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METHODOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONSTRUCTING LANGUAGE CORPORA BASED ON MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract
The digital revolution has transformed media into a primary source of linguistic data. However, the transient and heterogeneous nature of media texts, namely, spanning news reports, social media posts, and multimedia broadcasts, requires a structured methodological approach. This article explores the core principles of corpus design, focusing on representativeness, sampling, metadata enrichment, and ethical considerations. By adhering to these principles, researchers can create robust datasets capable of supporting diachronic and synchronic linguistic analysis.
Key words: media discourse, corpus design, representativeness, metadata enrichment, multimodality, diachronic analysis.

Introduction

In the contemporary era, media discourse serves as a mirror of social change and linguistic evolution. The creation of a "media corpus" as a digitized collection of texts from newspapers, television, radio, and online platforms, is essential for understanding how language functions in the public sphere. Unlike general reference corpora like the British National Corpus (BNC), media-based corpora must account for the high velocity of information and the multimodal nature of modern communication (Biber, Egbert, 2018). The primary challenge lies in ensuring that the corpus is not merely a "data dump" but a principled collection that reflects the reality of the media landscape.

Main part

The first principle of corpus construction is the definition of its boundaries. A media corpus can be "specialized," focusing on a specific event (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic), or "general," aiming to capture the breadth of national media output. Representativeness is the extent to which a sample represents the population from which it is drawn. In media linguistics, achieving a "balanced" corpus involves more than just collecting a large volume of words; it requires a proportional distribution across different genres and platforms (Bax, 2011). And in this case genre diversity refers to a balanced corpus should include editorials, hard news, lifestyle features, and opinion pieces. Platform Variation: With the decline of print, the inclusion of digital-native outlets and social media feeds (e.g., Twitter/X or Telegram) is now mandatory to capture the "informalization" of public discourse (Fairclough, 1995).

There are two approaches which should be taken into consideration while designing the corpus of media discourse: diachronic and synchronic approaches. Here, researchers must decide if the corpus will be a "snapshot" of a specific moment (synchronic) or a "monitor corpus" that grows over time (diachronic). Monitor corpora are particularly valuable in media studies as they allow for the tracking of neologisms and shifting ideological frames (McEnery & Hardie, 2011). Once the scope is defined, the researcher must implement a sampling strategy.

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Because it is impossible to collect every media text ever produced, "representative sampling" is used. In media texts, the sampling unit is usually the individual article or broadcast transcript. However, in the digital age, a single "text" may include hyperlinks, comments sections, and embedded videos. Sinclair (2004) argues that the integrity of the text should be maintained; therefore, removing "peripheral" data like advertisements is necessary, but removing user comments might result in losing the dialogic nature of online media.

Modern corpora are largely built using web-crawling tools. This introduces the principle of *"cleanliness."* Automated scraping often captures "boilerplate" text (menus, headers, footers) that can skew word frequency counts. Technical workflows must include robust deduplication processes to ensure that syndicated news stories (e.g., Reuters or AP wires) do not appear multiple times and artificially inflate data (Anthony, 2013). Furthermore, the "noise" in media texts, such as encoding errors or mixed-language snippets, must be addressed through algorithmic filtering. If a corpus of English media inadvertently includes large sections of untranslated quotes in other languages, the statistical profile of the corpus will be compromised. Therefore, language identification algorithms are a crucial part of the pre-processing stage. In also should be noted that raw text is of limited use without context. The principle of metadata enrichment ensures that each text is searchable by non-linguistic variables. Every file in a media corpus should be tagged with:

1. Source: The name of the publication or channel.
2. Date: Crucial for time-series analysis.
3. Author/Byline: To account for individual stylistic choices.
4. Domain: (e.g., Politics, Sports, Economy).

Beyond metadata, the text itself undergoes *"markup" principle*. Part-of-Speech (POS) tagging and lemmatization allow researchers to distinguish between the noun record and the verb record. For media texts, Semantic Tagging is increasingly popular, as it allows for the analysis of "sentiment" or "framing" in political reporting (Baker, 2006). This allows for a move beyond simple word counts to "concept counts," where researchers can track how abstract ideas like "freedom" or "security" are framed across different media outlets.

A critical but often overlooked principle is *the preservation of pragmatic context*. Media texts do not exist in a vacuum; they are responses to events and other texts. In digital media, the presence of hyperlinks creates a web of intertextuality. A corpus that ignores these links loses the "associative" meaning intended by the author. Methodologically, it is beneficial to include metadata that captures whether an article is a "primary source" or a "reactive piece" that links back to an original report. This allows linguists to study how information is transformed or "reframed" as it moves through the media ecosystem (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

The shift from "broadcast" to "social" media means that the boundary between producer and consumer has blurred. Including reader comments or "shares" as a sub-corpus provides insight into the "perlocutionary effect" of media texts—how the audience actually interprets and reacts to the news. However, this requires a tiered corpus design where the professional journalistic text is kept distinct from the vernacular responses of the public (Zimmer, 2010).

Traditional corpora were text-centric. However, modern media is inherently multimodal. A news article is often inseparable from its accompanying photograph or video clip. The principle of multimodal alignment suggests that when creating a corpus of television news, the transcription should be time-aligned with the video signal. This allows for the study

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of how gestures, prosody, and visual cues reinforce the verbal message (Baldry & Thibault, 2006). For instance, a sarcastic tone in a broadcast can completely invert the literal meaning of a transcript. Without audio-visual alignment, such nuances are lost to the researcher.

Creating a media corpus is not purely a technical task; it is a legal one. Media texts are intellectual property protected by copyright. In many jurisdictions, the "Fair Use" doctrine or "Text and Data Mining" (TDM) exceptions allow researchers to use copyrighted material without permission, provided the corpus is not redistributed for profit and the amount of text used is "transformative" (Gray & Malins, 2016). Researchers should document their compliance with these laws to ensure the longevity and legitimacy of their database. While public figures in news reports do not require deanonymization, media corpora that include "citizen journalism" or social media comments must adhere to ethical guidelines regarding the privacy of private individuals. Removing usernames or personal identifiers is a standard principle to prevent "doxing" or ethical breaches (Zimmer, 2010).

The final principle is *rigorous validation*. A corpus is a scientific instrument, and its "calibration" must be checked.

1. Statistical Validation: Using tools like Chi-squared tests to ensure the sample size is sufficient for the intended analysis.
2. Manual Spot-checking: Human coders should review a percentage of the automated tags to ensure accuracy. If the POS tagger has an error rate above 5%, the corpus may lead to false linguistic conclusions (Garside et al., 1997).
3. Stability Testing: For diachronic corpora, it is essential to ensure that changes in frequency are not due to changes in the sampling method over time (e.g., adding more sources in 2024 than in 2020).

Conclusion

The construction of a language corpus based on media discourse is far more than a technical exercise in data aggregation; it is a rigorous methodological undertaking that bridges the gap between computational linguistics and social science. As this article has demonstrated, the utility of a media corpus depends entirely on the integrity of its underlying principles, specifically the balance between representativeness, metadata precision, and ethical transparency. By moving beyond simple text collection toward a holistic model that includes multimodal alignment and audience interaction data, researchers can capture the "living" nature of language as it evolves in the digital public square.

Looking ahead, the integration of Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models (LLMs) presents both a challenge and an opportunity for corpus creators. While automated tools can now process vast quantities of media data with unprecedented speed, the human researcher's role in defining the pragmatic and ideological boundaries of the corpus remains irreplaceable. The "black box" nature of AI-driven analysis necessitates an even stricter adherence to the principles of quality control and validation outlined here. Furthermore, as media platforms become increasingly fragmented and ephemeral, the task of building "monitor corpora" becomes a race against time to preserve the digital linguistic heritage of our era. Ultimately, a well-constructed media corpus serves as a vital scientific instrument for uncovering the hidden power dynamics of discourse. It allows us to see not just what is being said, but how reality is being constructed for the public. By adhering to the methodological framework of systematic sampling, rich annotation, and legal compliance, linguists ensure that their findings are not only statistically significant but also socially relevant. As we move further into the 21st century, these principles will serve as the bedrock for understanding the

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increasingly complex relationship between language, technology, and the global media landscape.

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