

Press release**Universität Bayreuth****Jennifer Opel**

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<http://idw-online.de/en/news821455>Research projects
Language / literature, Nutrition / healthcare / nursing
transregional, national**Analyzing food videos on the social web**

Under the direction of Dr Sofia Rüdiger, the role of language on the internet is being analysed at the Department of English Linguistics at the University of Bayreuth. A new project focuses on videos that showcase excessive food consumption. The German Research Foundation is funding the project with around 500,000 euros over a period of three years.

The Chair of English Linguistics at the University of Bayreuth will begin a German Research Foundation (DFG) project entitled "The Discursive Construction of Eating as Entertainment: Carnavalesque Consumption in the Digital Sphere" on 1 October 2023. Dr. Sofia Rüdiger, Akademische Rätin a.Z., is in charge of the project. "The project focuses on the use of language in English online videos in which the excessive consumption of food is depicted," says Dr. Rüdiger. Specifically, it is about "cheat day vlogs", "eating shows and mukbang", "food competitions" and so-called "food challenges". In these videos, which captivate hundreds of thousands of viewers on YouTube and elsewhere, huge amounts of food are eaten. Dr Rüdiger is researching the connection between language and food. "In the past, research in this area has mainly focused on moderation, constraints, sustainability and health. We are devoting ourselves to the less researched area of carnivalesque consumption. Where 'carnavalesque consumption' here refers to the excessive consumption of food for the purpose of public self-expression."

In social networks, the popularity of videos in which the protagonists deal with food is growing enormously. They are often about different diets, health and fitness, but often also about gluttony and indulgence. "In the project, we ask ourselves four core questions: How is overconsumption justified linguistically in 'food as entertainment videos', especially in relation to culturally determined norms of healthy eating? What differences and similarities are there here between different video types? What role does the linguistic performance by the actors in the videos play, especially for the great popularity of the clips? And what discursive strategies are used to create different identities (food-related and otherwise)?" Dr. Rüdiger explains the research questions of the project. To answer these questions, the project envisages the design, creation and analysis of corresponding linguistic datasets. Extensive ethnographic observations complement the insights gained from the analyses.

"The project results contribute to our fundamental understanding of computer-based communication in the generation of belonging as well as the digital public sphere," says Dr Rüdiger. "In this context, it is even more important today to understand the fascination of these food representations as a kind of intimate performance. Although these video types existed before the Covid-19 pandemic, it was during this and in parallel to implemented 'social/physical distancing' measures that they developed for many as a way to escape personal loneliness."

The project is funded by the DFG for a period of three years with a total of around 500,000 euros.

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