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LING 76100: Introduction to Sociolinguistics
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Research Paper Proposal

"It's Just Memes:" Insight into How Chan Culture Changes

The topic of my research paper is how a popular imageboard has changed over the past four years. To do this, I will present and use a new corpus collection called *4chan/a/b/pol*. The corpora were made using two sets of month-long scrapings of the forums for text in July 2015 and recently in June 2019. The /a/ chan is for anime discussion, the /b/ is random, and /pol/ is politics. /pol/ was not scraped in 2015, so we'll be concerned mostly with /a/ and /b/ scrapings from four years apart. I will briefly explain the method of collection, how the corpus represents the population we're interested in studying, and limitations.

The research is both quantitative and qualitative, as I will look at the corpora using AntConc, NLTK, LIWC (a clearly limited tool for web text with neologisms), and Voyant Tools as well as themes from particular threads. My hypothesis is that quantitative findings such as word frequency or collocation will point me towards qualitative themes--such as a rise in hate-speech/radicalization or the entrance and departure of political and social ephemera--that are worth exploring in detail.

The theoretical framework that guides this research is Eckert's *Communities of Practice*. The shared practice is that of memes, a common lexicon, ephemera, and perceived anonymity. This is corpus-driven research. I plan to explore the concept of malign/online disinhibition and have two corpora with which to trace it and compare.