpus linguistics with stylistic analytical tools developed by Jeffries (2010) to investigate the socio-political keywords in newspaper reporting during the New Labour era in Britain. This research demonstrates that certain lexemes gain currency in relative short historical periods and take on political importance in addition to their everyday meaning(s) [2].

Publishing research carried out in 2008-9, Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) made the case for Stylistics constituting an essential component of the broad discipline of linguistics. This was on the basis that theories of language should be able to account for the workings of all text-types, and that since Stylistics is able to account for aspects of language use that some theories of language do not currently deal with, it should be seen as more than simply another approach to the analysis of literature. Jeffries and McIntyre argued that the analysis of texts should be objective and rigorous and should seek to explain the correlation between linguistic form and meaning using appropriate methodologies [3].

The work of McIntyre (carried out from 2010-11), and McIntyre and Walker (carried out during 2008-9) focused on developing and applying corpus analytical techniques and tools to small, specialised corpora. The research systematically and rigorously analysed corpora in order to provide detailed accounts of a range of linguistic and pragmatic phenomena, including techniques of discourse presentation (e.g. McIntyre and Walker 2011) and media discourse (e.g. McIntyre 2012). This research explored, among other things, what constitute linguistic norms against which current and other linguistic practices could be measured. For example, McIntyre and Walker (2011) investigate the forms and functions of speech, writing and thought presentation in Early Modern English using a manually annotated corpus of fiction and news texts. This project also tested the robustness of an established model of discourse presentation from stylistics [4]. McIntyre (2012) used a corpus-driven method to test claims from film studies concerning the nature of gendered cinematic dialogue and to refute overly subjective assertions [5]. Both these projects demonstrated how corpus stylistic techniques could be utilised for expanding understanding of diachronic and

synchronic development in language.

Other work by Walker, carried out during 2009-10, explored how corpus tools could help in the analysis of literary texts, and aimed to develop the synergies between corpus linguistics and stylistics. For example, Walker (2010) provided a detailed analysis of the main protagonists in a multi-narrator novel using computer software to demonstrate that such methodologies could complement more traditional linguistic and literary approaches to prose fiction [6].

The methodologies deployed in these projects, in tandem with the insights gained into linguistic practices, were taken forward in the Language Unlocked project.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Jeffries, L. (2010) *Critical Stylistics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

2. Jeffries, L. and Walker, B. (2012) 'Keywords in the press. A critical corpus-assisted analysis of ideology in the Blair years (1998–2007)', *English Text Construction* 5(2): 208-29.

3. Jeffries, L. and McIntyre, D. (2010) *Stylistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4. McIntyre, D. and Walker, B. (2011) 'Discourse presentation in Early Modern English writing: a preliminary corpus-based investigation', *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 16(1): 101-30.

5. McIntyre, D. (2012) 'Prototypical characteristics of blockbuster movie dialogue: a corpus stylistic analysis', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 54(3): 402-25.

6. Walker, B. (2010) 'WMatrix, key-concepts and the narrators in Julian Barnes' *Talking It Over*', in Busse, B. and McIntyre, D. (eds.) *Language and Style,* 364-87. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

4. Details of the impact

The Language Unlocked service that developed out of the University of Huddersfield's research into corpus stylistics has applied the team's findings and insights to assist public, private, third-sector and non-governmental organisations. As a result, the research has been used to inform strategic decision-making, communicate organisational strategies and help realise long-term aims.

The research has enhanced unions' understanding of their negative representation in the media and how they might reverse this trend. In 2012 Unions21, a think tank whose work is centred on the future of the union movement, asked the research team to examine the portrayal of unions and the TUC in British newspapers. The goal was to provide advice to press officers and key officials on how to encourage more objective representation. Two specially constructed corpora of news reports containing references to unions and/or the TUC were analysed using computer software combined with critical stylistic techniques.

In February 2013 a draft report of the analysis was presented to Unions21 and distributed to members of its steering committee [a]. The Language Unlocked team was subsequently invited to present its key findings at Unions21's 20th-anniversary conference, which was held in March 2013 and attended by almost a hundred delegates. Unions21's Director has remarked: "We know that unions use the information Unions21 provides to reflect on the way they work and to 'change to be fit for the 21st century'... The remit of the Unions21 annual conference is to examine the most pressing issues for unions. Putting the research at the heart of our conference gave prominence to the issue of union image and the importance of media language use to this." The conference presentation led in turn to a request to write an article for the Union News website [b]. Further findings from the research were presented to the 17 members of the Unions21 steering committee in April 2013, with members agreeing that the work had enhanced awareness of the continued negative representation of unions in the British press. Plans to continue the research partnership are under discussion [c].

Language Unlocked has also helped refine the Green Party's campaign messages. In the run-up to the May 2013 local elections the party asked the research team to analyse the use of 'Green Party', 'green', 'environmental' and 'sustainable' in news reporting in the British press. Three corpora of reports containing reference to green issues were constructed and analysed, resulting in a draft report whose findings were delivered to the party in December 2012. Copies went to the party's Policy and Research Officer, Public Relations Officer, National Office Press Officer and External Communications Coordinators. The research was used to support the research team's advice about particular wording in a new vision statement for the party.

In February 2013 the findings were presented to delegates at the party's spring conference, held at the East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham [d]. Among the audience were representatives from an advertising agency working with the party during the run-up to the elections. The agency used the report as evidence to support some of its marketing strategies and later remarked in an email to the research team that it was "really useful [and] highly relevant to the work we are doing in preparation for the local party election broadcast... [The research] rightly identifies that, given the media's blackout of coverage of any Green Party policy programmes aside from environmental issues, it is vital that we use election broadcast opportunities to put across our wider agenda, which is relevant to the immediate concerns of local voters" [e]. The findings subsequently informed scripting decisions for the party's county election broadcast and have been incorporated into its overall communications strategy around policies and the media. The party's Policy and Research Officer has acknowledged the research's role in "developing awareness in the party of the crucial importance of language to effective communication", adding: "The insights... have helped to bring a more scientific approach to using language to communicate the values and vision that the Green Party represents." [f] The party's then CEO has confirmed: "We found [the research] to be applicable immediately in understanding the representation of our organisation in the media, and this has influenced our approach to self-representation in press releases and public documents." [g]

The research has also been successfully applied in the private sector. In 2012 Intensichem Ltd, based in Sandwich, Kent, asked the Language Unlocked team to provide copy for a press advert that would emphasise the company's focus on delivering scalable chemical flow processes. The team proposed an approach based around a strapline for the company rather than a full-text advert and employed the British National Corpus, a database of 100,000,000 words of written and spoken British English, to test the denotational and connotational meanings of lexical items in that strapline. The aim was to avoid the possibility of negative semantic prosody (i.e. negative connotations) and maximise the possibility of positive semantic prosody (i.e. positive connotations).

In late 2012 the advert was published in *Chemistry World*, which is the official publication of the Royal Society of Chemistry and has a circulation of around 80,000 [h], and *Speciality Chemicals* magazine, which has a circulation of around 50,000. Intensichem confirmed that they "received verbal feedback from clients that they had seen the advertisement i.e. it had been noticed and not dismissed due to its size, but despite the limited word count, it had still resonated with clients, current or potential" [i].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

a. *Union Identity in the British Press*. In-house report:
http://www.hud.ac.uk/media/universityofhuddersfield/content/image/research/mhm/stylisticsresearchcentre/Unions21report12062013.pdf

b. 'Why the media gets it wrong on union barons', Union News, July 22 2013
http://union-news.co.uk/2013/07/why-the-media-gets-it-wrong-on-union-barons/

c. Director, Unions21

d. *Representations of Green Issues in the British Press*. In-house report

http://www.hud.ac.uk/media/universityofhuddersfield/content/image/research/mhm/stylisticsresearchcentre/Greenreportwebversion17062013.pdf

e. Strategy and Planning Director, Madwomen advertising agency

f. Policy and Research Officer, Green Party

g. Chief Executive, Green Party

h. Intensichem advert in *Chemistry World*, November 2012

i. Director of Chemistry, Intensichem Ltd