

# Guest lecture

## Vulgarity in Online Discourse around the English-Speaking World



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25th November 2024



12-14 (c.t.)



Seminar Room 7  
Rabinstr. 8

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The study presented in this talk takes a corpus-based approach to study vulgar language in online communication across 20 English-speaking regions based on the Global Web-Based English Corpus (GloWbE). The identification of vulgar items combines word lists used in profanity detection with regular expressions to identify a wide range of vulgar elements including spelling variants. The results show a notable trend for inner circle L1-varieties to exhibit higher rates of vulgarity online compared to outer circle and L2-varieties. The results also show that inner circle varieties have lower type-token ratios which indicates that inner circle variety speakers are more creative and rely on a larger repertoire of vulgar elements compared with speakers from other circle varieties. Finally, the results show that different regions exhibit preferences for vulgarity within different semantic fields: while speakers in the United States prefer vulgarity associated with sexual activity and speakers from Great Britain preferring vulgarity associated with sexual organs, speakers from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Ghana prefer vulgarity based in sex work and promiscuity, and Indian speakers exhibiting a tendency to use more racial slurs than speakers from other varieties. The findings are interpreted to show that cultural differences are reflected in region-specific preferences for vulgarity and that the creativity observed in inner circle varieties is linked to norm-setting compared to norm-reception associated with outer circle varieties.