# Inform
# Uninform
# Disinform

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# A WITTGENSTEINIAN ANALYSIS OF INTERNET MEDIATED NEWS

**Abstract:** Communication of news events has undergone a seismic shift with the advent of internet-mediated instantaneous news. This form of communication of news items possesses particular linguistic characteristics that can be made sense of when analysing the linguistic behaviour of participants in a given news item shared on the internet. This linguistic behaviour can be analysed using Wittgenstein's theory of language games. For the purpose of a case-study based research, this theory can be divided into three analytical layers; multiplicity of language games –'are participants discussing in a same language game?'– multiplicity of interpretations within the same language game –'are participants interpreting in the same way?'– and multiplicity of participations within a given language game – 'what kind of relationship are the participants involved in?'. By researching three representative phenomena of internet-mediated news communication –the 2016 American elections, the continuous nuclear military testing of North Korea, and the Arab Spring– through the lens of Wittgenstein's language games, this research aims to provide an account of the linguistic behaviour of the phenomenon of internet-mediated news, as well as offer a case-based study of the concept of language games in itself.

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## 1. Introduction

Communication of news events has undergone a seismic shift with the advent of internet-mediated instantaneous news. This mode of distribution and consumption of news stories on the internet has created a unique situation of linguistic exchange between a myriad of participants, with internet dialog involving the originators of the news in great proximity to the receptors of the news. This apparent shift in news-related communication raises many questions. How do conversations around news items work? What do the participants of these conversations do? Are the author and the recipient of the news engaged in a 'conversation'? If so, is this a phenomenon that was brought forward by the internet? These questions are complex, and not all of them will find a definitive answer. However, all these questions illustrate a component of language and behaviour as being central to any satisfactory answer.

Studies of news media are not a new discipline. News media, its evolution, and the consequences of this evolution have been extensively studied by media theorists and philosophers of media, among which McLuhan's *Guttenberg Galaxy* in 1962 or more contemporary and interdisciplinary efforts, such as Crowley and Hayer's *Communication in History* in 2003. Studies of internet-mediated news media in particular have emerged as a key field of research among communications scholars (Ibrahim & Pate, 2019, 228). Despite this rising interest in an important problem, few attempts have been made at studying the phenomenon of internet-mediated news through the lens of linguistic behavior. This appears to be a significant gap in research, as theories of philosophy of language could provide a compelling analysis of what exactly participants in internet-mediated news *do* linguistically, which would provide a much needed theoretical background to further linguistic studies of instantaneous news communication.

To fill this gap, this research will make use of Wittgenstein's theory of language, as will be discussed in chapter 2. The reason to use Wittgenstein's theories is their insistence on understanding language through the lens of behaviour. In addition, Wittgenstein's work offers many observations of real life communication, allowing for an analysis that is wholly centred on the experience of language *in a given context*. This means that the study of the phenomenon of internet-mediated news will be conducted in terms of 'language games', where the participants dictate and follow particular 'rules'. Given this focus, the question that will guide this research is: What are the characteristics of the language game of internet-mediated news? The thesis that will be defended is that whilst each case provides a unique application of Wittgenstein's theories, internet-mediated news does not share a single language game, but is

rather a family of resembling games, each one of these games pushing the understanding of the concept of language game in a different direction.

To reach this conclusion, this paper will be structured as such; firstly, the methods used will -briefly- be discussed. Then, analysis will be provided for three particular cases in instantaneous electronic news communication. A theoretical conclusion on Wittgensteinian games will then be provided, before a firm conclusion ties the analysis of all cases together. Starting with methodology, this chapter will provide a concise overview of the theories of Wittgenstein that are most adequate to understand instantaneous news communication, in addition to how these theories can be used to provide a 'Wittgensteinian discourse analysis' of sorts. This analysis will be centred on participation to given language games, through certain characteristic components: multiplicity of language games –'are participants discussing in a same language game?'– multiplicity of interpretations within the same language game –'are participants interpreting in the same way?'– and multiplicity of participations within a given language game –'what kind of relationship are the participants involved in?'. All three of these questions will be discussed in each case study. This methodology will be applied to three key cases in contemporary news communication.

The first case study will be the 2016 presidential elections in the United States. A brief historical overview will be provided to understand the linguistic importance of this event in terms of instantaneous news, after which the three-prong analysis will begin. This analysis will serve to elucidate the linguistic role of the media in this historic event, as well as to explain the linguistic legacy of the event. The second case study is contemporary news coverage of North Korea. After giving context for this case study and limiting the scope of that particular research, the analysis outlined above will be used to understand the sometimes confusing Western media landscape concerning North Korean news. The last case study will be the Arab Spring. This will be presented as an analysis of the media's language around an event that is often described as media-centric. This analysis will inevitably present a reflexion on the theories used, which will be pondered. This will lead to a firm conclusion being presented, summarizing and assessing the points made during the research. Before any of this however, one must start with the methodology.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Using Wittgenstein's Theories for Case Analysis

This research will focus on the linguistic components that constitute the discourse of contemporary instantaneous news diffusion. Instantaneous news, or internet-mediated news, is the ensemble of all communications that originates from a dedicated broadcaster of news and is aimed at the explicit individual and instantaneous consumption of said news. The desired time difference between the broadcast and consumption of the news is as small as possible, making the preferred mode of communication push notifications or appearance on social media feeds. This research will use Wittgenstein's literature to analyse three cases in instantaneous news communication, selected for their media importance and consequences on public discourse.

Analysing these cases will be done through a Wittgensteinian understanding of language, which focusses on 'language games' and use of language. Whilst Wittgenstein himself does not set out to define a theory of 'language as use' in explicit terms, the PU is a compendium of different cases, observations, and theories that are held together by a presupposition of language as being wholly defined by interpersonal use (Biletzki & Matar, 2021, §3.3). In this framework, language games are a "whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven", a set of linguistic behaviour and uses that finds its meaning in the social understanding of its rules and how they are followed (Wittgenstein, 1953, §7). Wittgenstein understands language as "rule following behaviour", that is to say, a medium that is inherently social and that follows from agreed-upon conventions (Wittgenstein, 1953, §6-§7). All forms of natural language are united at their core by how they generate human behaviour that complies with given rules. The term 'rule' here has to be understood as being an inherently social category, as not abiding by these rules does not present any failure other than the failure to be understood, or more precisely the failure for our communicative intentions to be met by our peers (Pears, 1991, 273-274).

Language games can be used to mean a variety of different uses of language but are best described as given uses of language according to a specific behaviour; the language game of 'a builder asking another builder for a slab' and of 'an academic debate about astrophysics' are two examples of dialogs in which the same language might be spoken, but the language games employed would make one totally esoteric to the other. Language games resemble each other as two family members resemble each other; two sisters might only look strikingly similar,

whilst two cousins might share very few features, yet they are all similar in one way or another, and are all part of a larger family (Wittgenstein, 1953, §67).

In order to analyse and understand a given language game, I propose to divide this complex set of linguistic behaviours into three 'layers'. The first of these layers would be to question whether the participants in a communicative exchange engage in the same language game; this would resemble a syntactic layer, where deciding of the correctness of an utterance would depend on a certain *behavioural* grammar. The second of these layers is the variation of interpretation possible within a given language game, which can be associated to a 'semantic' layer, where interpretation and meaning of a given communicative element are in question. Finally, the last layer is about how participants interact within a given context of communication and a given language game, which would resemble a 'pragmatic' layer; this layer of analysis aims to question how the *activity* of language is conducted in a given communication case. These layers are mainly methodological, and aim to help give this research structure and a ground for more thorough analysis.

The methodology of this research appears as "a *consequence* of the Wittgensteinian attitude toward paying attention to the concepts that feature in our empirical work and theories" (Racine & Slaney, 2013, 4). It aims to use Wittgenstein's complex body of work as a basis for examining how language works in a specific context. Wittgenstein himself understood his work as a basis for exploration and research, as he explains in prefacing the PI: "I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own" (Wittgenstein, 1953, viii).

The reason to use Wittgenstein to research internet-mediated news is this uniquely participative and behavioural focus of Wittgenstein's work on language. To theorise language in internet-mediated news is to offer a comprehensive support for a system of communication that is designed to be participative. Whilst other theories of language or media could offer a compelling analysis of the language of news media, the purpose of this research is to understand what actors *do* in a given linguistic situation, these situations being that of specific world events in internet-mediated news. Doing so requires a methodology that understands behaviour as integral to the construction of meaning, and that allows for analysis into specific headlines or articles. This sort of 'microscopic' analysis of language is fitting of Wittgenstein's theories.

## 2.2. The Case for Case Studies

This research will analyse the language used in the broadcast of contemporary key news stories in the light of the medium it is used in. The selection of these news stories will evidently limit the scope of this research; whilst it is obvious that broadening the scope of the research to include opinion pieces, minor stories, or other news entities emanating from dedicated news broadcasters would make for an interesting research project, it is similarly evident that it would not benefit the analysis this thesis aims to provide. The research this paper aims to provide is grounded in Wittgensteinian philosophy of language, and as such will focus on the social linguistic behaviours taking place in a given context. As such, this research focusses on what language in a specific selected context *does*; choosing different examples would only serve to display how language *can be used*. This would be an interesting research project, but it remains firmly out of the scope of this thesis. The selection of these examples is thus a determined choice, and a statement that the chosen cases exemplify particularly well the Wittgensteinian theories explored. Each case-study will be accompanied by a brief explanation of their particular selection. This is not to say that other examples would not have been potent catalysts for the same analysis, it simply means that given the scope and limitations of this research project, the accessibility of the sources, and how much academic research was conducted on these events, they appeared to be the most efficient examples to use.

Contemporary commenters of Wittgenstein, specifically those who work with the social sciences, will highlight the social element of language as being the most fruitful basis for any study regarding Wittgenstein (Racine & Slaney, 2013, 1-2). In this regard, the analysis of different modes of communication and how fitting they are to Wittgenstein's theories has become, since the 1970s, a rich field of enquiry (Harper & Sandis, 2018, 1). The analytic 'toolbox' Wittgenstein provides is predominantly adapted to the study of cases and particulars. Throughout the PI, Wittgenstein invites the reader to consider the theories he defends through the lens of everyday communication, refusing to conceive of a theory of language that could not account for trivial uses of natural language (Biletzki & Matar, 2021, §3.6). As such, applying elements of Wittgenstein's analysis to specific cases offers an opportunity to understand previously linguistically uncertain events with more clarity as to their purpose and inner workings, whilst respecting the stated aim of Wittgenstein's later work: investigating natural language. A 'Wittgensteinian approach' to analysing media would be one where the analyst decides "to have the good grace to try and see what people are doing when they communicate" (Harper & Sandis, 2018, 7). This is far from a definition of a unified

Wittgensteinian method, if such a thing even exists, in addition to being a very simplistic summary of a complex methodology. It nonetheless illustrates a desire to analyse language in terms of *doings*, an emphasis on what language does and how it does it.


### 2.3. Notes on the Early / Late Wittgenstein Dichotomy

All discussions regarding Wittgenstein's work, and specifically discussions that use Wittgenstein's work as a methodological basis for further research, are bound to discuss the problem of dichotomy of Wittgenstein's work, between his early, logic-focussed work exemplified by the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus –or TLP– and his later, use-focussed work exemplified by the Philosophical Investigations –or PI (Wittgenstein, 1921; Wittgenstein, 1953). Whilst this detour is an interesting and necessary question, it is only tangentially related to the research at hand, which uses elements of 'both Wittgensteins'. Despite this, a brief overview of this question ought to be offered, if only to defend to the use of Wittgensteinian theories from both his early and later work.

This research will use a number Wittgensteinian sources throughout, yet it will prefer using his research that explicitly discusses *use*, such as the PI, as opposed to Wittgenstein's earlier work, best exemplified by the TLP (1953). This is not to say that other analyses of language are useless, however. In the TLP, Wittgenstein expressed an analysis of language and its structure that is not wholly ignorable. This opus attempts to offer a solution to all of philosophy by "addressing its central issues", and does so by categorizing language in such a way as for philosophy to be made redundant, or to be the result of confused discourse (Biletzki & Matar, 2021, §2.1). This categorization is not conducive to the research of natural language through the prism of particular cases, but denotes a different *focus* of Wittgenstein's analysis rather than a different theory altogether. Wittgenstein only attempted to offer a holistic understanding of language using a 'syntactic' basis, thinking of it as a bedrock for the rest of language. The TLP's aim is similar as the PI's –that is, to offer an analysis of language that would be thorough enough to support the structure of all matters of human understanding– but goes about it in a more positivist way, due to a more mechanical –or maybe naïve– understanding of the function of language under the tutelage by logician Bertrand Russell (Grayling, 1988, 16-21). Despite this limiting framework, even a later Wittgenstein would not claim that logic, for instance, is useless (Wittgenstein, 1953, §242). Logic simply "takes care of itself" (Wittgenstein, 1961, 11e). In this sense, later Wittgenstein would argue that inquiring about the inner-workings and mechanics of language is not a useless endeavour, it simply is not

the way to acquire any insight on the important qualities of language, such as its mediative power. This focus on the mediative power of language is what defines 'later Wittgenstein'.

There is a continuity in Wittgenstein's work, which is important enough to discard the understanding of an 'early Wittgenstein' and a 'late Wittgenstein' as two different, mutually hermetic entities. However, the difference in focus between the TLP and PI make for different language games, so to speak, that can be difficult to fully reconcile. Therefore this research, whilst focussed on use –and therefore on the tools provided by 'later Wittgenstein'– will not shy away from referring to the TLP when necessary, as it is still a potent source when discussing syntactic elements of language, which even the most use-focussed analysis cannot fully escape.

### 3. Case Studies in Shifting Linguistic Attitudes

### 3.1. The Great Divide: Covering Democracy

### 3.1.1. The 2016 Elections as a Communications Issue

The first case study this research presents is that of the 2016 presidential elections in the United States of America. This case offers a particularly relevant basis to study linguistic attitudes in instantaneous news for several reasons. Firstly, it is a historically significant world event in terms of instantaneous news. The revolution of the internet-focussed political communication of former President Barack Obama in 2008 brought along a paradigm shift in communication and journalism of political affairs (Wattal et al., 2010, 669). Some of the tenets of Obama's communication style have had a lasting impact in the world of Western politics, not least of which its ability to generate instantaneous news stories and turn it into free and efficient political campaigning (Stromer-Galley, 2014, 186). Political commentators often point to the phenomenon of "Obama girl", an internet user singing her adoration of the soon-to-be president in a YouTube video aptly titled "Crush on Obama" (Relles, 2007). This video was promptly picked up by various news media sources, and is considered to have significantly raised Obama's visibility in younger demographics (Stromer-Galley, 2014, 126). It appeared that this video was produced by clumsy amateurs either having fun or professing their adoration, and was presented as such by a number of news publications; however, this video was the product of a marketing executive, and was published with the expectation of making the public believe in a grassroots movement of appreciation for what Barack Obama represented (Stromer-Galley, 2014, 125-126). By the 2016 presidential election, this strategy was widely adopted by all candidates, willing to make the public and press believe in artificial grassroots support: such a strategy is called "astroturfing", and it takes a particularly pernicious form in the age of instantaneous electronic news (Zhang et al., 2013, 1). This example is one of the most comical strategies of contemporary political communication, but it is far from the only one. This is to say, presidential campaigners understood the importance of online communication by the 2016 election, and acted accordingly.

Another reason why the 2016 US elections are a fascinating case in instantaneous news is the rise in popularity of the 'fake news'. Widely popularized by then candidate and now former President Donald Trump, this concept is meant to delegitimize news media, and refers to both the purveyor of news and particular news pieces (Quandt et al., 2019, 1). The concept skyrocketed in popularity during Trump's presidency, where it became a common saying for

both Trump supporters and Trump opponents (Quandt et al., 2019, 4). Whilst the rise of the concept of fake news is a fascinating topic, filled with diverse insights and implications in political science, its broader effect on the topic at hand is that it leaves instantaneous electronic news in a legitimacy crisis: it became reasonable and routine to distrust and sometimes dismiss news stories entirely. Previously well trusted sources became untrustworthy seemingly overnight for a large portion of the media-consuming public, with the exception of news stories that would confirm previously held biases (Quandt et al., 2019, 4). Whilst this situation is not entirely new, it nonetheless raises an important question as to the linguistic attitudes of both utterer and listener; if news is free, and appears on a phone screen at a given size that is the same for both an organization like BBC News and a far right medium such as Breitbart, what is the listener left to do with the information? How do the utterers fight off the other notifications on a phone's lock screen, if not by adopting certain linguistic attitudes that promote interest (Quandt et al., 2019, 5)?

The last reason this event is particularly relevant to this research is due to how much data was available to the voters concerning it. American voters, specifically undecided voters, were overwhelmed with a number of stories that were particularly significant to the choice of a potential Commander in Chief. These stories range from the easy-to-grasp yet vile, such as Donald Trump's history of sexism and racism, to the complex, such as Wikileaks making public internal Democratic Party documents. That Wikileaks story in particular is one that could have occupied the news cycle for the length of the electoral process, given how intricate a picture of the Democratic Party it painted. Those leaks went from confirming conspiracy theories to unveiling the 'seedy underbelly' of American party politics. Most popular among those was the confirmation that a 'handshake deal' was found within the Democratic party to push Hillary Clinton's presidency, which included concerted efforts to undermine the campaign of Senator Bernie Sanders (Podesta, 2016). This is not all, as Wikileaks documents also show that Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party colluded to ensure that Donald Trump would be the Republican Party nominate on the premise that the American public would never elect him, in what is referred to as Clinton's "Pied Piper strategy" (Wikileaks, 2016). This bold political move set out to "elevate extremists as leaders of the pack", or put simply, communicate loudly about how fringe Republican Party members were seen as the likely opponents of the Democrats in the general election. This was accompanied by a push of local candidates to consider the Republican Party's fringe as representing the entire Republican base, subsequently giving credence to their demagoguery and silencing the moderate wing of the Republican Party. In hindsight, this seems to have backfired, as it not only allowed Donald Trump to win the US

presidential elections, but also normalised his style of populism as being the dominant voice of the Republican Party (Ware, 2016, 406).

These instances exemplify the tense yet fascinating situation of instantaneous news media during the 2016 US elections. Both parties had a vested interest in diminishing public trust in news media, as internet-mediated news became the prime focus of election strategists in order to sway public opinion, overwhelming and confusing both the general public and experienced commentators (Persily, 2017, 63-64). The contemporary commentator will benefit from hindsight, and also from a number of tools offered by news publications. Thanks to internet-mediated news having efficient self-reference, and thanks to the efforts of several sizeable news media sources to archive, rank, and comment their own articles, the work of contemporary commentators is made not easier, but streamlined.

### 3.1.2. The Impossible is Only a Language Game Away

What multiplicity of language games exists in this case study? To answer this question, it is necessary to clarify Wittgenstein's concept of the language game. Language games, as defined in chapter 2.1, are sets of linguistic activities that follow and generate specific behaviours (Wittgenstein, 1953, §7). This makes specific uses of language akin to games, where participants are expected to play by certain rules, with the enforcement of these rules being a matter of social understanding. This basic description of language games allows for many communicative situations to be adequately described as language games. In the case of the 2016 American elections, it is possible to identify several language games at play; the discourses of the politicians form a different language from their communication behind closed doors, which is a different language game from the conversation of their electoral base. These particular discrepancies in linguistic behaviour are trivial. What is worth scrutiny, however, is how these discrepancies in language games have been weaponized, and how this weaponization has culminated in a result that some viewed as surprising.

In the build-up to the date of the election, instantaneous electronic news was presented to the American population via an array of news channels, some of greater size than others. This election was marked by the appearance in the mainstream electoral consciousness of 'alternative' news sources, such as Breitbart or The Young Turks. These sources rose from a demand of the American public to learn about news stories, whether believable or not, that depicted a specific understanding of the world. The behaviour of the American public dictated communications that would discuss a certain worldview, due in part to party strategy -as

discussed in chapter 1.1.1- and in other part to the expectations of communications in the database age. The era of database-centred internet discourse started with the Web 2.0 revolution, and by the time of the 2016 elections, its existence was solidly and subconsciously anchored in the minds of most American citizens; internet-mediated communication was then wholly focussed on presenting individuals with a personalized experience, where their habits were monitored and search results were optimized to generate more attention from the individual, creating not only filter bubbles, but most importantly a specific understanding of the world, tailored to confirm one's interests (de Mul, 2005, 252).

This situation created an interesting case of linguistic atomization. The language game of the American that learns about world events through MSNBC, The Young Turks, and Reddit was separate and unreconcilable from the language game of the American that gets their news from Fox News, Breitbart, and 4Chan. The set of linguistic references a Democratic Party voter might have did not resemble that of a Republican Party voter; words such as 'rights', 'freedom', 'immigration', 'welfare', or even 'trade' could be employed in the same context and mean very different *things* –this constitutes 'layer one' of Wittgenstein's analysis. Conversations and debates between opposing viewpoints would cause frustration in both parties, as the same premises could lead to conclusions so far removed from one another that their defence was unimaginable for the opposing participant.

This highlights the most defining feature of language games: their intrinsic relationship with *behaviour*. Language games are a result of behaviour, which can only be made sense of via language. Language, in its structure and its references, accounts for certain *forms of life*, and allows to communicate as efficiently as possible for said specific forms of life. As such, behaviour always precedes language, informs language, and results from language. In the case of the communication-doings of the American electorate in 2016, the language of either party was an indicator of a particular worldview, with themes and expressions that were mutually unintelligible. When the Republican party would communicate about immigration, jobs, or the economy, it utilized these topics and spoke of them in a way that would only resonate with voters of a certain sociology, that considers these themes to be relevant to their understanding of the world. Similarly, the Democratic party failed to campaign using language that resonated with most Americans, making their candidates unpopular even among their own base.

How did these political communications take form? Some attempts have been made to categorize the communication style of both Republican and Democratic candidates and the efficiency of such rhetoric; however, Clinton's communication style was not too dissimilar to campaigns prior, whereas Trump's communication was remarkably 'negative' for a Presidential

candidate (Liu & Lei, 2018, 147-149). This means that categorizing Trump's language is a more complex endeavour. Trump's style of discourse is as confident as it is unanalytical (Jordan et al. 2019, 3480). Similarly, it can be described as unprofessional, or closer to the rhetoric of a reality TV star rather than a president (Ross & Rivers, 2020, 1). In essence, Trump's language is not made for TV or radio, it is made for the internet (Ross & Rivers, 2020, 2). This makes the language game of the Trump base completely esoteric to the rest of the American voters in 2016. It is a language game where nicknames, such as 'Lying Ted' or 'Crooked Hillary' became just as meaningful as another language game's thorough analysis of a given candidate (Johnson, 2021, 302). It is a language game that creates a strong in-group / out-group dynamic, and that monopolises the headlines when misunderstood. This language game is one with a particular grammar, which is simplistic and based on shorthand for larger problems; all of immigration policy became 'build the wall', people with genuine grievances became 'liberals' or 'fake news', and campaigns of hate and misinformation became 'trolling'.

Tailoring one's language for simplicity has a few advantages: it is easily repeatable by many, it is easy to share in text or tweet form, and it is easy to report on. This made for the 'Trumpian language game' to be a set of linguistic behaviours prone to maximize Trump's brand online, completely comfortable with its negative connotations, that found in its meaning in the shared understanding of vague concepts as being important ways to understand the American experience. Compared to Hillary Clinton's campaign, which was reminiscent of many previous campaigns based on broad appeal, Donald Trump truly created a language game that was completely esoteric to any person outside of the in-group.

### 3.1.3. Your News is Fake News

What of the multiplicity of *listenings* in a given language game? The mere difference in language games, whilst important, does not suffice to explain the lasting linguistic impact of the 2016 American elections. Both the rise of Trump's brand of populism and the failure of the Clinton campaign indicate that even within traditionally set language games, a multitude of listenings competed with each other. If one is to understand the political communication of this election cycle being defined by the mainstream Democratic language game of Clinton and the Trumpian populist language game, it still leaves a lot of space for interpretation on the side of regular voters: whilst they can adequately understand and interact fully in the given language game, the targeted voters may still be brought to interpret the language used in a way that distracts from the intended message. This variety in interpretation do not indicate a

misunderstanding, or even a mistake in communication at any point in the interaction; it simply indicates that the language game did not 'stretch far enough' or oppositely 'focus in hard enough' to accommodate for the lived experience of all participants.

To understand some of the breaking stories of the electoral cycle under this light, one can use Politico's *16 Stories that Changed the 2016 Race*, as it provides a useful overview of a variety of stories from a variety of sources (Shafer, 2016). Using this list, it is interesting to see the coverage of Donald Trump by Democratic Party affiliated sources, as it highlights the language games and behavioural expectations of this particular subset of news media regarding political communication. The first story relating to Trump in this list is a news article published by Buzzfeed on the 18th of February 2016, titled *In 2002, Donald Trump Said He Supported Invading Iraq* (Kaczynski & McDermott, 2016). This related to Trump's claim that he was always opposed to the Iraq war, which is proven wrong in this article. Without the provided context it would have been difficult to understand the relevance of this story to the campaign. This plays in to a tendency of election coverage, aiming to make the opposition seem 'unpresidential' instead of supporting one's electoral representative; the language of the title starts with a date, followed by the name of the candidate and his message of the time, the reason for this being an important story being fully dependant on the context of its publication. The meaningfulness of that news story is, in essence, dependant on its use. In the domain of foreign policy communication during an election specifically, uncertainties about foreign policy are common, which makes pointing them and claiming them to be a defining story of the year meaningful (Meibauer, 2021, 17): what is being communicated is a specific type of analysis of Trump as a liar, which is analysis that will only appear to be meaningful to people that understood the 2016 campaign to be a referendum about Trump's presidential qualities as a world leader.

This was not what Democratic voters cared about most however, as they viewed problems such as the economy, the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities, healthcare, and gun policy as being more important than foreign policy (Doherty et al., 2016, 6). This inability of mainstream media to adequately address Donald Trump's troublesome campaign strategy without relying on what was a secondary concern for a majority of American voters represent a failure to account for a variety of interpretation in the Democratic base: what some viewed as a damning report, others glanced over. Not because they did not understand the meaning or timeliness of the report, but because it did not hold the psychologic weight that conversations about labour inequalities or healthcare might have. To highlight how this might have been a

determining factor in the election, it is useful to compare it to the streamlined attitude to communication adopted by the Republican party.

The source used above discussing "16 stories that changed the 2016 race" does not mention a single story from sources such as Fox News, the leading news network for American conservatives (Shafer, 2016). The reason for this can be easily explained through the less than favourable track record of Fox News when discussing news stories and their veracity (Folkenflik, 2020). However, Fox News is astoundingly popular in the United States, and is deserving of scrutiny due to its formidable reach (Mastrangelo, 2021). When inquiring what the Fox News editorial board deems to be the 'most important' stories of the year, the only sources available are two archived videos taken directly from their twenty four hour news coverage. One of them, titled "Biggest stories from around the world in 2016", focusses on exterior affairs, and is therefore not relevant for the research at hand in this chapter (Palkot, 2016). The second one, focussing on domestic affairs, is titled "2016: a year in review" (Smith, 2016). What follows is a condensed summary of everything Fox News built its reputation on, from presenting armed militias storming a reserve as "anti-government protestors" to focussing an uncanny amount of their broadcast to the status of transgender citizens in America, whether about the infamous 'bathroom bills' or the lift of the ban to serve in the military. Beyond this expected bias in reporting, what is most shocking to the contemporary viewer is the lack of time reserved for matters pertaining to the election.

Electoral stories selected for this end-of-year compilation include only 4 different headlines: Donald Trump winning the Republican nomination, Hillary Clinton winning the Democratic nomination, Hillary Clinton's emails being the subject of dubious legal oversight, and Donald Trump winning the American election (Smith, 2016). This is in stark contrast to Politico's selection of major news stories pertaining to the electoral campaign. It is however not a 'bug', but rather it is a 'feature'. Firstly, the commentary accompanying the stories is one that is not void of judgement: where Donald Trump won the nomination and announced a serious running mate, Hillary Clinton found herself "in a hard fought battle with independent senator Sanders of Vermont". Donald Trump won the presidency in a triumphant upset, where Hillary Clinton's emails were subject to "a federal investigation of which the conclusion seemed difficult to stomach for some". Whilst these stories are all deserving of coverage, and whilst they are not strictly false, it seems like much more could have been said about the road to the results of the election, specifically concerning Donald Trump's many controversies.

This difference in treatment might appear to be confusing. Indeed, one would not imagine that a network that was so central to Donald Trump's communication would not discuss

the election specifically. However, that would be missing the point: this discrepancy itself *is* the message, it *is* the story of the election according to Fox News. Donald Trump's communication relied on short, almost parodic statements that discussed the concerns of Americans as vaguely and as truth-indistinctly as possible. By doing so, Trump effectively reduced the fields of possible interpretations. He deliberately and systematically took strong positions on questions that he did not always understand, creating a language game that does not invite nuance. Doing so served to strengthen the sense of in and out group of his campaign, as no questioning of the simplicity of the language game would be allowed by its participants. This is how Donald Trump was heralded as the candidate of a LGTBQ+-less military, 'law and order', war on crime and war on drugs, among other underlying themes of the Fox News stories (Smith, 2016). By using Fox News, conservative viewers opt in to a certain understanding of the world, where politics aren't policy, but they are a certain understanding of the world.

### 3.1.4. 'Voz y Voto'

Whilst briefly discussed in the previous two chapters, the linguistic activity of participants in the various electoral language games deserves scrutiny. After identifying the language games at play, and the problem of interpretation within a given language game, identifying interpersonal relationship within language games is necessary. How do American voters interact within their respective language games?

In Culture and Value, a selection of Wittgenstein's personal notes, Wittgenstein offers a fascinating insight when discussing humour, which serves to explain how communication between parties in agreement works: "Humour is not but a way of looking at the world. So, if it's right to say that humour was eradicated in Nazi Germany, that does not mean that people were not in good spirits or anything of that sort, but something much deeper & more important" (Wittgenstein, 1970, 88). Humour, in its mechanics, can be considered as analogous to partisan politics: all parties involved are meant to share a way of looking at the world, and communication can only fulfil its desired goal if this dynamic is not stifled. In this sense, Donald Trump's presidency can be seen as the catalyst to allow for such a communicative dimension to prosper in America, where one either 'got it' or they could not understand what was being discussed. As such, it is not surprising to see that the pro Trump base was very united in its discussions, seldom publically disagreeing with one another (Galvin, 2020, 137). This type of acquiescing participation was invited by the form of the communication, which leaves very little in the way of possibilities for polite disagreement. The cleaving, antagonistic tone of the

language game of Trump and his fans transcended its apparent limitations and apparent niche appeal and managed to force many voters to learn to integrate it.

The interaction between different Democratic party voters will not resemble that of different Republican party voters. Due to its more non-confrontational language, and due to the perceived necessity to convince a larger group of people, Clinton's campaign was as all-encompassing and as harmless as possible (Hoffmann, 2018, 55). This has not, however, made interaction between Democratic party voters any easier; as mentioned in chapter 1.1.1, the language game was spread 'too large' so to speak, it invited too many interactions and tried to accommodate too many interpretations. This has led to a confused official communication, based on the virtues of not being Donald Trump, where Bernie Sanders voters were expected to respond to the same language that convinced corporate America. Whereas the Republican language game was vertical, characterized by an in / out group dynamic, and relatively resistant to disagreement, the Democratic language game was horizontal, overly vague, and filled with contradictions. Both are characterized by a lack of engagement of media sources with the voters. Instead of an interaction between the object of the news and its source, the 2016 elections saw media play a filter-bubble role, but rarely if ever engage with voters, which helped the case of the party that has been defined by its distrust for media.

This divide in linguistic attitude might contribute to explain the particular discourses surrounding the 2016 US elections, and the continued prevalence of some of these attitudes today. The case of the 2016 elections offers a particular insight into communication-doings that were as confrontational as they were unique. This case does not, however, offer an understanding of the linguistic components of instantaneous news media in contexts that are continuously explored by news media, or even contexts that do not invite interpersonal conflict directly. This is why the second case studied in this research will be the long-tail news coverage of North Korea.

### 3.2.Huttingtonian Translations: Covering Authoriatarianism

### 3.2.1.   Mediatic Context of Multiple Coverages

Some observations about the landscape of news media are not exclusive to its contemporary, internet mediated form. Whilst it is often held to high regard as the 'fourth estate', or as a pillar of society that has an importance and a power on par with the commoners, the nobility, and the clergy, it does respond to public demands in a way that may hinder effective communication of ideas for the public to get a useful understanding of the society they evolve in. Some would point at capitalism as being the culprit of this tension. For example, journalist Ben Bagdikian discusses the difficult coexistence of journalism and capitalism in detail, describing big publications as "apolitical organs of the elite" gearing their articles to serve their sponsors, and for all publications, it is more financially viable to curate a "demographic" than a selection of articles; that is to say, the job of a news publication is to ensure satisfaction of the fiduciary duty of a business, not ensure long-term trust-worthiness in news-breaking (Bagdikian, 2004, 222-230). This analysis offers a compelling yet seemingly incomplete approach to instantaneous news media; the complex contemporary news covering of authoritarian regimes, for example, seems to escape this dynamic of 'following the money', so to speak. What then does the language of instantaneous news media covering of authoritarian regimes do, and what rules does it follow?

When discussing contemporary authoritarianism, few nations fuel the imagination of Western commentators as much as North Korea. Ranked 2nd most unfree nation for the press on Earth by Reporters Without Borders, two things are certain when discussing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea –also called DPRK–: it is secretive, and it is not an ideal democracy (Reporters Sans Frontières, 2021). Whilst defining 'freedom' is beyond the scope of this research, and this index is, as are all others, a flawed representation of the complexities of different societies, defining the DPRK as 'unfree' seems to be an agreeable description. Additionally, this research does not aim to defend a strict understanding of the concept of authoritarianism, but will rather use it in a loose sense, similar to how Hannah Arendt presents it in her opus *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1979). That is to say, an authoritarian nation is one that exerts coercive control over both the private and public life of its citizens, without necessarily institutionalizing terror and violence (d'Entreves, 2019). Whilst asserting that a nation exerts coercive control over its own population is adequately feasible, finding consensus over whether or not a nation institutionalized terror is more difficult. Such a consensus only appears when specific historical and political circumstances arise, which can only be described

a posteriori. As such, calling the DPRK 'totalitarian' would be accurate, but for the purpose of this research and to avoid debate over specific nomenclature, this nation and others sharing a similar form of government will be called 'authoritarian', as the burden of proof required to describe a government as authoritarian is lesser than describing a government as totalitarian, and other descriptors would not serve the purpose of this research better.

How then, is the DPRK covered in instantaneous news media? The main focus of instantaneous news outlets these past few years has been North Korea's militarism, from the 2016 DPRK-US tensions about the DPRK's much publicized hydrogen bombs tests (Hu, 2017) to its most recent speculative reports of the growing nuclear arsenal of the nation (Dilanian, 2020). The DPRK's secretive approach to government is such that the exact size of their arsenal is extremely arduous to estimate. A report by the Nuclear Information Project states that "the authors cautiously estimate that North Korea may have produced enough fissile material to build between 40 and 50 nuclear weapons; however, it may not have actually assembled that many" (Kristensen & Korda, 2021, 222). That is to say, North Korea owns anywhere between one and fifty nuclear warheads, which is as speculative and unhelpful of an estimate as any report could provide.

Why then this focus on the DPRK's militarism? Quite simply, it is easier to believe official North Korean statements regarding their war capabilities than it is to believe their statements on the general life and wellbeing of their population. Given the video evidence provided by the DPRK, it is difficult for the international community and its press to not act on the side of caution, and therefore present these nuclear news items as anything other than stories worthy of being told and prepared for (Dai & Hyun, 306). As such, the only stories most sources agree on in regards to North Korea are that of their militaristic disposition.

Additionally to the language of militarism, another angle is particularly popular when covering North Korea: curiosities. Indeed, news stories might claim a number of extravagant things about North Korea, such as the fact they announced the discovery of a unicorn lair (Quinn, 2012). These articles have found their way out of the instantaneous news media landscape and found their way into Western popular consciousness, as some of these curiosities have become points of trivia or amusing observations of a foreign, 'cartoonishly villainous' society. This covering angle is popular, which would lead a neutral and naïve observer to assume it is well substantiated. This would be a mistake. Indeed, the apparent consensus regarding the credibility of sources about North Korea is that only the testimonies of refugees can be considered as trustworthy after a process of cross-comparison (Docan-Morgan et al., 2019, 1000); these accounts generally recall the militaristic, national, cultural, and even ethical

values propagandized by the North Korean system, and the horrible abuses to human decency refugees escaped, and much more rarely do these accounts recall these 'curiosities'.

Those stories about the DPRK's curiosities, as other surprising stories about Asia, are often provided by Radio Free Asia, also referred to as RFA. RFA is an American governmental service which presents as a news media corporation, which belongs in its entirety to the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USA.gov, 2022). Whilst it remains outside of the scope of this paper to determine the exact purpose of a source such as RFA, and whilst no judgements regarding the trustworthiness of their reports can be provided, it remains interesting to observe that the coverage of curiosities tends to find its source in RFA reports, and in very few other places (Broinowski, 2015). Another –perhaps more obvious– issue regarding North Korean news communication is the state monopoly on domestic news stories. Despite the sometimes purposeful 'poisoning of the well' of North Korean news by Western sources, it is plain to observe that believable news regarding the DPRK is difficult to come by due to North Korea's own agenda. All available sources seem to agree that mass indoctrination and state-driven propaganda are common in North Korea, from the schools to the newspapers (Docan-Morgan et al., 2019, 992). The only debate about this indoctrination relates to the nature of what is being communicated, as most refugees recount how news sources asserted the strong military, thriving economy, and cultural righteousness of the DPRK, not how King Jong Il invented the burrito (Staten, 2022). As such, official North Korean news media is difficult to assess without assumptions. It is designed to be hermetic to the outside world in both directions, and what the Western world has access to is heavily mediated, not only by Western sources treating non-military stories as curiosities, but also by how the West's most reliable sources are individual testimonies from refugees (Docan-Morgan et al., 2019, 1000).

### 3.2.2. Games of Distant Resemblance

The diversity of coverages regarding DPRK-related news makes for a variety of distinct language games. This section will look at the divergences and convergences in language games regarding North Korean news. Language games, by definition, relate and differ to each other in a variety of ways. It is possible to differentiate two mostly similar socio-linguistic contexts if their differences are meaningful to analyse. Similarly, some language games are so distinct and mutually exclusive in their language that comparing them appears akin to a comparison of two different languages entirely. A language game is, methodologically, merely a tool to identify differences in systems of behaviour between groups of people, that behaviour being essentially

linguistic. In the case of DPRK news coverages, the differences between language games tests the limits of family resemblance; the coverage of a same event by official DPRK sources, RFA-sourced media, and better sourced international news is astonishing, with only a subject matter bringing them together. The rest, from figures to details and from vocabulary to implications, is as resembling to one another as fifth cousins might be.

It might be easiest to start by analysing the language game of official DPRK news as presented to their citizen. Despite the challenges of Western media translations, as well as the lack of proficiency regarding the Korean language some commenters may have, some knowledge about the linguistic attitudes of DPRK news have reached the West. Official North Korean communication is defined not only on its militarism and common cultural myth, but also on a particular racism, one that sees members of the particular nation of North Korea as ethnically superior to Westerners and to their geographical neighbours, an attitude that resembles that of imperial Japan (Armstrong, 2011, 361). Comparisons between these two nations are beyond the scope of this research; however, it is important to highlight that the language game of the DPRK possesses an insular and self-referential structure, which may differ from that of a vast and diverse nation such as Stalin's USSR, to which North Korea is often compared. Whilst this is not strictly relevant to this research, it is not useless to understand the landscape of the problem at hand.

The language game of the DPRK media would then be highly controlled and centralised, making references and cultural expressions a result of the intent of the ruling party. Of course, it is impossible to summarize the existence of any people to the policies of the authoritarian government that rules them. However, it is possible to imagine a situation where, as mentioned in section 1.1.4, the will of the people to engage in a social setting with a behaviour other than that of the ruling party becomes arduous, as if their frame of linguistic reference to communicate anything trivial was taken from them (Wittgenstein, 1970, 88). This language game would be, quite sadly, one defined by its state mandated limitations, where literacy programs have the explicit goal to propagate dynastical power (Song, 2019, 128), cultural frameworks are controlled, and news media is unable to frame news in any other fashion but that of the national myth, defined by its insular self-reliance. The control of media and of linguistic education would make dialog structurally centred on themes that are beneficial to the ruling party, which would appear wholly unique in its expression of behaviour and cultural inference.

It would be difficult to bring forth a more detailed analysis of DPRK news media in itself, given the limited flux of precise data, research, and cultural artefacts on North Korea available in the West. However, Western coverage of DPRK events presents an interesting and

wildly different series of language games. In the globalized state of news –one must understand 'globalized' to mean 'Western'– some scholars argue that news-making has become filled with "contradictions" (Dai & Hyun, 2010, 299-300). Indeed, coverage of the same North Korean-related event is discussed in dramatically different ways depending on whether the source is American, Chinese, or South Korean (299). The American media is prone to frame DPRK military exercises in their understanding of the US' responsibility with the "war on terror", South Korean media is prone to frame the issue under the perspective of the legacy of the cold war, whereas Chinese media would frame the same event under the guise of necessity and attempted reconciliation (306). What unites them however is the concept of "threat", or the usage of a certain vocabulary that understands that North Korean militaristic events are a looming problem for all nations.

This highlights once again how language and behaviour are intertwined. Each of these three examples of coverages discussed a foreign nation using the general linguistic attitudes of their nation's own foreign policy. It is safe to assume that the news sources discussed were not coerced into adopting this worldview, simply because such a coercion would be unnecessary: were they to discuss the same event with another linguistic disposition, the public would not have understood it to be an insightful news article. Were the Associated Press to discuss North Korean military exercises as happening in a broader scope of reconciliation with neighbouring powers, the American public would not have even conceived of it as being a meaningful *utterance*. This does not make these expressions meaningless, it just means that the meaning of these expressions is dependent on a cultural behaviour that is as hermetic as the nation these news stories cover. "To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (Wittgenstein, 1953, §19).

What then of 'curiosity coverage', or the news reports of all the wild and uncanny things North Korea reportedly does? It is a language game with very distinctive features. Just as calling North Korea's regime 'Stalinist' would be a clear marker of operating in a non-academic language game, entertaining stories such as the invention of the burrito –briefly mentioned in the previous section– would be a clear delimiter of one's linguistic limitations: their perspective on the North Korean situation might be limited in terms of insightful geopolitical analysis. The language of North Korean curiosities news is different from any other language game possible regarding the North Korean situation, as it more closely resembles a mythology than it does reporting news on current affairs. Whilst the source of most of these stories, RFA, has an explicit intention to alienate and antagonize North Korea, the sort of vocabulary they convey is pervasive, most of the population will start conceptualizing this nation through the language of

curiosities. Here, the goal is to force language onto the population in order for behaviour free of this language to be made impossible; that is, no way to conceive of North Korea as anything but a fundamentally alien nation will be encouraged.

### 3.2.3.  Public Perspectives

Like tugged from language game to language game, the general public is left challenged to find meaning. This section will look at how difficult it is to establish diverging listenings in a same language game in the case of news about North Korean affairs. As mentioned here above, making sense of news about North Korea is a difficult task, even for a 'news savvy' and attentive crowd. Beyond how distinct these language games are, each of them offers information that invites for competing listenings. These competing listenings stem from the genuine intention of most to understand *as best as possible* what is happening in North Korea, despite how confusing the multiplicity of utterings on this same subject might be. This is a general intention of linguistic exchange that is being ascribed to this particular problem (Wittgenstein, 1953, §172). The way one *listens* is by being guided, the same way one reads; there is an expectation in all of language that the utterer will *lead* a listener *somewhere*. This 'somewhere' matters very little, as what does matter is this expectation to be led. For a listener to *understand* means, in a way, for a listener to walk down the path they are being led, with no guarantee that either utterer or listener will do a good enough job for that to be the case. This is to say, communication is a unique relationship between utterer and listener, where the listener ought to trust the utterer enough to lead the communication *somewhere*.

In the context of this research, it is nigh impossible to guarantee adequate conveyance of meaning, if even adequate conveyance of references. For one to conceive of a news regarding a North Korean military exercise, for example, would be an exercise in association across mildly resembling language games. The task for the listener would be to be led across a path that has already been paved by a variety of utterers with contradictory intentions, none of them seeming less believable than the next. Mobilizing the set of references of a listener is normally an implicit and expected task within a given communication, as language games do not ever need to make their rules explicit; these rules merely become obvious by necessity of behaviour. Here, the sets of references that ought to be mobilized are at odds with each other. As such, competing listenings do not make themselves plain to see by their different behaviours, but precisely in how paralyzing they are, in how there are no understood behavioural traits to adopt apart from assuming North Korea is a global threat and their culture is different to Western

culture. Such a vague attitude cannot be legitimately categorized as a meaningful linguistic behaviour as much as a default of it.

This default of behaviour parallels a different Wittgenstein observation: sometimes linguistic expressions implicitly determine which steps are to be taken (Wittgenstein, 1953, 190). Whilst Wittgenstein presents the example of a mathematical formula that when expressed demands to be solved in a certain determined way, this applies to the whole of language; in specific language games, certain expressions serve less as meaningful utterances and more as calls-to-action. The conditions for this to be the case are, if not strict, at least specific. First, the language game ought to be as commonly meaningful as possible, for even seemingly abstract expressions to be answered in a similar way by different participants. Secondly, it ought to be as free from confusion as possible, which demands education and consensus among participants. These two tenets are rare to find in natural language, which explains Wittgenstein use of mathematics to illustrate this point. However, such a language game may exist; the example of the two builders yelling 'slab' are a potent example of such a system where specific abstract expressions infer a complex modus operandi –here 'take the slab', 'pour some cement on it', 'pass the slab', and other such actions that lead to the slab being placed as precisely as possible. All of this is to say, a confused language game such as that of North Korean military news does not allow for specific actions to be taken: by purposefully blurring meaning in the language game and by making education of abstraction impossible, no definitive action can be taken by any participants.

### 3.2.4. Interpreting Lacunar Explanations

The behaviour of different participants within a given language game is difficult to assert in the case of DPRK news; indeed, the atomization of language games makes participants playing the same game a rarity. What is left is participants *thinking* they participate in the same language game. This confusion is understandable, as setting a clear boundary between resembling games is a difficult task, one that is done unconsciously and is a result of a social process more than it is a decision from any of the participants. The lack of categorical precision of Wittgenstein's concepts presents a great flexibility for interpretation, however it presents edge cases such as the one currently being studied with a great challenge: what if the tacit establishment of a language game is being actively hindered?

This active hindrance can be seen, in the allegory of a game, as a participant imposing an obscure rule change by means of implied coercion. An example is in order: it is easy to

imagine a group of children playing football, only for the child who owns the ball to state 'my goals count for 2 points' after being on the receiving end of a loss. Similarly, that child might exclude another kid from playing for reasons that they do not make explicit. All participants have no choice but to abide by these rules, despite not understanding them, or despite understanding they have no way to participate on a common ground of exchange. This dynamic of arbitrary rule-bending of a game can be seen in the example of DPRK coverage. When attempting to establish the category that North Korea fits in politically –whether a belligerent state ready and willing to trigger a nuclear war or an incapable nation with no real strength on the global stage, to use but one dichotomy– it is difficult to develop a reasonable argumentation when certain actors in that discussion change the categories. In this case, any question one might have about Western East Asian diplomatic strategy can be met using the rules of the language game of curiosities; after all, how could anyone defend a government crazy enough to claim that they found unicorns?

This borrowing of rules from a neighbouring language game can legitimize arbitrary rule changes. This, in turn, works as a neutralisation of the capacity to participate freely in the language game due to the difficulty of the ruleset. The example of this in the world of games would be being introduced to a particularly complex board game and understanding very little of it, making one too unsure of *what is at play* to even consider themselves a potential participant in that game. The other possible reaction is that of heated involvement, assuming other participants act in bad faith. When discussing North Korean news, it is easy to caricature other participants' involvement as disingenuous; 'you are parroting propaganda' is a statement any person in that language game could make, with no distinct way for any participant to categorize the statement as false. In the example of the board game, a participant can express their frustration with statements such as 'you have got to be making up rules'. Both examples are similar in that they understand there exists a tension between a set of rules that appears inconsistent and a genuine personal interest in understanding them. This makes for a strange language game, one that is unwelcoming to participations, and where the activities of different participants can run against one another.

### 3.3.Decentralization of Broadcast: The Case of the Arab Spring

### 3.3.1. What Happened in Spring

Both chapter 3.1 and 3.2 discuss the case of internet mediated corporate media news. An easy rebuttal to the analysis provided thus far would simply be to point at the reality of contemporary news sharing, which does not seldom happen through media conglomerates. A 'decentralized' approach to news media possesses different characteristics to corporate news media, both pragmatically and linguistically. The answer to this rebuttal would be that whilst decentralized news media is worth investigating, as it certainly possesses idiosyncrasies when compared to corporate news media, it is not wholly devoid of the linguistic mechanics presented thus far. To defend this answer, a particularly striking example might be of use; that of the Arab Spring. This particular event is notable for a variety of reasons, most important to this research being its position as the first global event that caught the public eye as a social media mediated event (Khondker, 2011, 675). Whilst true, and whilst further investigation of this status is outside of the scope of this research, it is important to make explicit the idea that a revolution arises from the material conditions of the revolting, not from the presence of decentralized means of communication; those are a facilitating factor, not a condition (678). Nevertheless, and despite the idealized Western perspective that a Twitter account and a dream can end colonialism, the role of instantaneous decentralized news in events of the Arab Spring make for a formidable case study.

The 14th of January 2011, Tunisian president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali resigned, marking the end of the first revolutionary movement of what would become the Arab Spring (Chrisafis & Black, 2011). This came after a period of protests started by a Wikileaks document that detailed the widespread corruption of the state of Tunisia. Rather humorously, experts claim that "Tunisians didn't need American diplomats to tell them how bad their government was, [however] the cables did have an impact" (Malinowski, 2011, p57). The sources for these uprisings are multiple, but it is theorized *a posteriori* that the common reason for all the revolutions of the Arab Spring was the economic situation of the Middle East that emerged from past exploitation, but was worsened by the global economic crisis of 2008 (Malik & Awadallah, 2012, p299). After Tunisia, a wave of protests emerged in the Arab World, with varying success; Tunisia, Lybia, Egypt, and Yemen saw a complete leadership change, whilst Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, South Sudan, Lebanon, Palestinian territories, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman saw protests of varying sizes that did not result in a regime change (Robinson, 2020).

The legacy of these protests and revolutions is often debated, as aside from Tunisia, none of the countries involved saw an improvement in their democracy, no country involved saw their standard of living increase, freedom of the press has remained low, and population displacement has increased hugely, leading to a expatriation crisis that is still at the centre of political public discourse today (Robinson, 2020). Nevertheless, the revolutionary moment was seen at the time as encouraging by Western –and specifically North American- commentators. The nomenclature of 'Somewhere Spring' is described by Professor of Modern Arab Politics Joseph Massad as a means to reclaim a revolutionary narrative as being inherently pro-Western, even going as far as describing the 'Spring' moniker as a marker of "liberalising regimes"; that is to say, making regimes more aligned with Western interests (Massad, 2012). Judging of the complex legacy of the Arab Spring is beyond the scope of this research. However, hindsight might be useful to understand the language used to describe and discuss breaking news events of the Arab Spring.

### 3.3.2. Clusters of Games

Identifying languages games was a difficult task in the case of DPRK coverages, in part due to how centralized, traditional news media sources and anecdotal, independent news sources were mixed with one another, with centralized news media quoting individual testimonies. This made for a limited selection of language games, where neither the language game of the official research into DPRK news nor anecdotal discussion being fully free from one another, therefore making it difficult to develop idiosyncrasies, or even evolve to develop their own sets of references and meanings. This confused division of language games is not present when analysing the Arab Spring. The great decentralization of sources made for decentralized communication *itself* to be a language game: the vocabulary and grammar of revolutionary news was the vocabulary and grammar of the media it organized around.

It is not difficult to identify certain characteristics of this game: first, there is an expectation of anonymity, all participants needing or choosing to interact as one among many. Second, there is a much stronger conversational tone to interactions, all participants expecting to hold a reciprocal interaction to any breaking of news. Third, there is a collaborative element to meaning-building. The first characteristic, anonymity, is best understood when discussing how behaviours within this language game function, which will be discussed in section 4.3.4. What matters to understand the organization of the language game at hand is that expectation of anonymity is, in principle, a motor of greater linguistic harmonization; whereas it is normal

to adapt one's attitudes regarding different participants within a given language game, having little to no knowledge of the participant beyond their role in the pressing matters at hand forces a certain uniformity to language, which bypasses some of the superfluous aspects of inter-personal communication to focus on what most requires sharing at a given moment.

The second characteristic, the conversational tone, stems from the expectation of response. Language stems from behaviour, is a behaviour, and precedes a behaviour; in this context, the behaviour that breaking news precedes is a direct interaction with the utterer of the news, which is not a behaviour that is expected –or encouraged– in traditional media settings. This makes for all news to be written, uttered, and shared with the knowledge that a response will be provided by a participant that is, until proven otherwise, not less believable of a source for whatever their response is. This creates an environment where news becomes the subject of a proactive conversation, and gets empowered into becoming the motor of behaviour that will affect all given participants. The behaviour generated by language is much closer to the utterer in this context than in cases concerning traditional media.

The last defining characteristic selected is the attempted collaborative building of meaning among groups of diverging specific interests. In a context such as the Arab Spring, some of the tenets of language games –such as how one's set of references being dependent on use– are 'stress tested', so to speak: the sheer amount of participants and the great number of distinct conversations happening within the same language game during a short amount of time dictates a necessity for the common linguistic ground to be simple and easily reproducible. If the difference between a police interrogation and progress towards better material conditions is five minutes and a message shorter than one hundred forty characters, it is not difficult to see how a certain type of linguistic attitude would emerge. Due to how far-reaching and how instantaneous the news needed to be, people from across social categories had to collaboratively agree on an implicit and quickly evolving set of references and meanings, with all the problems and struggles a situation like this one could provide.

### 3.3.3. Unheard Differences

When analysing the diversity in listenings within this language game, the notion of language game itself runs the risk of being questioned. This risk stems from the way in which language games as a concept are voluntarily open to interpretation. An interesting understanding of language games is to see them as one of Wittgenstein's many ladders: "my propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them

as nonsensical, when he has used them –as steps– to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)" (Wittgenstein, 1921, §6.54). The decision made for the purpose of this research is to understand the language game of internet mediated instantaneous interactive news during the Arab Spring as one language game, despite it containing many different linguistic interactions. One could understand the particular situations within this context to be language games –one could assert there is a language game to Tunisian organization of revolt, for example– but unless this assessment serves the purpose of an analysis of linguistic behaviour in particular, the possible existence of smaller games within games is not a hindrance to the analysis at hand. As such, it would not make sense to understand language games as an exact unit of measurement of group identity in language cases, as doing so would hinder the voluntarily fluid understanding of how language works.

Understanding how different behaviours can coexist within the same language game matters, specifically in a communicative context which has many participants. In the context of the Arab Spring, the multiplicity of participations makes for a unique language game, which possesses a certain necessity-driven unicity of listenings. Whilst misinformation, hoaxes, and government agents did participate in the language game and therefore did cause some miscommunication, these discrepancies in discourse had in common a shared understanding of what was at play, whereas the debates existing about the 2016 elections or the news coverage of North Korea were about the inaccessibility of the 'picture of the world' of other participants. After the fact, the debates concerning the Arab Spring concern mainly the degree to which certain elements contributed to the unrests, or who is to blame for what element, or even the legacy of the revolts; it is however agreed upon that internet mediated news was a factor, and that internet mediated news functioned a certain way during this historical context (Arafa & Armstrong, 2016, 76). This broad consensus about the functional communicative elements of the Arab Spring highlights how listenings were, if not singular, at least capable of understanding: participants understood the dynamics of what was happening, they understood the power of Twitter and YouTube in showing and discussing the reality of a revolution, there was little unintended meaning shift between participants due to how participative that meaning was. The meaning shift that did happen was intended, with government agents willingly contributing the chaos by infiltrating these social platforms. Having participants interact in a context where all actors are anonymous and proactive in the creation and spread of the news makes for unique simplicity to the discourse, where the reaction expected of the listener is to become themselves an utterer, or even an object of the news, and thus in a participative manner. In many ways, the Arab Spring was a watershed moment for what would become the citizen

reporter, where everyone with a phone is capable of meaningfully contributing to a given news discourse.

### 3.3.4.  Seasons of Grief

The multiplicity of interactions within the given identified language game offers an intriguing overview of a particular model of internet-age news. The democratization of news participations was an explicit goal of the Arab Spring. As such, it is not surprising to observe that interactions within the general language game of the social network news during the Arab Spring were varied in form but shared common purposes for revolting citizens. These purposes were the security of participants and the effective organization of resistance actions.

The security of the participants was encouraged through two social attitudes: anonymity when engaging with the news, and pedagogy about potential resistance. The anonymity is what has struck most commenters as being a defining factor of these events: being able to use an alias and a profile picture that does not resemble their own person allowed for many groups of people to participate in revolutionary discourse and announce their support to resistance movements without the fear of repercussion, whether this repercussion came from official –that is to say, military– groups (Rossiter & Zehle, 2013, 156), or from traditional structures of oppression, such as patriarchal rule (Radsch & Khamis, 2013, 884). This anonymity has a double effect on communicative behaviour: it both frees the discourse to allow for a more explicit vocabulary of revolt, and it allows for many to participate in the language game, whether or not the communication is targeted towards them. Anonymity increases possibility of interaction because it lowers the social barriers of entry of discourse, such as gender, race, or social group.

The other social attitude used to encourage the security of the discourse's participants was pedagogy: sharing advice and guides on how to minimize one's risks of injury when demonstrating in the physical world (Arafa & Armstrong, 2016, 76). This attitude made for a safeguard: the participants encouraging civil unrest had a vocabulary of care for the participants. Both in their form and in their content, the linguistic attitudes adopted to secure the security of the participants of this communicative situation were dependant on the media on which they were exercised; the language of the Arab Spring's online resistance mirrored both the language of internet micro-blogging and the language of revolution.

The effective organization of resistance action was achieved not through syntax or vocabulary, but through meta-linguistic means. That is to say, organization did not fully depend on how language worked –the *linguistic* means– but more so depended on where and how the

language was hosted where and how it was framed, presented, and distributed –the *meta linguistic* means. Indeed, by maximizing the digital footprint of their messages and choosing the host medium of their communication with care, organizers and participants alike achieved great efficiency regarding what purpose they aimed for their message to have, whether that be of organizing direct action, rallying supporters, or spreading their message beyond their borders (Arafa & Armstrong, 2016, 77). The particular qualities of different social networks was utilized to their fullest extents. Using the instantaneous and reactive nature of Twitter was perfect to organize and inform about matters that require quick reactions, such as tear gas being deployed at specific protest locations.

Such a situation perfectly displays the role of 'citizen reporter' that each participant may have in the given language game, where the grammar of the message is austere and efficient, and the 'retweet' and 'like' function can be used as a form of democratized publishing; a relative amount of anonymous Twitter users have deemed the news tweeted about to be deserving of more attention, or are signalling that they have understood the news, even giving them the option to react to it either by messaging support, distrust, confirmation, or other such reactions. By using the specifics of all the social media platforms available to their fullest extent, participants in the language game of particular events in the Arab Spring have maximized the efficiency of their organization.

It is not surprising then to learn that one of the go-to counter-measures of official powers was to shut off internet, or to limit access to certain sites whilst on the territory (Rossiter & Zehle, 2013, 154). This brings forth an observation that was also discussed for the previous two cases; that of entities that hold power over the social fabric's imagination 'dropping the ball', or how it is possible to limit the linguistic expressions of a given group by making the object that can be expressed as socially undesirable. Wittgenstein described this to be 'something else entirely' to a lack of ability to vocalize a certain feeling, whatever that feeling is –or for that matter, whatever 'feeling' is. The effectiveness of this, beyond not allowing for language to occur in the first place, is based on making a specific type of language meaningless, or to make a certain behaviour socially unrewarding. In the case of the Arab Spring, this attempt was foiled by the momentum of the movement as a whole, despite the variety of different outcomes from movements that comprised the Arab Spring.

## 4. On Games

When investigating the concept of language games by exploring specific cases to which it applies, certain characteristics of languages games as whole become clear. Firstly, 'language games' is a vague concept, one that benefits from an experimental approach instead of a purely deductive one; it is always possible, with creativity, to interpret a given communicational circumstance as being a language game, which possesses certain characteristics. These characteristics will constitute the rules of a given game, and will be useful to determine the degree of resemblance this game possesses to another. It is thus impossible to discuss language games without basing one's claims on particulars. Secondly, understanding any linguistic exchange as a game highlights how misunderstandings are always about non-compliance to tacit rules, whether the lack of compliance originates from a malicious intervention or simply a misunderstanding of the characteristics of a given game. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, this research highlights how apt of an allegory a 'game' is to discuss specific linguistic behaviours.

To strengthen this point, a more solid definition of 'game' ought to be offered. A game is a 'play' that adopts a specific structure, distinct from that of drama or theatre (de Mul, 2005, 257). 'Play' encompasses activities that are temporally and spatially set apart from everyday life, and that have no goal to motion themselves to an end (257). The nature of games lies in behaviour: games are meant to be played, that it, they find their existence in the interaction individuals have with them. A more concise definition of a game would be "a free act that takes place within a specially designated time in a specially designated place, according to specific rules which are strictly adhered to" (Huizinga, 1938, 13). Huizinga's definition is more complex than it appears; for him, all of culture can be described as being 'play', and 'games' are a given subset of 'play'. The designated space and time in which play operates is separate from life's most basic necessities, such as eating or sleeping (Huizinga, 1938, 4). This mirrors Hannah Arendt's distinction between work and labour, where the former describes activities of human necessity and the latter describes a codified area of cultural-building activity (d'Entreves, 2019).

These definitions offer some characteristics that will seem immediately fitting of language games, and some that will not. The characteristic that will hopefully strike the reader of this research as evidently fitting is the behavioural component. 'Games' and 'language games' are both defined by being inherently objects of interaction, which exist only in so far as human behaviour towards them exists. Another fitting characteristic is the lack of clear end-goal. Neither 'games' nor 'language games' have an 'external teleology', they are activities that

cannot be defined by their finality. This, however, must not be mistaken for a lack of internal teleology; all games can –and oftentimes have- a 'goal', or what can be better described as a 'win condition'. This allows for rules of play to structure the behaviour allowed to attain this win condition. In other terms, 'play' does not end whilst 'games' can and often do have an end point (de Mul, 2005, 257-258). 'Games' are defined arrangements of 'play' that follow a given ruleset, whilst 'play' is integral to all of human culture. Whilst some games have conditions that bring the current 'fixture' to an end, all games share in the need they have for participants to 'lose themselves' in the play, to be unable to see an end to the play element, no matter its incarnation. As such, it is possible to see the 'win condition' as another rule in a game's given ruleset; 'play' which is not defined by a ruleset, does not end.

Huizinga and other authors interested in his work did provide interesting attempts at categorizing subsections of play. Roger Caillois, expanding upon Huizinga's work, offered four categories of play: competition or 'agôn', chance or 'alea', simulation or 'mimicry', and vertigo or 'ilinx' (Caillois, 1961, ix-x). Examples are as follows: football is a 'competition', lottery is 'chance', Hamlet is 'mimicry', and bungee-jumping is 'vertigo' (12). Football, lottery, Hamlet, and bungee-jumping are all acts of 'play'. Furthermore, the four categories contain a multitude of 'games' (13-14). Caillois offers that these categories are not mutually exclusive, and that certain 'games' are of the domain of both competition and chance for example –sports betting would be one of these games (18). The last insight in this theory of play that is crucial is this: "Rules are inseparable from play as soon as the latter becomes institutionalized" (27). This primordial importance of rules in play seems odd given the distinction between 'play' and 'games' as its subset made in Huizinga's work. However, one must understand Caillois' statement as follows: when 'play' is made official, it is inextricable from rules. What 'institutionalized' means is not self-evident in Caillois, but seems to relate to official bearers of rule-enforcing measures; the theatre for Hamlet, the bookie for sports betting, and other such organisational authorities (34). In this conception of 'games', rules tend to be explicit: whilst theatre for example contains many articles of decorum which could constitute implicit rules, playing Hamlet in a park for free would still be 'playing Hamlet', and would do away with many implicit rules of the theatre.

Voluntariness of interaction is crucial, and is another definitive element of games that fits language games. Whilst it is easy to imagine getting cornered by a nosey neighbour as an example of involuntary participation in a language game, it is important to remember that the 'cornering' in question finds its roots in one's intent to not hurt the relationship with neighbour in question. This can be considered as a linguistic example of Huizinga's distinction between

'surviving' and 'playing', as insuring one is not kicked out of their home is important to survival. Despite this, there continues to be a rule following component to this situation, as resolving the conflict is akin to a game with its own rules and win conditions. There are many reasons to not hurt the feelings of a neighbour, be that empathy, duty, maybe a hope to ask for a service in the future, or other such reasons. These reasons matter very little, as they are only ways to navigate a given game. It is very much possible to tell the neighbour off, if one is not willing to play that game. Whether motivated by desire to play or desire to gain something, voluntariness is integral to games and language games. However, 'voluntariness' does not mean the same for games and language games; whereas Huizinga's distinction between survival and play ensures that 'games' are an activity one choses to partake in before adopting the ruleset, language does not afford this consciousness of choice: as a shaper of one's own understanding of reality, language for Wittgenstein is a component of life that cannot be avoided, that one cannot chose to withdraw from (Wittgenstein, 1950, §1.1). Huizinga's concept of voluntariness is more subtle: whilst 'play' is unavoidable as a definitive part of existence past survival necessities, engagement in specific 'games' is voluntary. Whilst the whole of culture dwells in 'play', choice operates at a different level; that of specifics of games. For Wittgenstein, the 'voluntariness', appears in one's ability to choose which game they are willing to participate in, or to participate in the shifting of rules within a given game. This is a generous interpretation of Wittgenstein's theories, as some linguistic situations are presented as unavoidable in his work, such as that of making sense of the world around us. This means that whilst it is possible to equate voluntariness in Huizinga's 'play' to voluntariness in Wittgenstein's 'language games', the fit of one concept into the other is far from optimal.

The characteristics of games that might seem a more difficult fit for language games are the clear designation of space and time. This categorization is necessary in calling an activity a game, as games must be finite in both space and time: poker happens at a given table at a specific time that participants agreed to, just as Monopoly, and similarly as the Olympic Games happening at a given city in a given year with tight schedules for each event. The separation between 'games' –as a subset of play– and 'life' seems necessary when discussing ludic matters, and there seems to be a tension between these two categories; it is impossible to imagine a life devoid of 'play', yet 'games' are defined by their separation from other activities of life. When it comes to language games, such a distinction is impossible. More than simply impossible, this distinction would run antithetical to Wittgenstein's conception of language, from the early "the world is the totality of facts, not of things" (Wittgenstein, 1922, §1.1) to the later "to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (Wittgenstein, 1953, §19). For

Wittgenstein, it is impossible –and even foolish– to say anything of a world beyond what language allows one to experience. Language games are therefore inherently part of life, insofar as what is meant by 'life' is not a metaphysical claim. An argument could be made for Wittgenstein's 'language games' to be closer to Huizinga's 'play', as they constitute a cultural bedrock of sorts, inherent to all cultural activities. Yet this fit is uneasy; 'language games' are rule-following first and foremost, and they are indistinguishable from Wittgenstein's understanding of life, as even working for one's survival is an experience that is made sense of using language.

To use unfitting concepts loosely, Wittgenstein would consider 'survival' to be a domain of 'play'; experiences of food, shelter, reproduction are made sense of through language not by choice, but by necessity. The language used to even consider certain activities as necessary to survival is in itself a particular language game; a contemporarily relevant example would be how the language of basic survival includes health resources but not mental health resources, or how leisure is not considered necessary to survival. It is impossible to even consider the category of 'survival' without language, let alone experience 'survival' without 'language'. This highlights an observation about Wittgenstein's theory of language that Wittgenstein himself would refuse to consider: in all of Wittgenstein's work, language is a transcendental category. This is to say, 'language' is a concept that can only be made sense of if it is considered as a necessary category of experience. Wittgenstein himself would no doubt refuse this observation, considering it to be merely an 'aesthetic consideration' (Biletzki & Matar, 2021, §2.1) However, understanding language to be a property that is primordial to any experience of phenomena allows to conceive of Wittgenstein's 'language games' as indistinguishable from any category of life, be it survival or culture. The success of Wittgenstein's method is that it makes sense of language in its 'local effects' so to speak, it attempts to approximate a theory of language starting from its effects and roles in everyday life. It is then perhaps unsurprising that Wittgenstein shifted his focus from his earlier work to a more constructive, observable iteration of language in his later work. Wittgenstein's position on language's role in life can best be summarized as: "being that can be understood is language" (Gadamer, 1975, 470). Whilst this quote was not meant to provide an explanation of Wittgenstein's work, it is nonetheless quite fitting.

What can one make of this difference between Huizinga's 'games' and Wittgenstein's 'language games'? If the 'space and time' characteristic is integral to games and impossible to assert for language games, can language games truly be called games? The answer relies on what can only be described as a *Wittgensteinian move*: 'language games' can be called 'games'

because discussing 'language games' is a language game in itself! Discussing language games implies certain participants, engaging in a certain dialog following certain rules that only disclose themselves by practicing dialog within that given game. Whilst it may seem humorous to present the problem as such, it is wholly fitting with one of Wittgenstein's most pervasive thesis: being precise is not a necessary prerequisite to effective communication. The concept of language games itself spawned from a necessity to explain how natural language works, with its incompleteness, its allegories, and its ability to operate with many implied connectors. Wittgenstein himself discussed his game allegory, stating that "one might say that the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges. –"But is a blurred concept a concept at all?" – Is an indistinct photograph a picture of a person at all? Is it even always an advantage to replace and indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct [picture] often exactly what we need? […] The point is that this is how we play the game" (Wittgenstein, 1953, §71).

Wittgenstein's 'language games' do not resemble all 'games' equally. Taking Caillois' distinction, 'playing Hamlet' would only slightly resemble a conversational 'language game' between two builders, for example. They would share some tenets, but this category of 'play' is intuitively dissimilar to any language game presented during this research. However, certain categories of 'play' are more resembling to given language games; it is possible to imagine a game such as 2 participants are required to say a word or expression which follows from the last syllable of the other participant's last word –for example, participant A would say 'passport', participant B 'port city', then participant A 'city state'. This simple game is a 'language game' as much as it is a 'game', as it fits the criteria of both categories perfectly. However, the exact match between two particulars –such as the 'language game' and the 'game' of the word-game here above– does not mean that the two concepts at play are one and the same –that of 'language game' and 'game'.

The historicity of the concepts of 'game' and 'language game' also deserves some scrutiny. Wittgenstein introduced 'language games' to criticize the linguistic positivism of his time, not only breaking with the rigor of logic-based understandings of language with the levity of the game allegory, but also presenting a theory of language as a matter of society. Huizinga's concept of play was introduced to segment clearly the sphere of survival, where technology belongs, from the sphere of play, where culture happens. The legacy of the concept of play in Huizinga is, however, not as simple. In "Homo Ludens 2.0: Play, Media, and Identity", part of the book "Playful Identities" which discusses contemporary cultural issues of through the lens of Huizinga's work and its application, it is identified that Huizinga 'leaves the door open' to the existence of entities that are both technological and playful, perhaps against his will; "In

principle, no single "serious domain" within human life is exempt from "ludification". This even applies to the "serious domain" that Huizinga considered to embody the very decay of playfulness: modern technology" (Frissen et al., 2015, 21). As such, it might not be surprising that whilst Huizinga did not understand 'play' to be a blurred concept such as Wittgenstein did with his 'language games', Huizinga nonetheless left enough room for interpretation to make 'play' a difficult concept to accept as hermetic to technology. Besides the evident example of contemporary video games, phenomena such as the economization of games and adversely, the gamification of business are examples of the blurriness of Huizinga's 'play' being exclusive from technology by definition; are modern football and stock market betting not serious games, or playful businesses? This makes for 'play' and 'not play' two concepts that are not mutually exclusive, as bewildering as it may appear. However, this bewilderment proves comparable to that of Wittgenstein's 'language games', as presenting such a dichotomy as not being hermetic incites a reflexive stance from the person that studies these concepts. This is not unlike Wittgenstein's method, for whom lack of clarity of concepts reinforced his arguments. Perhaps the main difference here is in how Wittgenstein understood his own methodology as insufficient to answer the questions he raises, whilst both approaches gain from their lacunar methods. Resorting to use the blurriness of his concepts as an argument in itself allowed Wittgenstein to avoid the reduction of his theories to easily distinguishable categories; In Wittgenstein's work, perhaps bewilderment *is* the point.

A full definition of 'game' is impossible to provide, whether according to ludologists, Huizinga, or Wittgenstein. This explains why many events can be described as games, from the Olympics to poker, or from Dungeons & Dragons to Model UN. This conceptual flexibility serves Wittgenstein's methodology well, as the limits of language are a dominant feature of his analysis. This serves to show how 'language games' are a powerful tool for analysis, which can catalyse insight about a variety of different linguistic situations, from a verbal exchange between two participants to the news coverage of a nation's elections. The pragmatics of language games become clear when understanding that rule-following behaviour dictates all linguistic attitudes, even those that aim to discuss rule-following behaviour.

## 5. Conclusion

What, then, are the characteristics of the language game of internet-mediated news? This research presented the following answer: whilst each case provides a unique application of Wittgenstein's theories, there cannot be such a thing as a unified language game of internet

mediated news; different case studies offered different sets of linguistic behaviours, which in turn informed different characteristics of the concept of language games. To reach this answer, a Wittgensteinian methodology was presented, offering a theoretical basis of language games as loosely defined ensembles of linguistic behaviours operating following rules, these rules being established from the behaviour of the participants. This opened the possibility to ask three major questions: 'are participants discussing in a same language game', 'are participants interpreting in the same way' and 'what kind of relationship are the participants involved in'. These questions were then asked of three major events in internet-mediated news: the 2016 USA elections, the nuclear communication of North Korea, and the Arab Spring. Each of these events brought forward different observations regarding language games. The 2016 American elections illustrated the ease with which a same topic can lead to widely differing language games when being communicated in internet news. The communication around North Korean nuclear missiles illustrated that all participants in a language game do not interpret a news in an equal way, and that some participants might have a vested interest in furthering a divide in interpretation. Finally for the case studies, the internet-focus of the Arab Spring illustrated that participations in a given language game are multiple, and that the collaborative nature of rule-building in the language game makes it a blurry but powerful concept.

These cases all offered insight on the application of 'language games' as an analytical tool. By analysing these cases, the theory of language games was offering more questions than it provided definitive answers. These questions lead way to an observation regarding the methodological utility of language games; the only constant of each case presented of internet-mediated communication is how 'language games' is a blurry concept. Whilst this vagueness affords great flexibility in analysis, it is challenging when attempting rigorous categorisation. By comparing the concept of 'language game' to Huizinga's concept of 'game', the importance of the blurriness of the concept of 'language games' becomes plain to see. Wittgenstein's most important teaching is perhaps that in natural language, being precise is neither necessary nor always possible. As such, an analytical tool such as the 'language game' which is blurry and unprecise can be of great use, when understood as a way to focus one's analysis on what participants *do* when they communicate. Other attempts at categorization, or even attempts at crystalizing language games into static norms are bound to fail. Language games are games insofar as they have rules and are experienced by participants. They differ or resemble each other on other characteristics, none of which are useful to assert.

What can be made of this research? This thesis provides a study of Wittgenstein's work that attempts to 'bridge the gap' so to speak between his earlier and later works, doing so by

offering categories of language within which Wittgenstein's analysis operates: his earlier work focussing on a semantic layer, and his later work focussing on a hermeneutic and pragmatic layer. This categorization serves to highlight how Wittgenstein operates when he analyses a linguistic phenomenon, and how his use of concepts is purposefully loose, which strengthens his analysis. This research does however contain some blind spots, which could be fulfilled by other researchers. Some of these blind spots are as the lack of media theory or the restrictive selection of cases. Research into these particular directions could lead to interesting insights into the role of linguistic behaviour in the study of mass media as a phenomenon in and of itself, for example. Similarly, other news cases may be considered by other researchers as representative of parts of language games that were not sufficiently addressed during this research. Whilst all these concerns lie firmly outside of the set scope of this thesis, they present fascinating challenges. What remains certain however, is that Wittgenstein's theories of language will continue to present challenges to any researcher that genuinely attempts to decipher them.

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*Note: as a convention, in-text citations of philosophical works will refer to their original publication year. If the version of the work used is posterior to its original publication, the original publication date will be in brackets in the bibliography, followed by the publication date of the version used.*

*In addition, direct in-text citation will use the " " quotation marks, whilst other purposes of quotation marks, such as textual distinction, will use ' '. For example, "language games" would be a direct quotation from a cited author, whilst 'language games' would be a simple differentiation from the rest of the text.*

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