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CORPUS ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE OF CONTEMPORARY CANCEL CULTURE

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The aim of the paper is to work toward an academic definition of cancel culture, a contemporary online phenomenon. Cancel culture has become a topic discussed frequently in the online environment; however, debate continues on how it is characterized and what it entails. Prior studies of the phenomenon are found in communication and media studies, political science and law, as well as social sciences, and have attempted to look at the origins, attitudes, power relations, and single cases of cancel culture. No studies in the field of linguistics are available to date, which opens an opportunity to research the language of the phenomenon.

The research procedure included creating a machine-readable corpus of different genres of online texts relating to cancel culture and conducting a statistical and qualitative analysis of the keywords, collocations, and lexical bundles within the corpus. The empirical methods used in the study were corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis.

Structural analysis of the corpus shows a variety of potential targets of cancel culture. Keyword analysis shows that the language of cancel culture revolves around the semantic fields of personal names, groups and affiliations, the media, politics and negative evaluations. Collocation analysis corroborates the findings. An analysis of lexical bundles shows a prominent debate on the existence and extent of the impact of the phenomenon. The study allows for initial supplementation of the existing definitions of cancel culture, but more research is still needed in the field.

Key words: cancel culture, corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, semantic analysis

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