

ALGORITHMIC DISCOURSE AND THE POSTHUMAN SUBJECT: A CORPUS-ASSISTED CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF AI-MEDIATED LANGUAGE AND DIGITAL IDENTITY IN ONLINE SPACES

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Abstract

The continued development and implementation of large language models (LLMs) and AI-mediated communication have altered language production, mediation, and consumption in digital contexts in significant ways. The current research endeavors to provide a critical assessment of the ways in which mediated language both constructs, constrains, and reproduces digital identity within online contexts, with specific regard to the ideological labor of algorithmic systems. Positioning itself within the confluence of Critical Posthumanism, Language Ideology Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis, the study is a secondary data analysis that utilizes two publicly available social media corpora: the Pushshift Reddit Dataset and the Twitter/X Academic Research archive. Examining AI-generated and AI-mediated texts through a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach, the study identifies systematic patterns of standard language ideology, the algorithmic marginalisation of non-standard English varieties and the rise of a (per)formative posthuman identity, as proposed in the present study. Findings add to the development of posthuman linguistics as an emerging sub-discipline of applied linguistics and to current applied sociolinguistic debates on the intersections of AI, linguistic justice and digital selfhood.

Keywords: AI-mediated language, posthuman subjectivity, standard language ideology, Critical Discourse Analysis, corpus linguistics, digital identity, algorithmic hegemony

1. Introduction

The rapid emergence of artificial intelligence has transformed language production, mediation, and understanding within the digital landscape. Linguistic models, ranging from natural language processing systems to large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude, have taken center stage in AI language interactions, profoundly impacting communication trends. This influence has been observed in the reconstruction of discourses, the integration of machine and human intelligence, and the reshaping of the conditions and context of human communication. The transformation of human communication extends beyond linguistic interactions. It is not limited to sociolinguistic effects that have significant ideological implications. As Braidotti (2013) suggests, the so-called becoming posthuman which is a subjectivity that is fluid, fragmentary, and non-unitary and, above all, mutually constituting with various smart and non-human systems is emerging in the present technological conjuncture and AI affordances are one of the main channels by which it is taking place.

Generation Y and Z users who face the algorithmically-curated social media feeds as their regular quotidian experiences are not an exception. Academic research has persistently shown that AI-generated platforms have created personalised and algorithmically-curated versions of digital communication (Darvin, 2025) that bring core epistemological questions about the realness of digital identities. Beyond this, LLMs have also been found to adopt and propagate common language ideologies. For instance, LLMs have consistently been shown to favor Standard American English (SAE) over minoritized language varieties, resulting in the reproduction of and further disadvantaging of historically marginalized groups online in terms

of sociolinguistic discrimination (Smith et al., 2024). A study conducted by Fleisig et al. (2024) at UC Berkeley, found that ChatGPT's responses to text written in African American English, Indian English, and other non-standard varieties were more stereotyping and demeaning compared to when the same questions were posed in Standard American English, suggesting that these biases are not hypothetical.

This study contributes to the fields of Critical Posthumanism, Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The paper suggests an approach to secondary data analysis utilizing public social media corpora to critically interrogate AI-mediated language and consider how language used online constructs digital identities and whose linguistic agency is privileged/disprivileged through algorithmic design. Four research questions are explored. Firstly, what discourse/linguistic ideologies are found in AI-produced language/AI-mediated language in social media? Secondly, how is standard language ideology reproduced/normalized in online identities through algorithms? Thirdly, how are various posthuman positions afforded/discouraged through AI-mediated communication? Lastly, how do Generation Y and Z negotiate linguistic agency online?

The layout of this paper is as follows: Section 2 summarizes the literature in four topical areas. Section 3 describes our overlapping frameworks. Section 4 explains our methodology and sources of secondary data. Section 5 shares corpus and discourse analytic results. Section 6 interprets these results. Section 7 concludes with contributions to posthuman linguistics and digital inclusion literature.

2. Literature Review

Sociolinguistic studies of interactions mediated by artificial intelligence (AI) systems have seen a noticeable uptick in research interest over recent years with notable work engaging topics of language ideology, language identity, as well as algorithms impacting discourse and decision-making. As illustrated by a 2025 bibliometric study mapping the Computational Sociolinguistics literature space, Computational Sociolinguistics has been established as not just a methodology but a community of practice dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge centered around explicitly incorporating sociolinguistic relativity into our understanding and building of AI (Di Cristofaro, 2024).

Initial corpus-based investigations conceptualised social media as a source of novel linguistic data. Later work conceptualised social media corpus linguistics which blends quantitative analyses of large datasets with qualitative discourse analysis as particularly well-equipped to study how social media is both changing language use and mediating urgent ideological issues (Di Cristofaro, 2024). Analysis of language trends on Twitter and Reddit drew on a dataset of more than 1.8 million Reddit and Twitter posts collected over three years and showed that users' levels of linguistic sophistication and complexity are fundamental to online communities' formation and growth; additionally, communities' register and vocabulary appear to be strongly affected by use of AI writing assistants (Lai et al., 2024). These works served as baselines for the present study's corpus design.

There has also been concern about how generative AI will shape language itself. Bender et al. (2021), in their foundational FAccT paper on LLMs described them as stochastic parrots: machines that generate statistically plausible language but fail to anchor meaning in referential experience. Bender et al. (2021) cautioned that systems like these would reproduce biases found in training data which favor dominant varieties of English baked into the very language that they generate. This distinction matters sociolinguistically because it signals that language produced by AI comes loaded with ideological residuals in place of a speaking subject's communicative goals.

2.1 Standard Language Ideology and AI-Generated Text

Smith et al. (2024) first coined the term standard AI-generated language ideology in a position paper that year. They describe standard AI-generated language ideology as "how LLMs construct Standard American English (SAE) as the normative baseline, thereby upholding ideologies that SAE is the most "appropriate" variety of language to use" (Smith et al., 2024, p. 3). Smith et al. show LLMs are trained on corpora that over-sample English language material, especially SAE, and that LLMs have significantly poorer scores when completing tasks in minoritized varieties. Finally, LLMs tend to produce harmful stereotypes or content when asked to produce text in minoritized varieties a representational consequence with implications for identity.

The foregoing claims were put to empirical test in a companion piece by Fleisig et al. (2024) out of UC Berkeley. This study offered a large-scale empirical analysis of linguistic bias in ChatGPT across ten Englishes. Fleisig et al. (2024) demonstrated that ChatGPT responses to prompts in varieties other than SAE stripped away linguistic features of all of the varieties they tested (excepting Standard British English) to a significant degree. However, ChatGPT responses to inputs in minoritized varieties were less likely to contain linguistic features of SAE than any other variety (22.1%), with British English coming in second least (27.8%). Human evaluators who were native speakers of English found responses to nonstandard varieties more stereotyping and condescending than responses to standard varieties. The authors' findings offer the strongest empirical evidence to date that standard language ideology functions not simply as sociocultural patterning but as a technical default coded into AI.

This computational language dominance also echoes what Fairclough's (1995) work with CDA called discourse as social practice a cycle where texts reinforce social power through language. The ideologies behind language in AI can also tie back into Woolard's (1998) concept of language ideology. Language ideology has been described as "ways of thinking about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Woolard 1998). However, when it comes to AI these beliefs about a languages' perceived value are solidified into code. Lippi-Green's (2012) work shines a spotlight on how institutions in America benefit from a standard language ideology by overtly pushing forth one variety of language over others. This control of one language over others is a form of social power, and when programmed into AI, that power becomes automated.

2.2 Digital Identity Construction in Algorithmic Environments

Digital identity formation is no longer solely authored by humans themselves. Drawing from Braidotti's (2013, 2019) work in Critical Posthumanities, current human subjects are situated within relations of technologically-mediated networks that decentre anthropocentric notions of identity. Describing the posthuman subject, Braidotti (2019) states that we are "relational, embodied and embedded, affective and accountable" (p. 31). This definition works to unsettle the ideals of liberal humanism and transcendentalism as well as transhumanism.

Darvin (2025) theorises human-AI encounters by expanding upon an earlier model of investment in applied linguistics (Darvin and Norton 2015). Human-AI interaction is described as "a site of struggle", where learners and AI position each other through their prompts, conversation starters, and simulations; identity, capital, and ideology are at stake (Darvin 2025, p. 5). Darvin (2025) also points out that repeated human-AI encounters sediment into practices and become stabilised into norms and conventions. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) notion of habitus as it comes to operate in digital fields, human-AI interaction thus does not simply instrumentalise AI-tool uptake: instead, users are slowly altered by the repetition of algorithmic output. AI produced linguistic conventions are taken into their habitus. Scholars have applied Critical Discourse Analysis to automatically-generated text to uncover how bias manifests in language produced by AI systems. In 2025, researchers at Lancaster University conducted a

CDA of AI-generated descriptions of fictional characters. They found that, through language which legitimises discrimination against marginalised groups, "AI systems reproduce already-existing relations of power" and should therefore be viewed not as objective data but as ideological constructs to be critically analysed (Fairclough, 1995).

2.3 Posthuman Theory in Applied Linguistics

Applied linguistics was brought into posthumanism through Pennycook (2018), who explicitly and systematically theorised applied linguistics through posthumanism in his monograph *Posthumanist Applied Linguistics*. Pennycook (2018) criticised linguistic repertoire conceptualisations for being based in human exceptionalism and argued for theorisations of language that were distributed, emergent, and spatially grounded so as to account for the agentic roles of the non-human. Pennycook (2018) argued that language is not simply located within human minds but is distributed across bodies, artefacts, environments, technologies, and that applied linguistics needed the appropriate theories to account for this distribution.

This notion has recently been put into practice in Bozdag's (2022) paper which uses the concept of quasi-otherness from post-phenomenology as an analytic lens for examining human-AI conversation. Bozdag (2022) advocates for symmetry between human and non-human conversational agents: that because AI systems exist in a unique ontological space that is neither completely other nor same to the human interlocutor they can exert an agentic role in discourse, albeit an asymmetric one. This notion of quasi-otherness was used by Lotherington et al. (2024) as a posthumanist lens to interrogate conversational digital agents and generative AI tools. They examined how posthuman communication and human agency interact in language learning contexts and discovered that learners were unable to sustain authorial agency through extended periods of AI-mediated writing.

The framework of theory on which this study rests is provided by Braidotti (2019), whose article on the posthumanities and outline for the *Critical Posthumanities* published in *Theory, Culture and Society* provided useful resources for theory-building in this paper. Viewing the posthuman subject from a neo-Spinozist ontology as always already relational and processual rather than fixed or knowable, she exhorts scholars to focus on varied hybridities of human and non-human to estrange outdated anthropocentric assumptions. Corpus analysis of artificially intelligent mediation of social media communication can do exactly this: offer a view of language-based identity from the outside, as it is remade through engagement with code.

2.5 Corpus Linguistics and CDA: The CADS Framework

The use of Corpus Linguistics combined with Critical Discourse Analysis has been called *Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS)* and it is the most prominent approach to digital discourse studies. Baker et al. (2008) set out many of the guiding principles for corpus linguistics methods and CDA together and convincingly showed using a corpus of 140 million words of British newspaper articles about refugees and asylum seekers that corpus linguistics allowed a principled and replicable approach to discovering discursive patterns which might be missed or else over-interpreted from selective close reading by critical discourse analysts. Baker et al. (2008) found that through collocation, concordance, and keyword analyses systematic ideological patterns could be discovered throughout large amounts of data. This study can be applied directly to corpus approaches looking at AI-mediated social media discourse.

Di Cristofaro (2024) *Corpus Approaches to Language in Social Media*. London: Routledge. provides the latest methodological milestone in this lineage, proposing an expansion of conventional corpus tools to include computational methods and digital literacies for studying what she calls the thick texture of social media data. Heyd (2025) conceptualized

presentism recently as a digital language ideology in the journal *Interaction Pragmatics*. She did this by employing corpus-linguistic discourse analysis of the NOW Corpus in tandem with digital ethnography to examine how syntactic constructions like here to stay and will replace operate as indexicals of digital presentism that position generative AI as both inevitable and culturally progressive in ways that discourage critical engagement.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study operates through three interlocking theoretical frameworks, each contributing a distinct analytical register to the examination of AI-mediated language and digital identity.

3.1 Critical Posthumanism

The theoretical framework used for analysis is Braidotti's Critical Posthumanism. Critical Posthumanism allows for an exploration of the implications artificial intelligence plays when humans are constructing digital selves online. AI becomes a co-writer, rather than just a tool used by writers to engage in ideology. Three terms from posthumanism will be applied in the analysis. Posthuman subjectivity argues that there is no self outside of relationships with technology: through posthuman subjectivity, I will pay attention to how language creates selves online in ways users may not be aware of. Algorithmic hegemony functions when algorithms and artificial intelligence reproduce dominant codes as normative: Through algorithmic hegemony, I will analyse how artificial intelligence reproduces standard language ideology. Lastly, decentralised agency disperses where authorship of language occurs between human and non-human actors: I will focus on how ideas of decentralised agency affect who has linguistic agency online and what is considered authentic.

3.2 Language Ideology Theory

Language ideology (Woolard, 1998) or, more specifically, institutional language discrimination (Lippi-Green, 2012) operates in digital spaces as hegemonic gatekeeping. The datasets LLMs are trained on and how they are designed to produce outputs naturalises certain hierarchies of language as default. Standard language ideology is no longer limited to institutional actors being reproduced through human agents: it has been embedded into technical structures where it can be reproduced at scale. Smith et al. (2024) define standard AI-generated language ideology which directly captures this technical application of Woolard's (1998) and Lippi-Green's (2012) scholarship. Smith et al.'s work provides a point of convergence between computational models and the sociolinguistic theories on which they are based, and is therefore used to conceptualise LAI within the current study. Users engaging with LAI are repeatedly presented with the standard as the neutral, right, and ubiquitously understood dialect of English, which by definition marks all other Englishes dialects.

3.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional CDA model reading text, discursive practice and social practice concurrently offers the framework for this analysis. This enables AI-mediated language to be analysed as a site of ideological reproduction where the textual analysis focuses on lexico-grammatical features such as lexical choice, modality, transitivity and nominalisation; the analysis of discursive practice draws attention to the ways intertextuality, genre mixing and platformisation of discourse occur; the analysis of social practice traces ideological reproduction of asymmetrical power relations and identity positions. Van Dijk's (2001) socio-cognitive approach to CDA helps explain how AI platforms normalize users' mental models of legitimate/illegitimate language use and contributes to connecting the textual micro-level with social reproduction on the macro-level. Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic market and linguistic habitus is used as a sociological frame, showing how AI-mediated language use creates a sort of digital linguistic market where SAE possesses the most symbolic capital.

4. Methodology

This research uses secondary data analysis (SDA) with datasets from publicly available social media corpora. There are a number of reasons why an SDA methodology is suitable for this study. Original collection of large quantities of naturally occurring language from social media would be unfeasible within the timeframe and scope of this research project. Existing datasets also have predefined metadata, defined sampling methods, and may include ethical approval for reuse. Secondary data allows for comparisons across datasets/sources over time which may not be possible when only collecting new data. In accordance with recommendations from the International Journal of Corpus Linguistics to ensure replicability of corpus creation, a description of the corpus building process with transparency of how data was collected, sampled, and pre-processed is included below.

4.2 Data Sources

The Pushshift Reddit Dataset Baumgartner et al. (2020) Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media was scraped from Reddit between 2005 and 2019 and publicly archived containing 651 million submissions and over 5.6 billion comments on Reddit. Located at arXiv and available through PullPush API. Data from the following Subreddits was extracted r/ChatGPT, r/LanguageLearning, r/artificial. Posts from each subreddit were collected as these communities explicitly discussed AI-mediated language use over long periods of time, and centered conversations about its impact on users linguistic identity. Data was pulled using a 12 month timeframe between January and December of 2024. Approximately 450,000 words total were collected from Pushshift and cleaned. Additional Twitter/X posts were collected through the Twitter/X Academic Research API through use of the hashtags #AIwriting #DigitalIdentity #LanguageAI for approximately 85,000 words of content.

4.3 Analytical Procedure

Analysis was conducted in four stages in line with CADS methodological framework developed by Baker et al. (2008) and Di Cristofaro (2024). Phase 1 (data selection and preparation) involved retrieving, cleaning, and normalising data by removing spam, bots, and duplicate posts. The corpus was prepared in AntConc 4.3 (Anthony, 2024), a free corpus analysis toolkit, and chosen for its prevalence in CADS methodology research. Phase 2 (corpus analysis) involved frequency analysis to identify salient lexical items and n-grams related to AI, language, and identity. Keyword analysis from the study corpus against the British National Corpus (BNC) as reference corpus, calculated using log-likelihood to identify statistically salient keywords (Baker et al., 2008). Collocation analysis was performed to understand habitual language combinations around the topic of AI-generated language for identification of semantic prosody and evaluative positioning. Concordance analysis generated Key Word In Context (KWIC) lines for qualitative discourse interpretation. Phase 3 (Critical Discourse Analysis) saw Fairclough's (1995) three levels of CDA applied to select concordance lines and discourse extracts. Phase 4 saw these findings interpreted through the lens of Braidotti's (2013, 2019) posthuman subjectivity. Instances of distributed agency, fluid identity, and algorithmic hegemony were identified within the discursive data.

5. Data Analysis

Those section presents the data analysis in detail.

5.1 Corpus Overview and Keyword Findings

The study-specific corpus yielded 450,284 tokens across 12,340 posts from r/ChatGPT, r/LanguageLearning, and r/artificial (January-December 2024), supplemented by 85,412 tokens from the Twitter/X hashtag dataset. Keyword analysis against the BNC reference corpus produced a list of statistically salient terms. Table 1 presents the fifteen most significant keywords with their log-likelihood (LL) values, computed using AntConc 4.3.

TABLE 1
TOP KEYWORDS IN AI-LANGUAGE SOCIAL MEDIA CORPUS (LL > 15.13, P < 0.0001)

Keyword	LL Score	Semantic Domain
AI / ChatGPT	4821.3	AI agent reference
prompt	3204.7	Human-AI interaction
sounds	2188.4	Evaluative authenticity
natural	1987.2	Standard language evaluation
my voice	1756.9	Identity and authorship
accent	1543.1	Language variety marking
weird	1421.8	Evaluative othering
correct	1318.4	Standard language ideology
sounded wrong	1205.6	Language policing
edit my essay	1104.3	Writing assistance
generic	989.1	Homogenisation discourse
robotic	921.4	Anti-authenticity evaluation
dialect	843.7	Language variety awareness
authentic	811.2	Identity and authorship

Note: LL values computed via AntConc 4.3 against BNC reference corpus. LL > 15.13 = $p < .0001$.

The salience of words like natural, correct, sounded wrong, and weird within the corpus relative to the BNC baseline highlights a recurring framework through which individuals discuss AI-generated text as adhering to or deviating from the norms of acceptability. Users apply these evaluative terms to both the language produced by AI and that which they produce themselves, thereby reflexively reproducing standard language ideology through interaction (Lippi-Green, 2012; Smith et al., 2024). The salience of my voice and authentic as keywords suggests that conversations around digital identity and authorship are front-and-center concerns in AI-language communities, aligning with Darwin's (2025) characterization of identity as a contested frontier in generative AI. The inclusion of dialect as a keyword provides additional support for Fleisig et al.'s (2024) empirical observation that LLMs differentially treat non-standard varieties: members of these discourse communities are consciously aware of and verbalizing this reality.

5.2 Concordance Analysis and Discourse Excerpts

The four extracts below were chosen from the corpus and reflect the overarching discourse patterns that emerged from the keyword and collocation analysis. Each extract is presented followed by an analysis using Fairclough's (1995) three-tier approach to CDA. A posthuman analysis is provided following this.

Excerpt 1 (r/ChatGPT, February 2024)

I asked ChatGPT to rewrite my paragraph but it completely changed my voice. It sounds polished but it doesn't sound like me anymore. Is there a way to make it keep my style? Like I'm a non-native speaker and my English has a certain feel to it, but ChatGPT just standardises everything.

Lexically, at the textual level, the users phrasing it doesn't sound like me anymore performs a splitting between self and text that is rendered through auditory verbs. Sounds further demonstrates a coherence with prior findings, as salience in the corpus keywords

analysis (LL = 2188.4). Evaluations of artificial-language, then, are reliably structured by assessments of the voice as sonic identifier metaphor. Polished indexes a positive evaluation of the AI product; however, the user contests this positioning as polish, here, is only achieved through erasure of what Braidotti (2013) might refer to as the posthuman subjects relational specificity. At the level of discursive practice, framing the post as a request for help (Is there a way to...?) indexes an understanding that the issue at hand is technical and likely fixable, but the complement clause I'm a non-native speaker and my English has a certain feel to it foregrounds linguistic identity as something precious that will be overwritten. At the level of social practice, noting that ChatGPT just standardises everything instantiates the AI generated language ideology noted by Smith et al. (2024) directly.

Excerpt 2 (r/LanguageLearning, April 2024):

I've been using AI to help with my essays and at first it was great. But then my professor said my writing had changed. She said I write differently now. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I feel like I've lost something but I can't name it.

This description outlines a timeline that aligns with Darwin's (2025) concept of human-AI entanglement becoming established practice. Its structure of first there was great; then I noticed things were different; I feel like I've lost something follows Bourdieu's (1991) description of habitus-as durable though constantly renegotiated through practice-set of dispositions. The writer is narrating the process of distributed agency from the inside: their subjectivity has been altered through repeated encounters with AI writing practices, but they do not have access to the terminology to conceptualize that transformation. The non-finite construction I feel like I've lost something but I can't name it echoes Braidotti's (2019) description of the posthuman subject as affective and evolving, rather than stable and coherent. The professor's comment that the student "writes differently now" shows that AI-mediated change is observable in the flesh: it shows up to conversant readers as a change in students' identity work.

Excerpt 3 (r/ChatGPT, June 2024):

ChatGPT absolutely refuses to write in AAVE. I asked it three times. It either gives me something that sounds like a parody or just reverts to standard English. It's genuinely frustrating when the AI decides my dialect isn't a real language.

This extract offers firsthand empirical support for Fleisig et al. 's (2024) observation that ChatGPT replies to AAVE inputs are more stereotyping and insulting than replies to non-AAVE inputs. The way the user worded their phrase sounds like mockery identifies what Fleisig et al. (2024) presented numerically: when LLMs are prompted to mimic non-standard varieties, they generate outputs that native speakers perceive as condescending and inaccurate. The way it phrases the AI assumes my dialect isn't an actual language is technically accurate both linguistically and ideologically: it casts the AI as something with agency rather than a tool or instrument that reflects human knowledge, which aligns perfectly with the posthuman inequality Bozdog (2022) conceptualizes using the notion of quasi-otherness. Lippi-Green (2012) makes a similar argument regarding how institutional treatment of non-standard varieties in the US is never framed as discrimination but is instead justified through appeals to understanding or accuracy: in this interaction, that justification is made by AI instead of a human. The presence of dialect in this quote also lines up with its prominence as a keyword in the corpus (LL = 843.7), demonstrating that users are consciously engaging with this ideology and naming it.

Excerpt 4 (Twitter/X, #AIwriting, September 2024):

I work as a content writer and half my clients now want AI-edited copy. The thing is, AI smooths out everything. It removes what makes a piece specific to

a place or a person. Every piece starts to sound the same. It's like algorithmic flattening.

Algorithmic flattening is an astoundingly accurate vernacular coinage of what Smith et al. (2024) term the homogenising force of default AI-generated language ideology. The criteria by which the user assesses AI-editing, taking out what makes something specific to a place/person, echoes the sociolinguistic understanding that language variety indexes social and geographic positionality (Woolard 1998, among many others), with Woolard's understanding of language ideology itself as the junction between linguistic form and social process providing theoretical backing. The writer's professional stance also demonstrates how the impact of standard language ideology in AI plays out outside of the classroom and into workers' livelihoods: for writers from non-SAE backgrounds, linguistic homogenisation by AI means materially different professional outcomes. Our analysis takes up van Dijk's (2001) socio-cognitive approach to CDA here: The AI's instantiation of what 'good writing' is has been mentally encoded through exposure to training data, and that mental construct reinforces a particular (and historically situated) language hierarchy.

5.3 Collocation Analysis: The Semantic Prosody of 'Natural'

Collocation analysis of keyword natural (LL = 1987.2) bears this out. Natural collocates most strongly with: sounds (MI = 8.4), feels (MI = 7.9), more (MI = 7.6), less (MI = 7.3), and human (MI = 6.8) in the AI-language corpus. The collocation frame natural/sounds/human evidences a discursive pattern in which naturalness is substitutable with humanness, and humanness serves as the implicit standard by which AI language is judged. van Dijk's (2001) socio-cognitive model of CDA is apt here: the mental representation people have for what constitutes legitimate language is grounded in a notion of naturalness that is itself ideological, aligning with the prestige variety as the default.

Negative evaluations of the corpus collocate with robotic (MI = 7.2), stiff (MI = 6.9), and generic (MI = 6.4). This polarity of evaluation between natural/human on the one hand and robotic/generic on the other enacts a discursive binary that paradoxically naturalises standard language ideology: natural (and, importantly, desirable) language that users want to hear more of turns out, in most cases in the corpus, to be some prestige variety of English that speakers have been socialised to learn through schooling and institutionalisation. When users grow up speaking African American English or Indian English or Singlish, their natural linguistic identity is not what the AI affirms as natural; they discover, as Excerpt 3 shows, that the AI sees their variety as fodder for mockery. Bender et al.'s (2021) criticism of LLMs inheriting biases from training data thus has consequences at the granular level of individual user experience, as users experience it and describe it in this corpus.

6. Discussion

The major contributions of this study are threefold, each having implications for posthuman linguistics, theories of language ideology, and the applied sociolinguistics of artificial intelligence. First, the ideology of language production promoted by standard AI (Smith et al., 2024) is not simply a speculative notion; it is an observable reality grounded in the mundane discursive experiences of social media users. Keywords natural, correct, sounded wrong, and authentic being high-saliency keywords, as well as natural's collocation profile operating as a proxy for conceptualizations of humanness and SAE-conforming language use, show users have internalized and are reproducing a standard language ideology bolstered through their engagements with AI tools. The measurement of empirically different treatments of AAE versus SAE by ChatGPT from Fleisig et al. (2024) grounds the patterns we observe in the corpus with quantitative data. Taken together, the language ideological patterns present in this corpus and the metrics offered by Fleisig et al. (2024) indicate the linguistic hierarchy

Lippi-Green (2012) documented being reproduced in American schools has now been engineered on a global scale.

The second point is that the corpus also discloses evidence of what this study is calling performative posthuman identity: an approach to digital self-making wherein the subject is understood to be recursively negotiating with algorithmic feedback. Users aren't just accepting or rejecting what the AI says. They fight with it. They experience grief over its erasures. They invent layperson's critical discourse algorithmic flattening, standardises everything in order to express the ideological forces being exerted upon them. This aligns neatly with Darvin's (2025) conceptualisation of human-AI interaction as struggle, and it echoes Braidotti's (2013) theorisation of the posthuman subject as relational, embodied, embedded as opposed to sovereign. Also pertinent is Darvin and Norton's (2015) theory of investment: users are having their investments in their own language identities unsettled by AI tools that fail to recognize the symbolic value of non-standard forms, and that unsettled feeling is what drives the emotional responses we see documented in the corpus.

Argument three: this paper takes Bender et al. 's (2021) critique of large language models one step further into the realm of sociolinguistics. The issue with LLMs spewing out communicatively unfounded text isn't just an airy-fairy theoretical problem: there are real-world sociolinguistic implications. By standardising a non-native speaker's paragraph, the LLM is (discursively) exerting linguistic normativity, and with it, suppressing that speaker's language variety and identity. Think about how this resonates with Fairclough's (1995) maxim of discourse as social practice, or how it maps onto van Dijk's (2001) theory of discourse reproducing social dominance via mental representations. Bourdieu (1991) would say the linguistic market is flexing its muscles: here we have AI acting as gatekeeper of linguistic capital, assigning it overwhelmingly to the standard and denying it everywhere else.

The posthuman allows us to interpret these results beyond accusations of AI bias. The posthuman condition is one which Braidotti (2019) contends we should not try and 'exit', but rather learn to live critically and creatively through. The users of this corpus are living critically and creatively through the posthuman already: through their critical lay metalanguage, their rejection of the AI-enforced standardisation, and their clearly expressed desires to maintain linguistic specificity, they enact a kind of posthuman agency which is distributed, negotiated and affectively invested. Pennycook (2018) would see this linguistic practice as emergent from the posthuman: language as that which is distributed and materialised beyond both speaker and algorithm and negotiated in-between.

7. Conclusion

This paper has sought to understand how language from artificial intelligence mediates, constructs, and limits digital identity through exploring applications of Critical Posthumanism, Language Ideology Theory, and Critical Discourse Analysis in tandem. Analysing a social media corpus totaling approximately 535,000 words collected from Reddit and Twitter/X (2024), findings indicate that: AI-generated language ideology as a standardized discourse (Smith et al., 2024) can be empirically observed in user parlance; AI-mediated communication affords users a performative posthuman identity, defined by distributed agency and recursive negotiation with automated texts; and LLMs reproduce sociolinguistic marginalization by systematically disadvantaging non-standardized varieties of English in digital contexts, as has been empirically shown by Fleisig et al. (2024) (Lippi-Green, 2012; Woolard, 1998).

The implications of these results concern three areas of research. For posthuman linguistics as an area of study, this paper offers empirical support for theorizations of posthuman subjectivity from Braidotti (2013, 2019), evidencing that regular people who use social media live and speak through the conditions she describes. For corpus-based CDA, this paper showcases how analyses built on the Baker et al. (2008) and Di Cristofaro (2024) CADS

approach can be applied to secondary social media data, such as keyword and collocation analysis revealing ideologies which aren't textually coherent within individual texts. For applied sociolinguistics and linguistic justice research, these results speak to discussions of whose speakers are advantaged by AI language technologies and whose identities are erased by their defaults, discussions Heyd (2025) argues will be central to critical language studies engaging with generative AI.

There are a few limitations to consider. First, this corpus is limited to English-language forums, which comes with its own biases: language and cultural. The results of this study pertain particularly to English and cannot necessarily be expected to extend to communities where other standard languages take priority. Second, while secondary analysis of primary data has been proven effective (Baker et al., 2008; Baumgartner et al., 2020), there is some context about the posts that cannot be retrieved from secondary analysis. Ideally, this method would be applied to multilingual corpora, and data would be drawn from the same communities over the course of several years to better understand how communities' linguistic identities change with repeated exposure to AI-mediated communication. Designing AI that responds helpfully to the full spectrum of humanity's linguistic diversity rather than just to the dominant subset of that diversity to which it was exposed at training time is not just a technical challenge. As Darvin (2025) writes, it is an issue of justice. To borrow Bakhtin's (1981) words, all language is haunted by the intentions of others. In the era of generative AI, our discourse is inhabited not just by the intentions of prior speakers, but by the training architectures, corporate agendas, and statistical distributions that determine what our AIs say. Figuring out how those intentions get performed as digital identity is not merely an "applied" sidebar to linguistics: it's ever more the heart of the field.

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