

**The discursive construction of trolling
on British and Hungarian political blogs**



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**This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of
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Declaration

I hereby confirm that this thesis has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree at this or any other university. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration. Many of the ideas in this thesis were the product of discussion with my supervisors, Dr Claire Hardaker and Dr Karin Tusting. Excluding the front and back matter, the thesis is 79,775 words long.

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Abstract

This thesis looks at how users construct *trolling* as a negatively marked communicative behaviour and *troll* as a behaviour-based identity in their comments on British and Hungarian political blogs, thus focusing on the users' metapragmatic discourses on online trolling. The main aim of the thesis is to identify the perceived actions, motives, and aims that users associate with trolling in their comments. The thesis is also concerned with how these actions, motives, and aims affect the ways in which trolling is depicted and trolls are portrayed in the users' comments.

To answer these questions, the thesis presents a corpus-based analysis of 6,129 British and 1,118 Hungarian comments in which users call someone a *troll* or refer to someone's behaviour as *trolling* or *trollkodás*. These comments were collected from 1,713 British and 519 Hungarian comment threads, which were posted on 27 British and 28 Hungarian political blogs in 2015.

The thesis observes that British and Hungarian commenters attribute the same four activities, five motives, and six aims to the alleged trolls. The perceived trolling activities include spamming, ignoring or withholding information, flaming, and dishonesty, which in total cover sixteen specific actions. The trolls' perceived motives comprise various emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons, financial gain, political beliefs, being employed by a political body, and unspecified political affiliation. Finally, the trolls' perceived aims involve diverting others' attention, triggering unpleasant emotions, eliciting responses, provoking conflict, misleading or confusing others, and disrupting the ongoing discussion. The analysis also shows that, although users construct trolling and trolls in many different ways, trolling is generally conceptualised as a non-normative and manipulative behaviour while trolls are portrayed as bad debaters and uncooperative troublemakers.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Trolling is a derogatory internet slang term, which probably first appeared on *Usenet*, a worldwide distributed discussion board system, at some point in the late 1980s (Cruz et al., 2018: 16). Based on its academic definitions (see Section 2.1 for a fuller discussion of these), trolling is generally conceptualised as an intentional, non-normative, and harmful online behaviour that involves deception, aggression, provocation, and disruption. *Trolling* is also used as an all-encapsulating term to describe various online behaviours that are antisocial (Cheng et al., 2017), negatively marked (Binns, 2012), or malicious (Ortega et al., 2012).

There are two widely held views on the possible etymology of *trolling*. According to the first one, the verb variant is conceptually related to a fishing method of the same name that involves slowly dragging a lure or baited hook from a moving boat (Herring et al., 2002: 372). At the same time, *troll* as an internet slang term might be traced back to the noun *troll* which refers to the aggressive and slow-witted supernatural beings in Norse mythology and Scandinavian folklore who were believed to inhabit isolated caves and subterranean dwellings (Hardaker, 2017: 504). Due to the massive success of some fantasy series, such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter*, troll as a supernatural being has become part of modern Western popular culture.

Online trolling was a subcultural concept in the late 1980s and early 1990s as it was only known to those who actively engaged in online discussions on Usenet, Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), and Internet Relay Chat (IRC) networks (Tepper, 1997). The term reached public attention in the late 1990s and 2000s and it has become part of mainstream Western culture (Golf-Papez & Veer, 2017: 1339). It has been widely covered in the mainstream media (Chen, 2018) while it has also attracted increasing interest in several academic fields, including linguistics (Hardaker, 2010), media and communication studies (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2016), psychology (Buckels et al., 2014), and computer science (Cheng et al., 2015). Today, the term is extensively used on websites where users can directly interact with one another, such as blogs, message boards, chat rooms, and social networks, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter (Dyrel, 2016: 356).

1.2. Research questions and aims

This thesis looks at how users construct trolling as a communicative behaviour and troll as a behaviour-based identity in their comments on British and Hungarian political blogs. Consequently, I treat *trolling* and its Hungarian counterpart *trollkodás* not as predefined academic terms but as inter-subjective and context-sensitive *metapragmatic labels* (Hardaker, 2015) that internet users employ in *metapragmatic comments* to describe, conceptualise, and evaluate their own and others' communicative behaviour (Haugh, 2018). Approaching *trolling* and *trollkodás* as metapragmatic labels also entails that the object of my analysis is not trolling itself but the users' *metapragmatic discourses* on this perceived communicative behaviour in the comment threads of British and Hungarian political blogs. In order to understand how internet users conceptualise trolling and to give a comprehensive overview of the metapragmatic discourses around this communicative behaviour, the thesis aims to answer four research questions, which are discussed in Chapters 5–7:

- (1) What actions do the users associate with trolling in their comments? (Chapter 5)
- (2) What motives do the commenters attribute to the alleged trolls? (Chapter 6)
- (3) What discursive aims do the commenters ascribe to the trolls? (Chapter 7)
- (4) How do the above actions, motives, and aims affect the ways in which trolling is depicted and the trolls are portrayed in the users' comments? (Chapters 5–7)

To answer these questions, I built two corpora. The British corpus consists of 1,713 comment threads whereas the Hungarian corpus comprises 519 threads. These were collected from 27 British and 28 Hungarian political blogs. The British threads contain 740,841 while the Hungarian threads include 107,719 comments. Every collected thread was created in 2015 and each involves at least one *troll comment* in which a commenter calls someone a *troll* or refers to someone's behaviour as *trolling* or *trollkodás*. In total, 6,129 British and 1,118 Hungarian comments have been identified as troll comments.

Data analysis involved a corpus-based qualitative-interpretative investigation of the troll comments. Firstly, using the concordance lines of the search term **troll**, I selected and annotated those troll comments in which users associate actions, motives, or aims with trolling. I refer to these as *troll action comments*, *troll motive comments*, and *troll aim comments*, respectively. Secondly, I identified the actions, motives, and aims that

users attribute to the alleged trolls in these comments. Thirdly, I described how trolling and the trolls are constructed in the troll comments. Fourthly, to determine how frequently users associate the identified actions, motives, and aims with trolling, each troll comment was provided with various action-, motive-, and aim-related annotations. Fifthly, to make the annotation process more transparent and consistent, the n-grams and collocates of the search term **troll** and the positive keywords in the troll comments against the other comments in the threads were also studied. The aim of this step was to identify those words and multiword expressions that consistently mark troll actions, motives, or aims in the comments. Finally, I summarised the quantitative results of the annotation. As I used large collections of electronically stored texts and corpus methods, such as n-gram, collocation, and keyword analysis, to describe how users employ the metapragmatic label *troll(ing)/trollkodás* in the online discourses around this perceived behaviour, this study can be situated within the broad fields of corpus-based discourse analysis (Baker, 2006) and metapragmatics (Haugh, 2018).

1.3. Rationale

I had four main reasons to undertake this study. Firstly, although trolling is one of the most prominent negatively marked online behaviours, which has attracted much academic interest in the past ten years (Hardaker, 2017: 493), previous research has mainly focused on trolling in English online interactions (Sun & Fichman, 2018: 478). This thesis contributes to the intercultural study of user conceptualisations of trolling by analysing not only English but also Hungarian comments.

Secondly, despite the fact that trolling has recently been associated with state-orchestrated political propaganda and disinformation campaigns (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016; Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018; Saka, 2018), very little is known about how trolling is conceptualised in online political discourse. This thesis contributes to the academic study of perceived trolling in online political discourse by analysing comments that were posted on British and Hungarian political blogs. I decided to focus on political blogs because these cover the entire political spectrum from radical left to radical right. Moreover, comment threads normally play an even more important role on blogs than the original blog posts, which makes blogs a valuable data source for analysing the perceptions of trolling in online political discourse.

Thirdly, although Sanfilippo et al. (2017: 2323) point out that motive attribution has a crucial impact on the user conceptualisations of online behaviours, the trolls' motives have received much less academic attention than their actions and aims (see, however, Shachaf & Hara, 2010 and Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015). This thesis contributes to the academic study of the trolls' perceived motives by giving equal weight to the actions, aims, and motives that users associate with trolling in their comments.

Finally, with some exceptions, such as Hardaker (2010, 2013) and Hopkinson (2013), previous research on trolling has mainly relied on case studies (Herring et al., 2002), interviews (Shachaf & Hara, 2010), and questionnaires (Maltby et al., 2016). This thesis contributes to the corpus-based study of perceived trolling by building two specialised troll corpora and by analysing large numbers of online interactions, using well-established corpus methods, such as n-gram, collocation, and keyword analysis.

1.4. Contributions

The five main contributions of this thesis are as follows: Firstly, the thesis points out that British and Hungarian commenters attribute the same four activities, five motives, and six aims to the alleged trolls. This suggests that, although trolling is generally considered to be context-sensitive (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2319), it is conceptualised in a similar way in two different, yet not completely dissimilar, European cultures. Moreover, although all these troll activities, motives, and aims have at least been mentioned in previous research, this thesis is the first corpus-based study to demonstrate that ordinary internet users indeed associate each of these with trolling in online interactions.

Secondly, the perceived trolling activities include (1) spamming, (2) ignoring or withholding information, (3) flaming, and (4) dishonesty, which in total comprise sixteen specific actions as discussed in Chapter 5. This suggests that although Herring et al. (2002) and Dynel (2016) describe trolling and flaming as two distinct yet equally complex behaviours, users conceptualise flaming as only one of the four main ways in which trolling may manifest itself, thus depicting flaming as a less diverse behaviour than trolling (Cheng et al., 2017). The analysis of the troll action comments also reveals that users consistently depict trolling as a non-normative behaviour, reinforcing the idea that trolls continuously transgress social norms (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 163).

Thirdly, the trolls' perceived motives comprise (1) various emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons, (2) financial gain, (3) political beliefs, (4) being employed by a political body, and (5) unspecified political affiliation. The quantitative analysis of the troll motive comments also reveals that the most frequently mentioned motive for trolling is an unspecified political affiliation in the British corpus and being employed by a political body in the Hungarian corpus. These findings suggest that, although existing scholarship consistently depicts trolling as a chiefly emotionally motivated behaviour (Buckels et al., 2018: 9), users perceive trolling as being mainly motivated by financial, ideological, and political reasons, at least on political blogs.

Fourthly, the trolls' perceived aims involve (1) diverting others' attention, (2) triggering unpleasant emotions, (3) eliciting responses, (4) provoking conflict, (5) misleading or confusing others, and (6) disrupting the ongoing discussion. These aims reveal that alleged trolls seek discursive dominance over the comment threads (Herring et al., 2002: 380) by negatively influencing others' attention, emotions, beliefs, actions, and interpersonal relations for their own benefit (Craker & March, 2016: 83). The quantitative analysis of the troll aim comments also shows that, although Donath (1999) and Dynel (2016) depict trolling as an inherently deceptive behaviour, users accuse the trolls of trying to mislead others in only around one quarter of their comments.

Finally, the thesis points out that users employ action, motive, and intention attribution as a behaviour- and identity-building device to construct trolling and trolls in various ways in their comments (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2323). A common feature of these different constructions is that users generally depict trolling as a non-normative and manipulative behaviour while trolls are portrayed as bad debaters and uncooperative troublemakers. This suggests that users attribute actions, motives, and aims to trolls not only to explain their behaviour but also to belittle and discredit them.

1.5. Thesis structure

The rest of the thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 2 gives an overview of previous research on online trolling, focusing on the communicative actions, motives, and aims that have been associated with trolling in the academic literature. Chapter 3 summarizes the theoretical assumptions I build upon and the theoretical terms I use in the empirical analysis presented in this thesis. Chapter 4 describes the British and Hungarian corpora I have built for the purposes of this study, including their selection,

collection, and characteristics. This chapter also outlines how the troll comments were analysed.

Chapter 5 addresses the first research question by analysing the comments in which users associate various communicative actions with trolling. Chapter 6 addresses the second research question by examining the motives that users attribute to the alleged trolls. Chapter 7 addresses the third research question by looking at the aims that users ascribe to the trolls. Chapters 5–7 also address the fourth research question by analysing how the trolls' perceived actions, motives, and aims affect the ways in which trolling is depicted and trolls themselves are portrayed in the users' comments. Finally, Chapter 8 gives a summary of the main conclusions, limitations, and theoretical/legal/methodological implications of this study. This final chapter is followed by the references and appendices.

2. Literature review

2.1. Overview

Trolling has attracted interest in several academic fields. These include linguistics (Donath, 1999; Herring et al., 2002; Hardaker, 2010), media and communication studies (Tepper, 1997; Binns, 2012; Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2016), psychology (Buckels et al., 2014; Griffiths 2014; Maltby et al., 2016), and computer science (Ortega et al., 2012; Dlala et al., 2014; Galán-García et al., 2014). However, despite its continuously expanding social and mainstream media coverage and its relevance to legislation, trolling has several under-researched aspects (Hardaker, 2015).

This thesis aims to contribute to the academic study of four such areas. These are (1) perceived trolling in online political discourse (Özsoy, 2015; Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018; Saka, 2018) (2) perceived trolling in non-English interactions (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016; Sun & Fichman, 2018), (3) the trolls' motives for engaging in non-normative behaviour (Shachaf & Hara, 2010; Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015), and (4) the corpus-based analysis of the metapragmatic discourses around trolling (Hardaker, 2010, 2013; Hopkinson, 2013).

Trolling is generally understood as a goal-driven behaviour (Hardaker, 2013: 58; Golf-Papez & Veer, 2017: 1339) whereas *troll* is widely regarded as a behaviour-based identity (Golder & Donath, 2004: 3), which implies that internet users identify others as trolls based on their perceived behaviour. The academic definitions of trolling suggest that trolling is generally conceptualised as a diverse (Fornacciarri et al., 2018: 258), intentional (Golf-Papez & Veer, 2017: 1336), non-normative (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 163), and harmful (Sest & March, 2017: 69) behaviour that involves deception (Dahlberg, 2001), aggression (Hardaker, 2013: 79), provocation (Crystal, 2001: 52), and disruption (Turner et al., 2005).

However, I do not use *trolling* as a predefined academic term in this thesis. Instead, I deal with how commenters conceptualise trolling on political blogs, focusing on the actions, aims, and motives that they attribute to the alleged trolls (see Chapter 3 for further details). Consequently, the aim of this chapter is not to choose a suitable academic definition for trolling or to create a new definition from the existing ones. Instead, I review the academic literature to identify the actions, aims, and motives that have already been ascribed to the trolls by themselves (Phillips, 2015), by other users (Hardaker, 2010), or by the researchers (Herring et al., 2002). This is a

crucial step for my analysis as in Chapters 5–7, I look at whether the actions, aims, and motives associated with trolling in the academic literature correspond with those that users attribute to the alleged trolls in their comments.

It is also important to point out that researchers normally take one of three approaches to trolling when discussing the trolls' actions, aims, and motives. The dominant approach, which this thesis also draws on, is to look at the actions, aims, and motives that internet users attribute to those they call trolls in online discussions (Hardaker, 2010; Hopkinson, 2013; Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015). The second approach is to describe how self-confessed trolls conceptualise their own perceived actions, aims, and motives (Phillips, 2015). Finally, the third approach is to treat trolling as a theoretical concept and describe the researcher-defined trolls' actions, aims, and motives (Herring et al., 2002). The main difference between these three approaches is that depending on which approach an academic study takes, its object of enquiry may be perceived trolling, self-confessed trolling, or researcher-defined trolling. Although the analysis presented in this thesis solely focuses on perceived trolling, Chapter 2 reviews the academic literature on self-confessed and researcher-defined trolling as well to give a comprehensive overview of the actions, aims, and motives that ordinary internet users, self-confessed trolls, and researchers associate with perceived, self-confessed, and researcher-defined trolling.

Section 2.2 describes the actions associated with trolling, pointing out that trolling is generally understood as a non-normative behaviour. Section 2.3 focuses on the (alleged) trolls' (assumed) aims and the unintended consequences of trolling. Finally, Section 2.4 covers the trolls' motives for engaging in non-normative behaviour. This last section also gives a summary of previous research on the personality traits of self-confessed and alleged trolls.

2.2. Trolling actions

2.2.1. Trolling as a diverse behaviour

As Sanfilippo, Fichman, and Yang (2018) point out, trolling is a multidimensional behaviour that may manifest in a variety of ways. Consequently, several different actions have been associated with trolling in the relevant academic literature. In fact, this multifaceted nature is one of the reasons why it is notoriously difficult, if not

impossible, to use trolling as a well-defined theoretical concept in the analysis of computer-mediated interactions (Hardaker, 2015: 202). The key trolling actions are:

- (1) repeating the same utterance (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364);
- (2) posting irrelevant or meaningless information (Hardaker, 2010: 232);
- (3) posting misleading or factually incorrect information (Morrissey, 2010: 75);
- (4) disseminating bad or dangerous advice (Donath, 1999: 41);
- (5) ignoring, despising, rejecting, or attacking the core values of the interaction (Utz, 2005: 50);
- (6) (hypo)criticising others often for an offence of which the critic is also guilty (Hardaker, 2013: 71);
- (7) directly insulting, threatening, or otherwise attacking others (Herring et al., 2002: 377).

Although I only refer to one academic source after each trolling action, the reviewed studies mostly agree on what actions characterise trolling. However, these studies focus on different platforms and cover a period from 1999 to 2019. The most often analysed platform is Usenet (Tepper, 1997; Donath 1999; Hardaker, 2010), a worldwide distributed discussion system, but other platforms have also been studied.

These platforms include an online feminist forum (Herring et al., 2002), Hebrew Wikipedia pages (Shachaf & Hara, 2010), online computer games (Thacker & Griffiths, 2012), corporate websites (Binns, 2012), Youtube comment threads (McCosker 2014), the comment sections of British (Hopkinson, 2013), US (Cheng et al., 2017), and Bulgarian (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016) online newspapers, Twitter (Fornacciari et al., 2018), Facebook (Lopes & Yu, 2017), and the dating app Tinder (March et al., 2017).

Trolling on political blogs has not been analysed but the fact that similar trolling actions have been observed on different platforms suggests that the main actions associated with trolling are relatively platform-independent. Similarly, the literature does not suggest that trolling has gone through radical changes in the past two decades. However, one should not reject the possibility of historical change in trolling as no study has yet focused on this issue.

2.2.2. Trolling as a non-normative behaviour

Herring et al. (2002) and Shachaf and Hara (2010) describe trolling as a non-normative behaviour, suggesting that trolls engage in actions that violate the norms of the ongoing interaction. To understand this argument, we need to consider the nature of interactional norms in computer-mediated communication. Following Postmes et al. (2000), I argue that it is worth distinguishing the explicitly codified norms and the potentially implicit, (inter)subjective norms of computer-mediated interactions.

Explicitly codified norms are predefined rules that specify what behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable in a particular interaction (Cheng et al., 2017: 1218). These rules are established by the owners, administrators, or moderators of the website where the interaction takes place, and users often need to formally accept those before joining the discussion (Binns, 2012: 548). However, normally, not all users agree with, respect, or even read these rules (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 33). Moderators usually have the right to remove user-generated content if they find it inappropriate. They can also ban those users who fail to adhere to the website's comment policy (Cheng et al., 2015: 1). Therefore, if users do not follow these explicit norms in an actively moderated interaction, they need to face the direct consequences of their non-normative behaviour. However, the pure existence of explicitly codified rules of behaviour on a website does not guarantee that the interactions on that website are indeed moderated and users are in fact sanctioned for their non-normative behaviour (Bergstrom, 2011).

Beyond the explicit rules, all participants have beliefs about how one should act in a computer-mediated interaction (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 33). Participants use these beliefs to decide whether an utterance is appropriate from their own perspective (Postmes et al., 2000). These beliefs are implicit and subjective (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366) but participants may decide to explicitly discuss and negotiate them with one another (Herring et al., 2002: 377). Therefore, these individual beliefs may become group norms (Hardaker, 2013). Explicit interactional rules may affect these individual beliefs and shared group norms but equally, the two sets of norms can be different or even contradictory. Unlike moderators, on most platforms, regular participants do not have the right to remove others' comments or the means to prevent others from posting new ones. Therefore, if regular participants find others' behaviour inappropriate (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 36), they can ignore or filter out these non-

normative participants (Hopkinson, 2013: 8), they can ask them to leave or to change their behaviour (Hardaker, 2015), or they can inform the moderators about the issue (Donath, 1999: 48).

The diversity of norms in computer-mediated interactions (Sun & Fichman, 2018: 479) suggests that the above-discussed actions do not constitute an exhaustive list of those associated with trolling (Hardaker, 2013: 67). This is because depending on what actions the different participants deem inappropriate in the ongoing interaction (Sanfilippo et al. 2017: 2314), the actions perceived as trolling may vary across interactions (Cruz, Seo, & Rex, 2018: 21) and even across individuals (Hopkinson, 2013: 8).

As Fichman and Sanfilippo (2015: 165–169) note, internet users tend to explain perceived non-normative behaviour in computer-mediated interactions in two ways. Firstly, users can assume that the non-normative participant fails to abide by the interactional norms only because s/he is not aware of what these norms are. Alternatively, users may assume that the non-normative participant is well aware of the interactional norms but deliberately violates those to achieve certain goals (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364). As trolling is widely considered a goal-driven behaviour (Cruz et al., 2018: 24), Fichman and Sanfilippo (2015) argue that internet users normally identify only those non-normative participants as trolls who they assume deliberately violate the interactional norms. Trolling may therefore be seen as a folk concept that internet users have developed to conceptualise and explain the deliberate transgression of interactional norms in computer-mediated communication (Coles & West, 2016b: 242).

2.3. The trolls' aims

2.3.1. Trolling as a goal-driven behaviour

Due to the perceived goal-driven nature of trolling (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 363; Coles & West, 2016b: 241), the (alleged) trolls' (assumed) intentions have been discussed in almost every academic paper on trolling (Hardaker, 2015: 204). Different authors, such as Donath (1999), Herring et al. (2002), Hardaker (2010), and Fichman & Sanfilippo (2015), have used different expressions to describe the trolls' aims. The academic literature therefore seems to associate a wide range of different aims with trolling. However, I argue that these different descriptions can be summarized into a

handful of closely related aims. I also suggest that these aims are not only related but their complexity also differs since the more complex aims incorporate the less complex ones. According to the academic literature, the trolls' key aims are:

- (1) diverting others' attention (Herring et al., 2002: 380);
- (2) triggering intense unpleasant emotions in others (Binns, 2012: 547);
- (3) eliciting potentially offensive responses from others (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 31);
- (4) provoking conflict (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366);
- (5) deceiving others (Donath, 1999: 45);
- (6) disrupting the ongoing interaction (Hardaker, 2010: 232).

These aims suggest that the trolls' ultimate goal is to establish discursive dominance over computer-mediated interactions by negatively influencing other users' attention, emotions, beliefs, actions, and interpersonal relations (Herring et al. 2002: 380; Binns, 2012: 548; Hong & Cheng, 2018: 403).

The trolls' first aim is to divert other participants' attention from the ongoing discussion to themselves (Herring et al., 2002: 380) or to certain, often controversial, topics (Hardaker, 2010: 232). This goal suggests that trolling is an attention-seeking behaviour as trolls try to gain full control over other participants' mental focus by attracting their undivided attention (Maltby et al., 2016: 457).

The trolls' second aim is to trigger strong unpleasant emotions (Thacker & Griffiths, 2012: 17), such as annoyance (Utz 2005: 51; Buckels et al., 2018: 2), embarrassment (Dahlberg, 2001; Morrissey, 2010: 79), outrage (Hardaker, 2013: 79), or anger (Galán-García et al., 2014: 422) in other participants. This second goal directly relates to the other participants' emotional state but it also affects their attention. This is because it is unlikely that one could trigger unpleasant emotions in others without attracting their attention in the first place (Maltby et al., 2016: 452). Utz (2005), Dahlberg (2001), Hardaker (2013), and Galán-García et al. (2014) use different terms to describe the negative emotions that trolls seek to elicit from others. However, they fail to point out how 'annoyance', 'embarrassment', 'outrage', and 'anger' differ from one another. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that these terms refer to the same, vaguely defined, emotional state.

The trolls' third aim is to elicit a large number of responses from the other participants (Herring et al., 2002: 373), suggesting that trolling is directed not only at

the users' attention and emotions but also at their actions (Dyrel, 2016: 376). As Morrissey (2010: 75) points out, trolls normally try to provoke others into posting offensive or violent responses, which themselves can lead to conflict and disagreement. Consequently, the trolls' fourth aim is to cause, perpetuate, or escalate conflict and disagreement among the participants (Galán-García et al., 2014: 422).

The trolls' fifth aim is to deceive others (Herring et al., 2002: 380). For instance, Bergstrom (2011) argues that trolls deliberately try to mislead other participants into false beliefs while Golder and Donath (2004: 18) point out that trolls normally want to convince the other participants that they are not trolls but 'norm-abiding' users who take part in the interaction in good faith. Following Donath (1999), trolling is widely described as an inherently deceptive behaviour (Dyrel, 2016: 358) whereas trolls are generally portrayed as malicious individuals who seek to conceal their real intentions (Hancock, 2007: 293). However, Hardaker (2013: 62) reports cases where (perceived) trolling does not involve any deception. This suggests that whilst deception can help trolls achieve their other aims, it is not a necessary component of trolling (Cook et al., 2018: 3324). It is also worth mentioning that Donath (1999) focuses on the deceptive aspects of trolling because she introduces it as a type of online identity deception.

The trolls' sixth, and final, aim is to disrupt the ongoing interaction (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 32), which is arguably the most comprehensive aim associated with trolling in the academic literature. This is because trolls can only achieve this aim by gaining control over the other users' attention, emotions, beliefs, actions, and interpersonal relations (Shin, 2008: 2834). Consequently, the aim to disrupt the ongoing interaction incorporates the trolls' other goals as well.

2.3.2. The outcomes of trolling

Since trolling is widely regarded as an intentional or goal-driven behaviour (Morrissey, 2010), the possible outcomes of trolling are normally compared to the goals that trolls are believed to seek to achieve (Hardaker, 2015). If trolls manage to achieve their assumed goals, their trolling behaviour is deemed successful (Baker, 2001). Depending on the trolls' aims, successful trolling may entail that the trolls attract others' undivided attention (Ortega et al. 2012), trigger strong negative emotions (Thacker & Griffiths, 2012), elicit responses (Morrissey, 2010), provoke conflict (Galán-García et al., 2014), disrupt the ongoing interaction (Binns, 2012), or

mislead others into false beliefs (Donath, 1999). However, trolling is not always successful. For instance, Hardaker (2015: 224) considers trolling to be *failed* if it remains unnoticed, *frustrated* if the participants notice the trolls but decide to ignore them, and *thwarted* if trolling results in unwanted or unexpected consequences.

Trolling may have several unwanted consequences. Firstly, moderators may ban the trolls and remove their posts (Turner et al., 2005). Secondly, instead of directly challenging the troll (Coles & West 2016b: 239), participants may discuss their beliefs about appropriate behaviour in the ongoing interaction (Hopkinson, 2013: 21). Participants may also start developing and negotiating shared group norms in order to prevent trolling from happening in the future (Herring et al., 2002). Thirdly, participants may explicitly evaluate and even mock the quality of others' perceived trolling behaviour in an attempt to humiliate the trolls (Hardaker, 2010). Finally, participants may also expose and confront the trolls in real life (Shachaf & Hara, 2010).

As discussed above, Hardaker (2015) covers four different outcomes of (perceived) trolling. However, the idea that either the researcher or the participants are able to decide whether trolling is successful, failed, frustrated, or thwarted seems to be problematic for three reasons. Firstly, to decide how the outcomes of trolling relate to the trolls' goals, one needs to know what these goals are. However, neither the researcher nor the participants *know* what goals the alleged trolls try to achieve. Therefore, one cannot decide whether the trolls' goals have indeed been fulfilled. Secondly, if trolling does not have any directly observable consequences, such as offensive responses from other participants, one cannot decide whether trolling is failed or frustrated as we do not know whether the participants deliberately ignored trolling or they did not notice it in the first place. Thirdly, it is difficult to use successful and thwarted trolling as mutually exclusive categories. This is because trolling might have unwanted consequences even if the trolls are otherwise able to achieve some of their aims.

2.4. The trolls' motives

2.4.1. Emotional motives

Although the trolls' possible motives for engaging in non-normative behaviour have repeatedly been addressed in the academic literature, most studies on trolling have not

attempted to empirically examine these (Hopkinson, 2013). The only exceptions are Shachaf and Hara (2010) and Fichman and Sanfilippo (2015), who used interviews and online questionnaires to examine what 15 Israeli Wikipedia editors and 100 US Midwestern university students think about the motives behind trolling. However, as these studies used interviews and online questionnaires for data collection, they were only able to summarize their respondents' general impressions about the trolls' motives. Consequently, neither Shachaf & Hara (2010) nor Fichman & Sanfilippo (2015) provide any evidence on what motives the respondents would ascribe to the alleged trolls when engaging in actual online interactions. This is a clear gap in the literature, which this thesis directly addresses in Chapter 6 when discussing the motives attributed to trolls on political blogs.

Trolling is normally described as an emotionally motivated behaviour in the academic literature (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 176). The most frequently mentioned motive is that trolls engage in this behaviour because they simply enjoy what they are doing (Hardaker, 2010: 237). Beyond this, trolls also take pleasure in the attention and reactions that they receive (Herring et al., 2002: 380) and in the harm and frustration that their behaviour causes (Coleman, 2012: 111). Further emotional motives for trolling are also mentioned, such as boredom (Baker, 2001), a desire for control and self-empowerment, hatred towards specific participants, hostility to the purpose of the interaction (Herring et al., 2002), a need for attention or achievement, revenge (Shachaf and Hara, 2010), loneliness, malevolence, curiosity (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015), and bad mood (Cook et al., 2018).

2.4.2. Personality traits

When discussing the trolls' emotional motives, some researchers also comment on the personality traits of online trolls, suggesting that trolls might have various mental health issues (March, 2019: 137). For instance, Shachaf and Hara (2010: 365) argue that some Wikipedia editors might turn into trolls because they have Narcissistic Personality Disorder or other personality disorders. A key problem is, however, that this statement is entirely speculative as it is not supported by any empirical evidence. Beyond these sporadic and speculative remarks, the personality traits that might trigger trolling behaviour have recently been addressed in a number of more focused empirical studies as well.

Thacker and Griffiths (2012) conducted a survey to examine trolling in online video games. In this survey, 125 self-selected gamers completed a standardized personality test and a questionnaire on their communicative habits when playing online video games. The study aimed to find statistically significant correlations between the respondents' personality profile and their self-confessed communicative habits, especially trolling. However, it did not investigate what communicative habits the respondents did in fact follow in online video games and whether other gamers indeed identified them as trolls (Lopes & Yu, 2017: 75). Nevertheless, Tacker and Griffiths (2012: 17) concluded that self-confessed trolls are typically younger males with low self-esteem.

Using similar methods, Zezulka & Seigfried-Spellar (2016: 19) and Hong & Cheng (2018: 403) also found that individuals with a sense of inferiority are more likely to engage in trolling whilst Craker & March (2016: 82), Cheng et al. (2017: 1222), and Sest & March (2017: 72) suggest that the majority of self-reported trolls are males rather than females. Lumsden & Morgan (2017) and Paananen & Reichl (2019) further argue that male trolls tend to target females, thus depicting trolling as an example of online misogyny. However, the relationship between gender and trolling remains somewhat unclear as March et al. (2017: 141) point out that males and females are equally likely to troll others on Tinder and other online dating apps.

In another study, Buckels et al. (2014) conducted two online surveys, in which 1,215 respondents completed personality inventories and a questionnaire on their online commenting habits. The aim of this study was also to find those personality traits that correlate with self-confessed trolling. According to the findings, self-reported trolling behaviour correlates positively with sadism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Buckels et al., 2014: 97). The authors also emphasise that sadism seems to show the most robust association with trolling. Based on this particularly strong statistical relationship, they claim that trolling appears to be an online manifestation of everyday, i.e. subclinical, sadism and online trolls might be prototypical everyday sadists who engage in trolling because they enjoy hurting others (Buckels et al., 2014: 101). These findings have since been replicated by several other studies, such as Lopes & Yu (2017), Sest & March (2017), Buckels et al. (2018), and March (2019). However, Buckels et al. (2018: 9) also warn that, of course, not all trolls are everyday sadists or subclinical psychopaths.

While Thacker and Griffiths (2012) and Buckels et al. (2014) investigated trolling from the self-confessed trolls' perspective, Maltby et al. (2016) carried out three questionnaire-based studies to examine 965 British university students' implicit theories about trolling. In their analysis, five replicable factors emerged from the students' implicit theories about the online trolls' personality traits. Namely, the respondents suggested that trolls are attention seekers, they have low self-confidence, they are vicious, and they are uneducated but amusing at the same time (Maltby et al., 2016: 14).

Although questionnaire-based studies necessarily decontextualize trolling, Maltby et al. (2016) is a more relevant source for my thesis than the other studies on trolls' personality traits. This is because Maltby et al. (2016) apply an interpretation-based approach to trolling when they examine what their respondents think about the trolls' personality. I also apply a similar approach but unlike Maltby et al. (2016), I analyse how commenters portray the trolls in their posts. Consequently, this thesis only deals with those cases where the commenters spontaneously discuss what they think about the alleged trolls' personality (Coles & West, 2016b: 238).

2.4.3. Political trolling

Trolling has recently been associated with online political discourse as well (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2323). Following Dahlberg's (2001) brief comment on trolling and politics and based on eight interviews with self-confessed trolls, Özsoy (2015) argues that some Turkish Twitter users engage in trolling due to their political beliefs. Using a similar, interview-based method, Saka (2018) suggests that some self-reported Turkish Twitter trolls insult opposition politicians and praise Recep Tayyip Erdogan simply because they support Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party.

Beyond ideologically motivated individual trolling (Özsoy, 2015: 543), several academic papers, such as Mihaylov & Nakov (2016), Broniatowski et al. (2018), Kurowska & Reshetnikov (2018), and Saka (2018), as well as newspaper articles, such as Walker (2015), Hanula (2017), Hegyeshalmi (2018), and Lee (2018) use the term *political trolling* as a label for centrally organised, state-orchestrated online propaganda and disinformation campaigns. These papers suggest that the Russian (Aro, 2016), Turkish (Saka, 2018), and Bulgarian (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016) governments employ undercover online agents to disseminate pro-government

propaganda (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018), to spread disinformation (Llewellyn et al., 2018), to promote discord around controversial topics (Broniatowski et al., 2018), and to harass the supporters of their political rivals on the internet (Aro, 2016).

Following Garmazhapova's (2013) newspaper article, in which she called the Russian Internet Research Agency, a company with suspected links to the Russian security services, a "troll factory" and referred to its employees as "trolls", *political troll* has become a widely used synonym for these undercover online agents in the mainstream Western media (Aro, 2016: 122). This is not surprising given that deception, provocation, and direct harassment are commonly associated with both organised political propaganda campaigns and trolling. However, there is no evidence that anyone who has admitted to working for the Internet Research Agency or for similar organisations has ever referred to herself/himself as a troll or has ever described her/his engagement in online political campaigns as trolling (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399). Similarly, self-identified trolls have consistently denied having any ties to state-organised propaganda and disinformation campaigns (Saka, 2018: 166). Finally, although it is reasonable to assume that the media constantly influences everyday language use (Stuart-Smith, 2007), it yet remains unclear to what extent internet users refer to these undercover online agents as trolls in actual interactions.

This overall suggests that there is a fundamental difference between how the original term *online trolling* and the more recent expression *political trolling* have made their way into academic research. Academics, such as Tepper (1997) and Donath (1999), adopted the label *online trolling* directly from ordinary internet users who coined it as a slang term probably in the late 1980s (Cruz et al., 2018: 16). The academic use of *political trolling* as a shorthand for manipulative online political campaigns is, however, a recent development that has been influenced not by ordinary internet users but by the mainstream media.

2.4.4. Relative anonymity

So far, I have focused on the perceived and self-confessed trolls' own motives for engaging in non-normative behaviour. However, Hardaker (2010) and Binns (2012) suggest that computer-mediated communication itself also has a feature that appears to facilitate trolling. This feature is the participants' relative anonymity in online interactions. Relative anonymity refers to the fact that in many computer-mediated

interactions, participants are not required to share their personal data, such as their legal name, physical appearance, age, gender, nationality, or ethnic background (Kennedy, 2006). Instead, participants use online accounts, which normally include a username and a profile picture of their choice. Consequently, participants are able to hide their offline personal identity from others (Rodogno, 2012). Moreover, the same participant can use different online persona in the same interaction while different users may have access to the same online account (Hopkinson, 2013).

Relative anonymity may facilitate trolling in three different ways (Synnott et al., 2017: 77). Firstly, as participants have very little, if any, background knowledge about one another and they cannot see or hear other participants, they can only attribute mental states, such as intentions, motives, beliefs and desires, to others based on the posts that others produce (Hopkinson, 2013: 6). Consequently, participants may find it easier to engage in potentially deceptive behaviours, such as trolling, in computer-mediated interactions than in face-to-face conversations (Hardaker, 2010: 223).

Secondly, as Thacker and Griffiths (2012: 18) point out, relative anonymity at least partially removes the threat of severe physical, emotional, or existential consequences of non-normative online behaviour, such as trolling. This allows participants to behave in ways that they normally would not do in the offline world (Morrissey, 2010: 81) since they do not need to worry about the negative impact that their behaviour might have on their own well-being (Buckels et al., 2018: 2).

Finally, relative anonymity may also have a dehumanizing effect on the participants (Hopkinson, 2013: 6). As participants of computer-mediated interactions normally do not know one another and often cannot see or hear the other participants, they may not perceive one another as actual human beings but merely as virtual characters (Coles & West, 2016a: 46). Consequently, participants may feel that their actions will not affect others' emotional well-being (Hardaker, 2015: 204). In sum, some internet users may start trolling in semi-anonymous online interactions simply because they perceive their own behaviour as ultimately harmless (Hopkinson, 2013).

In conclusion, Chapter 2 suggests that trolling is generally conceptualised as a diverse, intentional, non-normative, and harmful behaviour that involves deception, aggression, provocation, and disruption. Previous research associates multiple communicative actions with trolling. These include repeating the same utterance (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364), posting irrelevant or meaningless information (Hardaker, 2010: 232), posting misleading or factually incorrect information

(Morrissey, 2010: 75), disseminating bad or dangerous advice (Donath, 1999: 41), ignoring, despising, rejecting, or attacking the core values of the interaction (Utz, 2005: 50, and criticising or otherwise attacking others (Hardaker, 2013: 71).

According to the academic literature, the trolls' key aims involve diverting others' attention (Herring et al., 2002: 380), triggering intense unpleasant emotions (Binns, 2012: 547), eliciting potentially offensive responses (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 31), provoking conflict (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366), deceiving others (Donath, 1999: 45), and disrupting the ongoing interaction (Hardaker, 2010: 232). Finally, trolling is described as a chiefly emotionally motivated behaviour (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 176).

3. Theoretical background

3.1. Overview

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the theoretical background of this study, focusing on the terms and theoretical concepts that I draw upon in the corpus-based analysis presented in Chapters 5–7. The aim of this chapter is to specify the object, scope, and limitations of the analysis and to clarify how the research questions will be answered. First, I introduce the theoretical terms that I use in this thesis. These terms are *metapragmatic label*, *metapragmatic comment*, *metapragmatic discourse*, *human communicative behaviour* (all discussed in Section 3.2), *the discursive construction of communicative behaviour*, *action*, *mental state*, *motive*, *intention*, *(linguistically marked) mental state attribution* (all covered in Section 3.3), *behaviour-based social category*, *behaviour-based identity*, and *discursive identity construction* (all defined in Section 3.4).

Note that I do not give an extensive summary of the various ways in which the above terms are treated in the academic literature. Instead, I only specify how I use them in this thesis to help the reader understand the scope of my analysis. This is because some of the terms that I refer to, especially *discourse* and *identity*, have been assigned so many different meanings in linguistics, psychology, and sociology that it would be impossible, and in fact, counterproductive, to cover them all in a single chapter. However, I acknowledge that the way I understand these terms is not the only way to conceptualise them. I therefore point the reader to relevant sources that give a comprehensive account of how for instance, *discourse* or *identity* is defined by various authors in Sections 3.2 and 3.4.

Chapter 3 also summarizes the theoretical assumptions that I build upon in Chapters 5–7. In Section 3.2, I point out that I approach the term *trolling* and its Hungarian counterpart *trollkodás* not as predefined theoretical terms but as inter-subjective metapragmatic labels that laypeople use in their metapragmatic comments to describe, conceptualise, and evaluate their own and others' communicative behaviour. In Section 3.3, I argue that language users discursively construct trolling as a perceived communicative behaviour by specifying the actions that count as trolling in their own view and by attributing various motives and aims to the alleged trolls. Finally, Section 3.4 suggests that language users identify others as trolls based on their perceived

behaviour and consequently, the actions, motives, and aims that they associate with trolling are identity-building devices that shape how the alleged trolls are portrayed.

3.2. *Trolling* as a metapragmatic label

As I pointed out in Chapter 2, *trolling* has several academic definitions. For instance, Donath (1999: 45) defines it as “a game about identity deception, albeit one that is played without the consent of most of the players”, arguing that “[t]he troll attempts to pass as a legitimate participant, sharing the group’s common interests and concerns”. Herring et al. (2002: 372) argue that “trolling entails luring others into pointless and time-consuming discussions [...] with the intent to disrupt the ongoing conversation” whereas Hardaker (2013: 79) describes trolling as “the deliberate (perceived) use of impoliteness/aggression, deception and/or manipulation in computer-mediated communication to create a context conducive to triggering or antagonising conflict, typically for amusement’s sake”. Finally, Fichman and Sanfilippo (2015: 163) consider trolling to be “a specific example of deviant and antisocial online behaviour in which the deviant user acts provocatively and outside of normative expectations within a particular community”.

A key problem with these and other similar, but less often cited, definitions (see Section 2.1) is, however, that they are rather vague as they use *trolling* as an all-encapsulating term to describe various behaviours that are deceptive (Donath, 1999), disruptive (Herring et al., 2002), negatively marked (Binns, 2012), aggressive (Hardaker, 2013), non-normative (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015), or malicious (Ortega et al., 2012). Another issue is that the academic definitions of trolling have limited practical use as they require the analyst to know the users’ intentions but as Hardaker (2013: 62) points out, this is never the case. The definitions also tend to be decontextualized, intuitive, and heavily influenced by the media representations of trolling (Hardaker, 2013: 60). Finally, whilst trolling is frequently discussed in the literature in relation to other online behaviours, such as flaming (Cheng et al., 2015), cyberbullying (Galán-García et al., 2014), hacking, and online vandalism (Shachaf & Hara, 2010), the exact nature of the relationship between trolling and these other behaviours yet remains unclear.

Considering these issues, I agree with McCosker (2014) and Clarke (2018) that *trolling* should not be used as a theoretical term as it lacks a nuanced and transparent

definition that could be applied to actual online interactions without serious methodological problems. Consequently, I treat *trolling* and its Hungarian counterpart *trollkodás* not as predefined academic terms but as inter-subjective and context-sensitive *metapragmatic labels* (Hardaker, 2015) that laypeople use in *metapragmatic comments* when they talk about their own and others' communicative behaviour (Haugh, 2018). This metapragmatic approach suggests that similarly to speech act verbs (Jucker, 2009) and other lexical items, such as *impolite(ness)/rude(ness)* (Culpeper, 2009; Culpeper, Haugh, & Johnson, 2017) or *sarcasm/irony* (Taylor, 2016; Dynel, 2017) that denote folk concepts related to human communication (Verschueren, 1999: 196), *trolling* is part of a metacommunicative lexicon that language users have collectively developed to describe, conceptualise, and evaluate various human communicative behaviours and to understand the social world around them (Hübler, 2011; Hübler & Busse, 2012). For the purposes of this thesis, I define *human communicative behaviours* as sets or sequences of actions that people deliberately engage in with the intention to influence others' mental states and behaviours (Tomasello, 2008: 13–15). Mental states include one's beliefs, intentions, motives, desires, and emotions whereas the actions that constitute human communicative behaviours refer to the use of directly observable linguistic and non-linguistic symbols in certain ways (Tomasello, 1999: 95).

As Jucker (2013) points out, the metapragmatic comments that contain a particular metapragmatic label create various discourses around the communicative behaviour the label in question refers to. These can include, for instance, the utterances in which people use the word *rude* to describe, conceptualise, and evaluate others' behaviour or to discuss what counts as rude in general. Approaching *trolling* and *trollkodás* as metapragmatic labels therefore entails that the object of my analysis is not trolling itself but the *metapragmatic discourses* on this perceived communicative behaviour in the comment threads of British and Hungarian political blogs.

These discourses on trolling include those metapragmatic comments in which British and Hungarian users call themselves or others trolls or describe their own or others' communicative behaviour as trolling. I refer to these metapragmatic comments as *troll comments*. Consequently, whilst I acknowledge that the term *discourse* has a number of different definitions (see Schrifin, 1994: 23–43 for a more extensive and Baker, 2010: 121 for a more compact summary of these), I understand it as the social practice of using language and other communicative means, such as images or gestures,

to co-construct inter-subjective concepts, including behaviours, social relations, groups, and identities, in certain ways (Baker, 2006: 4; Partington, Duguid & Taylor, 2013: 4).

As the metapragmatic troll comments that I analyse in this thesis have been posted on British and Hungarian political blogs, they are also embedded into various online political discourses on British and Hungarian public matters, such as the 2015 UK General Election, the 2015 Labour Party leadership election, the Brexit referendum, Scottish independence, the 2014 Hungarian General Election, the Hungarian government's handling of the refugee crisis and its persistent anti-immigration campaign, Russia's influence on Hungarian politics, and the war in the Donbass region of Ukraine.

Metapragmatic comments have three interactional functions (Hübler & Bublitz, 2007: 18) that are directly relevant to my analysis. Firstly, language users produce them to conceptualise various communicative behaviours (Verschuere, 2000: 446) by specifying the less complex actions these more extended behaviours incorporate (Haugh, 2018: 619). However, Tomasello (2008: 15) argues that humans perceive communicative behaviours as intentional since they assume that communication normally involves the intention to influence others' mental states and behaviours and one's motives for doing so. Language users therefore not only focus on the directly observable actions when they conceptualise a particular communicative behaviour. They also attribute mental states, such as motives and intentions, to those who engage in the communicative behaviour that they refer to.

Secondly, metapragmatic comments may serve the purpose of explicitly evaluating communicative behaviours (Jucker, 2013: 15). For instance, Tanskanen (2007) points out that in a corpus of computer-mediated interactions from two mailing lists and two discussion boards, participants primarily use metapragmatic comments to assess the degree of (in)appropriateness of their own posts or those of others. This evaluative function of metapragmatic comments is particularly relevant to this thesis as trolling is normally considered a non-normative behaviour (Herring et al., 2002; Shachaf & Hara, 2010; Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015).

Finally, metapragmatic comments are also used to establish, shape, negotiate, and challenge the identity of those engaged in a particular communicative behaviour (Hübler, 2011: 118). This is because the way in which a communicative behaviour is conceptualised affects how those displaying this behaviour are portrayed.

3.3. The discursive construction of trolling as a communicative behaviour

As I pointed out in Section 3.1, Verschueren (2000: 446) argues that metapragmatic comments play a key role in conceptualising the communicative behaviours that metapragmatic labels refers to. This suggests that metapragmatic labels, including *trolling* and its Hungarian counterpart *trollkodás*, do not have a fixed, universally shared meaning that each and every language user would simply retrieve from their mental lexicon in the exact same way when using these labels in the ongoing interaction (cf. Kintsch & Mangalath, 2011: 347). Instead, every metapragmatic label has a number of flexible, temporary, context-dependent, and inter-subjective meanings that language users actively shape, negotiate, challenge, and at least partially re-establish in their metapragmatic comments (Haugh, 2018: 620). For this thesis, the above social constructionist approach to metapragmatic labels implies that the communicative behaviour that language users refer to as *trolling* or *trollkodás* is not a stable concept but a context-sensitive and dynamically changing discursive construct that is constantly re-established and reshaped by every metapragmatic comment on trolling (Coles & West, 2016b: 235).

The ever-changing nature of trolling as a perceived communicative behaviour also means that every time language users produce metapragmatic comments on trolling, they give slightly different accounts of what counts as perceived trolling in their view. I acknowledge that these accounts are subjective and partial (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366) but I argue that exploring them can help us understand how internet users conceptualise trolling. I refer to the language users' joint effort to establish these different accounts of perceived trolling in their metapragmatic comments as *the discursive construction of trolling*. I also refer to the accounts themselves as *the discursive constructions of trolling*. I therefore use *discursive construction* as an uncountable noun in reference to the joint practice of creating and shaping discursive constructs whereas the plural *discursive constructions* denotes the various ways in which language users conceptualise these constructs. This distinction is consistent with how for instance, Unger (2013) uses the singular and plural forms of the term in his study on the discursive construction of the Scots language.

Haugh (2018: 619) suggests that the communicative behaviours (or activities in his terminology) that metapragmatic labels denote can be conceptualised as extended sets

or structured sequences of actions. Following this point, I argue that one way in which language users construct trolling is by specifying the less complex actions that constitute this perceived behaviour in their view. Chapter 5 therefore focuses on the actions that commenters associate with trolling on British and Hungarian political blogs. I broadly define these *actions* as the perceived ways in which the alleged trolls engage with others in the ongoing interaction from the language users' perspective.

While I acknowledge that the actions that language users perceive as trolling play a crucial role in how this communicative behaviour is conceptualised, I also argue that language users construct trolling not only by specifying the actions that count as trolling in their view but also by attributing various mental states, such as beliefs, emotions, intentions, and motives, to the alleged trolls (Cook et al., 2018). This is because all neurotypical adults understand themselves and others as mental beings who possess mental states and carry out cognitive processes. Consequently, we consider others' (communicative) behaviour to indicate their mental states and we make inferences from their perceived behaviour to construct assumptions on their mental states, which we then use to explain their behaviour (Balconi, 2010: 171). This cognitive ability and its use are variously termed as *Theory of Mind (ToM)* (Tomasello et al., 2005), *folk psychology* (Schaafsma et al., 2015), or *mental state attribution* (Lockard, 2014).

Although mental state attribution is sometimes referred to as "mind reading" (Tomasello et al., 2005: 675), the fact that most humans are able to ascribe mental states to others and themselves does not mean that we *know* what others feel, think, or want to achieve. This is because no one has direct access to others' mental states (Tomasello et al., 2005). In fact, even our introspective reflections on our own mental states are highly unreliable (Smithies, 2013). Consequently, I treat *mental states* not as directly observable entities but as inherently subjective folk psychological concepts that participants of social interactions attribute to others and themselves to explain others' or their own behaviour (Haugh & Jaszczolt, 2012). For this thesis, the above implies that neither the participants of social interactions nor the analyst, who observes these interactions, are able to prove or falsify that certain participants intend to troll or believe that they are trolling (Donath, 1999). Therefore, I do not follow the practice of those studies (Baker, 2001; Herring et al., 2002; Turner et al., 2005) in which the researchers decide that certain participants intend to troll and consequently, they interpret their behaviour as trolling even if the participants themselves do not use this term. Instead, I look at what mental states the participants attribute to those they call trolls.

Within mental states, I focus on *motives* and *intentions*. I define *motives* as assumed mental states in which an individual voluntarily carries out an action for specific internal and external reasons (Wright, 2016). The internal reasons refer to the individual's own mental states, including their beliefs and emotions, whereas the external reasons are factors of the individual's perceived environment. Similarly, I approach *intentions* as assumed mental states in which an individual voluntarily carries out an action with the specific *aim* to produce or prevent a change in their perceived physical and social environment (Tomasello et al., 2005). Consequently, Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the motives and aims that commenters attribute to those they identify as trolls. However, given that no one has direct access to others' mental states, I reiterate that it is impossible for the commenters or for the analyst to decide what the alleged trolls' "real" motives and aims are.

Finally, I deem *mental state attribution* to be a cognitive process whereby participants form a belief that other participants perform certain actions because they possess particular mental states (Lockard, 2014). Within mental state attribution, I focus on *linguistically marked mental state attribution*. This involves those cases where participants use language to describe the mental states that they attribute to others. While mental state attribution is a cognitive process that cannot be directly observed, linguistically marked mental state attribution can be examined by analysing metapragmatic comments.

3.4. The discursive construction of troll as a behaviour-based identity

As Hübler and Bublitz (2007: 18) point out, language users produce metapragmatic comments not only to conceptualise communicative behaviours but also to position themselves and others in their perceived social world. To do so, language users establish various *behaviour-based social categories* in their metapragmatic comments and identify those who engage in a particular communicative behaviour as members of one of these categories (Hübler, 2011: 118). Behaviour-based social categories are therefore made up of people who are considered similar because they display the same perceived behaviour (Koller, 2012: 24).

As a consequence of this, some metapragmatic labels are also used as social category or identity labels (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006: 3). These labels directly refer to those who display a particular communicative behaviour, thus establishing a behaviour-

based social category that encompasses these individuals (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005: 594). For instance, Culpeper (2009: 83) points out that while both *impolite* and *rude* are used to evaluate one's behaviour in the Oxford English Corpus, *rude* is also regularly used as a term of social/personal description in expressions, such as *rude doorman* or *rude waiter*. Similarly, the noun *troll* as a CMC-related term normally refers to those individuals, both in English and Hungarian, who are perceived as being involved in trolling.

However, I argue that language users construct others' troll identity not only when they explicitly call them trolls but also when they describe their behaviour as trolling. This is because troll is a *behaviour-based identity*, which simply means that people identify others as trolls based on their perceived behaviour (Hardaker, 2013: 62). I define *behaviour-based identity* as one's perceived and potentially temporary membership in an inter-subjective social category that consists of people who engage in the same perceived communicative behaviour (Vignoles et al., 2011: 3). In this thesis, *discursive identity construction* therefore refers to the language users' collective practice of creating, shaping, and negotiating behaviour-based social categories and recognising themselves and others as members of these categories in their metapragmatic comments (Grad & Rojo, 2008: 14). The above definition shows that although *identity* can be conceptualised in a number of ways (see Vignoles et al., 2011 for an overview of these), I understand identity as social category membership (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

The behaviour-based nature of one's troll identity also implies that each action, motive, and aim that language users associate with trolling in their metapragmatic comments shapes how those who display this perceived behaviour and the social category they belong to are portrayed in these comments. I therefore argue that, similarly to communicative behaviours, behaviour-based social categories and one's behaviour-based identities, including one's troll identity, are context-sensitive and inter-subjective discursive constructs that language users actively shape, negotiate, dispute, and at least partially re-establish in their metapragmatic comments (Vignoles et al., 2011: 4). Consequently, Chapters 5–7 not only focus on the discursive construction of trolling as a communicative behaviour but also look at how commenters portray the alleged trolls by ascribing various actions, motives, and aims to them. After having discussed the theoretical background of this study in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 will focus on data collection and analysis.

4. Data and methods

4.1. Overview

To describe how users construct trolling and portray the trolls in their metapragmatic troll comments, 50 British and 50 Hungarian political blogs were shortlisted, 1,713 British and 519 Hungarian comment threads were collected from these, and 6,129 British and 1,118 Hungarian troll comments found in these threads were analysed.

Section 4.2 describes how the above-mentioned 50 British and 50 Hungarian blogs were shortlisted and how the troll threads were collected from these. Section 4.2 also gives a summary of how I built two corpora from the British and Hungarian troll threads. Section 4.3 first gives an overview of the five versions of the British and Hungarian corpora. Then, it focuses on the distribution of the troll comments across the collected threads and shortlisted blogs. Finally, Section 4.4 summarises how the troll comments were analysed.

4.2. Data collection

The aim of data collection was to find comment threads of British and Hungarian political blogs in which at least one participant called at least one participant a troll or accused someone of trolling at least once. I refer to these as *troll threads*. Thus, the sampling units were comment threads, which comprised a blog post and its comments. The troll threads were selected based on three criteria:

- (1) The comment thread had to be published on a British or Hungarian political blog that was active in 2015. From a practical point of view, I defined *blogs* as websites that call themselves blogs or that are hosted by blog sites, such as *blogspot.com* or *blog.hu*. From a more theoretical perspective, I defined *blogs* as frequently modified web pages, in which dated, and often commented, entries are listed in reverse chronological sequence (Herring et al., 2004: 1). I defined *political blogs* as blogs that focus on the acquisition, distribution and practice of power in human communities, societies and states (Bevir & Rhodes, 2016: 21). I defined *British* political blogs as political blogs on which posts and comments are written mainly or exclusively by Britons in English, while I considered those blogs to be *Hungarian* that are written mainly or exclusively by Hungarians in Hungarian. Finally, I considered British and Hungarian political blogs to be active

in 2015 if at least one of their blog posts was published between 1 January and 31 December 2015.

- (2) The comment thread had to be created between 1 January and 31 December 2015.
- (3) The comment thread had to contain at least one *troll comment* in which a commenter called at least one participant a troll or described at least one comment as an act of trolling at least once. That is, at least one commenter had to use a word form of the lexeme TROLL, such as *trolling* or *trollok* ('trolls'), to refer to a participant or comment. I refer to these words as *troll tokens*.

In Subsections 4.2.1–4.2.4, I discuss the main steps of data collection. These were (1) compiling the preliminary lists of the British and Hungarian political blogs, (2) creating two harmonised shortlists from these preliminary lists, (3) collecting the troll threads from the shortlisted British and Hungarian political blogs, and (4) building two corpora from the collected troll threads.

4.2.1. Creating the preliminary lists of the British and Hungarian political blogs

The first step of data collection was to compile the preliminary lists of the British and Hungarian political blogs active in 2015. These lists, which are available in Appendix A, comprise 90 British and 90 Hungarian political blogs. Note that these preliminary lists cannot be considered statistically representative samples of all British and Hungarian political blogs. This is because we do not know how many such blogs exist and thus, it is impossible to conduct probability sampling.

Despite their non-representativeness, these lists are relevant samples of the British and Hungarian political blogs active in 2015. This is because the collected blogs cover the whole political spectrum from radical right to radical left. They also include blogs that are written by private citizens, journalists, and political analysts or run by political institutes and other organisations. I used four sources to compile the preliminary list of the British political blogs.

- (1) **Teads list of top 100 British political blogs in September 2015.** Teads is a French technology company, which regularly publishes a list of top 100 British political blogs on its website.¹

¹ The list is available at <http://uk.labs.teads.tv/top-blogs/politics>. (Date of access: 1 March 2016.)

- (2) **Vuelio list of top 10 UK political blogs in October 2015.** Vuelio is a global provider of PR and Political Services Software, which regularly publishes a list of top 10 UK political blogs.²
- (3) **Google search.** The search terms were *British political blog*, “*British political blog*” (‘British political blog as exact term’), *UK political blog*, and “*UK political blog*” (‘UK political blog as exact search term’).
- (4) **The British political blogs recommended on the already collected ones** were also considered, which can be seen as a form of snowball sampling where existing data sources yield up additional ones (Atkinson & Flint, 2004).

Four similar sources were used to create the preliminary list of the Hungarian political blogs.

- (1) **Goldenblog contest.** Goldenblog was an annual Hungarian blog contest, organised by *hvg.hu*, the online version of *Heti Világgazdaság (HVG)* (‘Weekly World Economy’), a weekly economic and political magazine. I collected the blogs that were shortlisted in two categories: *Hírblogok* ‘News blogs’ (2011, 2012) and *Közélet* ‘Public Sphere’ (2013, 2014).³
- (2) **Lap.hu.** The largest Hungarian aggregator website. I collected the blogs from *politikusblog.lap.hu*.⁴
- (3) **Google search.** The search terms were *politikai blog* (‘political blog’), “*politikai blog*” (‘political blog as exact term’), and *politika blog* (‘politics blog’).
- (4) **The Hungarian political blogs recommended on the already collected ones** were also considered.

Note that the preliminary lists do not include the blogs of active British or Hungarian politicians. This is because most British and Hungarian politicians use Facebook or Twitter rather than blogs to communicate with the public. The lists include the following information about each collected blog:

- (1) **Name.** For instance, *Guido Fawkes*.

² The list is available at <http://www.vuelio.com/uk/social-media-index/top-10-uk-political-blogs/>. (Date of access: 1 March 2016.)

³ These are available at <http://goldenblog.hu/>. (Date of access: 1 March 2016.)

⁴ Date of access: 1 March 2016.

- (2) **URL.** For instance, *https://labourlist.org/*.
- (3) **Author type.** I used six categories to describe the author type of the blogs. These categories were (a) blogs written by a private citizen, (b) blogs written by a professional journalist, (c) blogs written by a professional political analyst, (d) blogs run by a political research institute, such as the LSE European Institute, (e) blogs run by a political organisation, such as a political party, activist group, or civil organisation, and (f) independent multi-authored blogs with more than one regular contributor. The first three categories cover the blogs written by only one person while the latter three include the blogs written by multiple authors.
- (4) **Political position.** I used seven categories to describe the political position of the collected blogs. These were radical left, left-wing, centre-left, centrist, centre-right, right-wing, and radical right. I relied on these categories since the bloggers themselves tend to position their blogs along this one-dimensional spectrum. A single left–right axis obviously cannot describe the existing variation in political beliefs but it would have been even more arbitrary to use a more sophisticated, multi-dimensional political spectrum.
- (5) **Time frame.** Date of the first and the last posts of the collected blogs.

In the second half of Section 4.2.1, I will discuss the author-type, political, and temporal distribution of the collected British and Hungarian political blogs. Figure 4.1 shows the author-type distribution of the blogs.

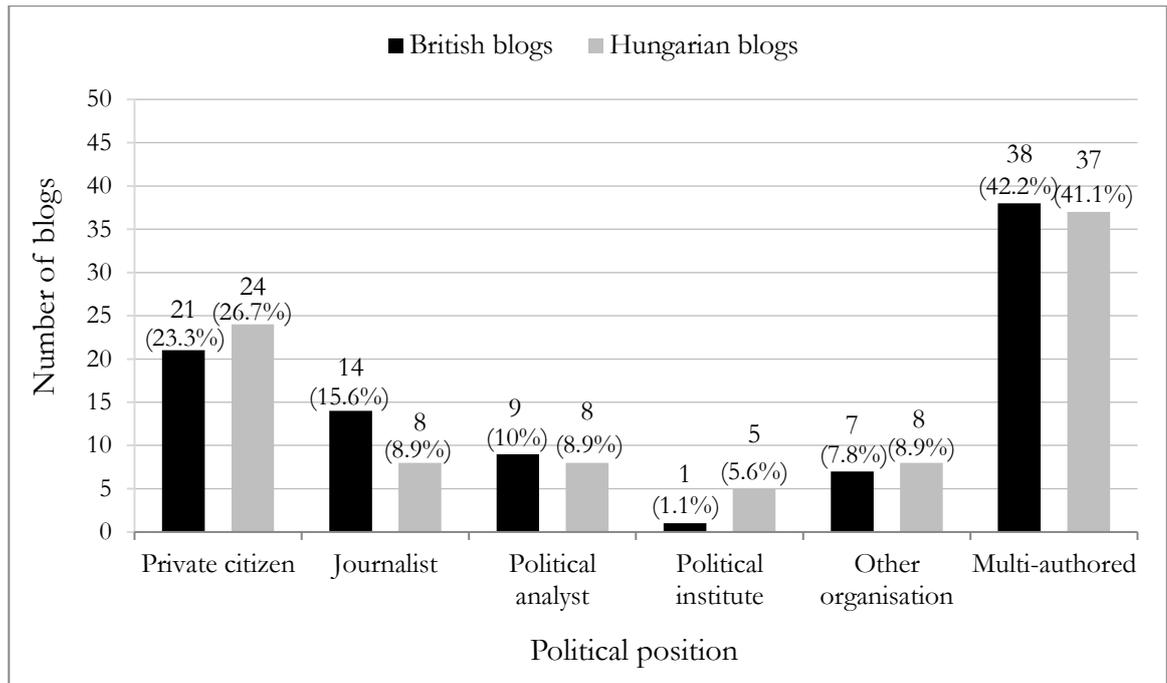


Figure 4.1. The author-type distribution of the collected British and Hungarian political blogs (100%=90)

Figure 4.1 shows that the British and Hungarian blogs have a very similar author-type distribution. 42.2% of the British and 41.1% of the Hungarian blogs are multi-authored while 23.3% of the British and 26.7% of the Hungarian blogs are written by a private citizen. The other author types are much less dominant as their proportion remains under 20% in both datasets. In fact, the only notable difference is that 15.6% of the British but only 8.9% of the Hungarian blogs are written by professional journalists. Figure 4.2 presents the political distribution of the collected British and Hungarian political blogs.

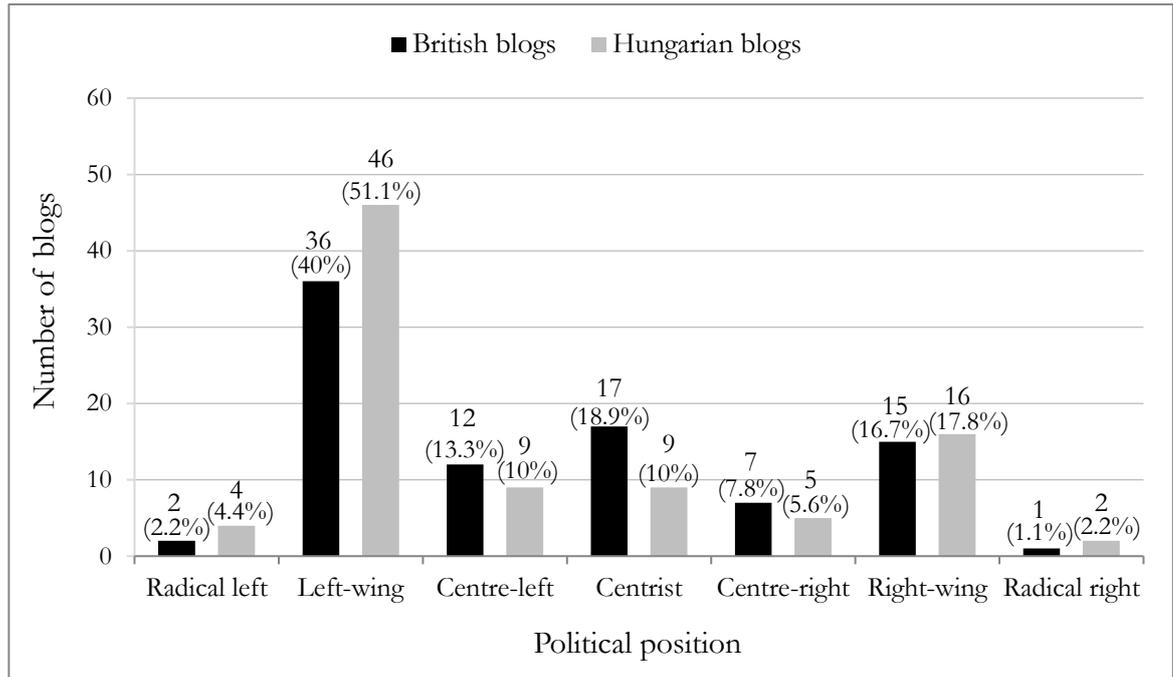


Figure 4.2. The political distribution of the collected British and Hungarian political blogs (100%=90)

Figure 4.2 reveals that 55.6% of the British and 65.5% of the Hungarian blogs associate themselves with the political left while 25.6% of the British and 25.5% of the Hungarian blogs are on the right. The remaining 18.9% of the British and 10% of the Hungarian blogs hold a centrist position.

Figure 4.3 shows the launch dates of the collected British and Hungarian blogs. Note that all collected blogs were active in 2015 as at least one blog post was posted on each of them in 2015.

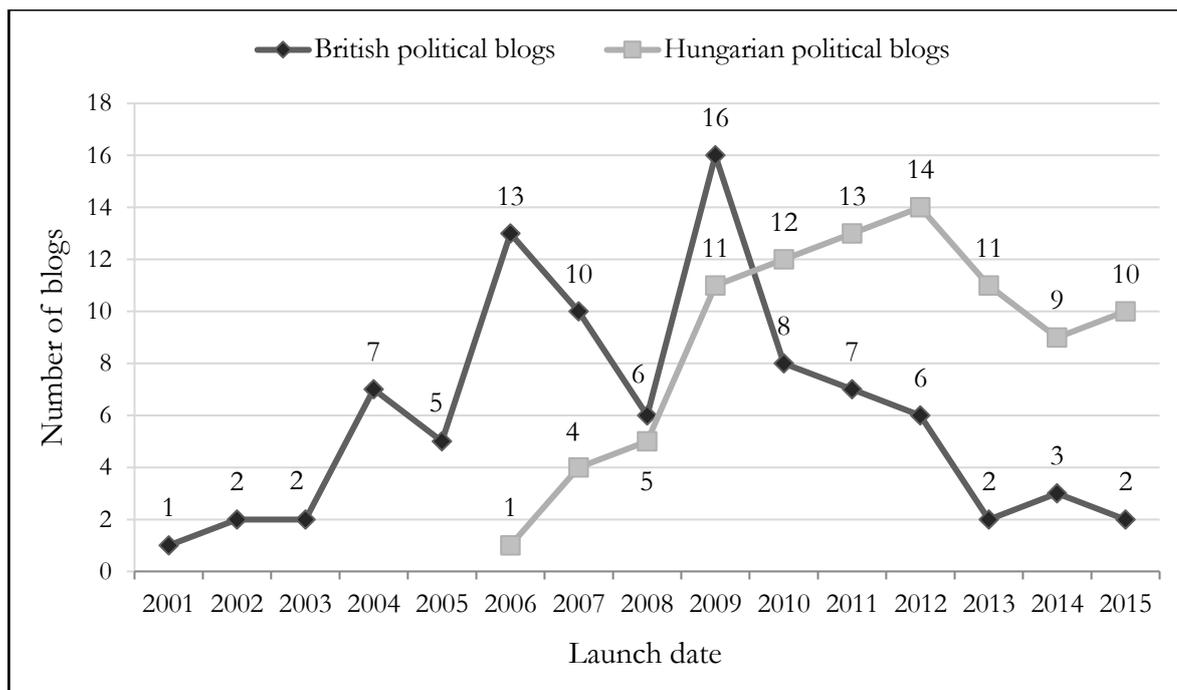


Figure 4.3. The launch dates of the collected British and Hungarian political blogs

Figure 4.3 suggests that the British political blogosphere is slightly older than the Hungarian as the oldest collected British political blog, *Samizdata*, was launched in 2001 while the oldest Hungarian blog, *mandiner*, has only been running since 2006. In fact, 88.9% of the examined Hungarian blogs started in 2009 or later. Moreover, 18.9% of the collected British blogs are older than the oldest Hungarian blog. Another major difference is that 2.5 times more Hungarian than British political blogs have been launched since 2010. The main reason for this difference might be Twitter, which was launched in 2006 and has become highly popular in the UK but has mostly been ignored in Hungary.

4.2.2. Creating the shortlists of the British and Hungarian political blogs

As discussed in Subsection 4.2.1, the preliminary lists of the British and Hungarian political blogs cannot be considered statistically representative samples of all British and Hungarian political blogs active in 2015. Therefore, the main principle of data collection was balance rather than representativeness at this point, which means that I aimed at creating two corpora as similar as possible. To reach this balance between the two corpora, I created two harmonised shortlists from the preliminary lists of the

British and Hungarian political blogs. These shortlists, which can be found in Appendix B, include 50 British and 50 Hungarian political blogs.

When establishing the shortlists, I focused on the political position and author type of the blogs. I made this decision because I assumed that the political position of a blog affects the way in which different political opinions are expressed and evaluated in the comment threads. Similarly, I assumed that the author type of a blog might affect the relationship between the bloggers and the commenters.

To avoid any selection bias against either the British or the Hungarian blogs whilst also maintaining their original diversity, I calculated the mean proportion of each political position and author type in the preliminary British and Hungarian lists. Then, I multiplied this mean proportion by 50, which is the number of blogs in the shortlists, and rounded the result to the next whole number. I applied the following formula:

$$\frac{p_B + p_H}{2} \times 50 \approx$$

where p_B is the proportion of a political position (e.g. left-wing) or author type (e.g. multi-authored) in the preliminary list of the British political blogs and p_H is the proportion of the same political position or author type in the preliminary list of the Hungarian political blogs. Table 4.1 gives the distribution of the considered political positions and author types in the preliminary lists and in the parallel shortlists of the British and Hungarian political blogs.

Table 4.1. The distribution of political positions and author types in the preliminary lists and shortlists of the British and Hungarian political blogs

	Preliminary British list (100%=90)	Preliminary Hungarian list (100%=90)	Shortlists (100%=50)
Political position			
Radical right	1.1% (1)	2.2% (2)	2% (1)
Right-wing	16.7% (15)	17.8% (16)	18% (9)
Centre-right	7.8% (7)	5.6% (5)	6% (3)
Centrist	18.9% (17)	10% (9)	14% (7)

Centre-left	13.3% (12)	10% (9)	12% (6)
Left-wing	40% (36)	51.1% (46)	46% (23)
Radical left	2.2% (2)	3.3% (3)	2% (1)
Author type			
Private person	23.3% (21)	26.7% (24)	26% (13)
Journalist	15.6% (14)	8.9% (8)	12% (6)
Political analyst	10% (9)	8.9% (8)	10% (5)
Political institute	1.1% (1)	5.6% (5)	2% (1)
Other organisation	7.8% (7)	8.9% (8)	8% (4)
Multi-authored	42.2% (38)	41.1% (37)	42% (21)

I applied stratified sampling to construct the shortlists with the distribution presented in Table 4.1. Stratified sampling refers to the practice of dividing a population into categories and then drawing a probability sample from each category (Lemm, 2010). I used political position as the primary variable in the sampling process. First, I listed the British left-wing blogs in a Microsoft Excel 2010 spreadsheet. Then I gave a pseudo-random number between 0 and 1 to each blog using the `=RAND()` function. I also saved these numbers as `RAND()` produces a new result whenever one modifies something in the spreadsheet.⁵ Finally, I ranked the blogs based on their pseudo-random numbers and selected those with the highest numbers.

For instance, from the 36 British left-wing political blogs, I selected the first 23 with the highest pseudo-random numbers. I followed the same procedure with the other political positions and with the Hungarian blogs as well. This method produced two parallel shortlists consisting of 50 British and 50 Hungarian political blogs. Both the British and the Hungarian shortlist contained 1 radical right, 9 right-wing, 3 centre-right, 7 centrist, 6 centre-left, 23 left-wing, and 1 radical left blog.

After this, I examined the lists to see whether the shortlisted blogs had the planned author-type distribution. As I noticed some deviations from the expected distribution, I listed the member blogs of the over-represented author-type categories, gave each blog a pseudo-random number, and removed those that got the highest numbers. Then, I replaced these blogs with randomly selected new blogs that had the author type and

⁵ The `RAND()` function in Microsoft Excel 2010 applies the Mersenne Twister algorithm (Matsumoto & Nishimura, 1998) to generate pseudo-random numbers. This algorithm passes most statistical tests for accuracy (Mélard, 2014).

political position that I needed to ensure that the shortlisted blogs had the planned author-type and political distribution.

4.2.3. Manual collection of the troll threads

The third step of data collection was to gather the troll threads from the shortlisted British and Hungarian blogs. I decided to collect the troll threads manually as several technical problems emerged when I attempted to collect them automatically. These problems stemmed from the fact that different blogs offer different ways of posting comments. Some blogs, such as *LabourList* or *Átlátszó*, use the *Disqus* plugin, other blogs, such as *Kettős Mérce*, rely on the *Facebook comments* plugin, while others, such as the *Guardian Politics Blog*, offer their own interface for users to post comments.

For a thread to be selected as a troll thread, at least one participant had to use a word form of the lexeme *TROLL* to refer to a participant or a comment in the thread. I refer to these word forms as *troll tokens*. The troll tokens include the base form (*troll*), inflections (e.g. *trolls* or *trolling* in the English comments and *trollok* ‘trolls’ or *trollt* ‘troll (accusative)’ in the Hungarian comments), derivations (e.g. *trollery* or *trollish* in the English comments and *trollkodik* ‘someone is trolling’ or *trollocska* ‘little troll’ in the Hungarian comments), and compounds (e.g. *trollfest* in English and *bértroll* ‘wage troll’ in Hungarian).

Although *troll* as an English word and *troll* as a Hungarian word may seem identical, they are used in a somewhat different manner. In English, *troll* can be used as either a noun or a verb. As a noun, it can refer to (a) a person who is accused of trolling (e.g. *He is a nasty troll*) or to (b) an utterance or action that is considered trolling (e.g. *This comment is just a poor troll.*). As an English verb, *troll* denotes (c) the behaviour itself (e.g. *He tried to troll everyone in this comment thread*).

However, in Hungarian, *troll* can only be used as a noun and it always refers to the person who is accused of trolling (e.g. *Ő a legidegesítőbb troll, akit valaha láttam.* ‘He is the most annoying troll I have ever seen.’). The denominative verb *trollkodik* (the noun *troll* + the denominative verb suffix *-kodik*) denotes the behaviour (e.g. *Húzzál innen és trollkodj máshol.* ‘Get lost and troll somewhere else.’) while the deverbial noun *trollkodás* (the noun *troll* + the denominative verb suffix *-kod(ik)* + the deverbial noun suffix *-ás*) refers to the action that is considered an act of trolling (e.g.

Az előző kommented nem több mint sima trollkodás. ‘Your previous comment is nothing but pure trolling.’).

A further difference is that whilst in English, the verb *to troll* can be transitive (e.g. *Please, don't troll the comment thread.*) or intransitive (e.g. *You are trolling too much lately.*), the Hungarian verb *trollkodik* is normally intransitive (e.g. *Miért trollkodsز állandóan?* ‘Why are you trolling all the time?’). *Trollkodik* needs to be provided with the prefix *meg-* (*megtrollkodik*), *tele-* (*teletrollkodik*), or *szét-* (*széttrollkodik*) to be used as a transitive verb (e.g. *Jól megtrollkodtad a többieket.* ‘You really trolled the other users’, *Miért kell teletrollkodni/széttrollkodni ezt a blogot?* ‘Why do you need to keep trolling this blog?’). These differences relate to the fact that Hungarian mainly uses affixes to indicate grammatical relations.

I manually opened every comment thread that was created between 1 January and 31 December 2015 on the shortlisted blogs and searched for the character string *troll* using the Ctrl+F keyboard shortcut. With this very simple search term, I was able to find the troll tokens in the threads. The search term also returned false hits, such as *stroll*, *trolley*, *trollop*, and *controlled* in the British threads and *kontroll(ál(t))* ‘control(led)’ in the Hungarian ones, but as I manually examined the threads, I was able to detect these false hits.

Table 4.2 shows the number of threads that I examined on the shortlisted British blogs and the number of qualifying troll threads that I have found. The percentages between round brackets indicate how the number of examined threads on a blog relates to the total number of examined threads. These percentages were calculated by comparing the numbers in the first column and they reveal how active the blogs were in 2015. The percentages between square brackets specify how the number of troll threads on a blog relates to the total number of troll threads. These percentages were calculated by comparing the numbers in the second column and they show how the troll threads were distributed across the blogs. Finally, the percentages between curly brackets show how the number of troll threads on a blog relates to the number of examined threads on the same blog. These percentages were calculated by comparing the numbers in the same row and they give the proportion of troll threads on a blog.

For instance, the different percentages for *Archbishop Cranmer* need to be interpreted as follows. (1.1%) in the first cell means that 1.1% of all examined threads were published on this blog. [2.2%] in the second cell indicates that 2.2% of all troll threads were found on this blog. Finally, {12.8%} in the second cell shows that 12.8%

of the examined threads on this particular blog were troll threads. The top seven blogs with the most threads are highlighted in bold in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. The number of examined threads and collected troll threads on the shortlisted British political blogs

Name of the blog	Number of examined comment threads	Number of collected troll threads
In total	26,804 (100%), {100%}	1,712 [100%], {6.4%}
A Burdz Eye View	11 (0.04%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Alex's Archives	66 (0.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Anna Raccoon	130 (0.5%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Archbishop Cranmer	296 (1.1%), {100%}	38 [2.2%], {12.8%}
Bella Caledonia	651 (2.4%), {100%}	55 [3.2%], {8.4%}
Benedict Brogan	123 (0.5%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Bloggers4UKIP	463 (1.7%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Capitalists@Work	351 (1.3%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {0.3%}
Charles Crawford	92 (0.3%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Conservative Home	2,700 (10.1%), {100%}	81 [4.7%], {3%}
Dale&Co	330 (1.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Dick Puddlecote	229 (0.9%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
EUROPP	530 (2%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {0.2%}
Fabian Review	201 (0.7%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Guardian Politics Blog	304 (1.1%), {100%}	167 [9.7%], {54.9%}
Guido Fawkes	2,832 (10.6%), {100%}	391 [22.8%], {13.8%}
Harry's Place	962 (3.6%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Hopi Sen	9 (0.03%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}

John Redwood's Diary	418 (1.6%), {100%}	7 [0.4%], {1.7%}
John Rentoul	1 (0.004%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	79 (0.3%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Labour Hame	37 (0.1%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {2.7%}
LabourList	2,664 (9.9%), {100%}	433 [25.3%], {16.3%}
Labour Uncut	310 (1.2%), {100%}	4 [0.2%], {1.3%}
Lallands Peat Worrier	102 (0.4%), {100%}	5 [0.3%], {4.9%}
Left Foot Forward	1,400 (5.2%), {100%}	89 [5.2%], {6.4%}
Left Futures	739 (2.8%), {100%}	26 [1.5%], {3.5%}
Lenin's Tomb	76 (0.3%), {100%}	8 [0.5%], {10.5%}
Liberal Conspiracy	10 (0.04%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Liberal Democrat Voice	2,673 (10%), {100%}	22 [1.3%], {0.8%}
Liberal Vision	85 (0.3%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Longrider	282 (1.1%), {100%}	3 [0.2%], {1.1%}
Obnoxio The Clown	9 (0.03%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Political Betting	1,104 (4.1%), {100%}	111 [6.5%], {10.1%}
Political Scrapbook	486 (1.8%), {100%}	7 [0.4%], {1.4%}
Politics and Insights	204 (0.8%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {0.5%}
Raedwald	305 (1.1%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {0.3%}
Slugger O'Toole	1,541 (5.7%), {100%}	74 [4.3%], {4.8%}
Stronger Unions	176 (0.7%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Stumbling and Mumbling	198 (0.7%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {0.5%}
Subrosa	44 (0.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Syniadau	26 (0.1%), {100%}	2 [0.1%], {7.7%}
The Devil's Kitchen	33 (0.1%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}

The Rambles of Neil Monnery	82 (0.3%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
The Slog	686 (2.6%), {100%}	17 [1%], {2.5%}
Think Left	150 (0.6%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Touch Stone	567 (2.1%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Velvet Glove, Iron Fist	274 (1%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {0.4%}
Wings over Scotland	761 (2.8%), {100%}	164 [9.6%], {21.6%}
Zelo Street	1,002 (3.7%), {100%}	1 [0.1%], {%}
In total	26,804 (100%), {100%}	1,712 [100%], {6.4%}

Table 4.2. The number of examined threads and collected troll threads on the shortlisted British political blogs

Table 4.2 shows that 26,804 comment threads were examined on the shortlisted 50 British political blogs and 1,712 troll threads were found. These 1,712 troll threads constitute the British corpus. The fact that only 6.4% of the threads were troll threads suggests that commenters rarely accuse others of trolling. However, some blogs, such as the *Guardian Politics Blog* or *Guido Fawkes*, are actively moderated and thus, some troll comments might have been deleted. Consequently, the original number of troll threads might have been somewhat higher but this cannot be confirmed.

Although 50 British blogs were analysed, these 1,712 troll threads come from only 28 blogs. Furthermore, 15 of these 28 blogs had no more than ten troll threads. In fact, 83.9% of all troll threads were published on only seven blogs. That is, 83.9% of the relevant British data comes from 14% of the investigated blogs. These seven blogs, *Conservative Home*, *Guardian Politics Blog*, *Guido Fawkes*, *LabourList*, *Left Foot Forward*, *Political Betting*, and *Wings over Scotland*, are the key British political blogs for my analysis. Within these blogs, *LabourList* and *Guido Fawkes* are the most prominent as they hosted 25.3% and 22.8% of the troll threads, respectively. The fact that the vast majority of troll threads were collected from only a handful of blogs is illustrated by Figure 4.4, which displays the distribution of the British troll threads across the examined blogs. Figure 4.4 also includes those British blogs where no troll threads have been found.

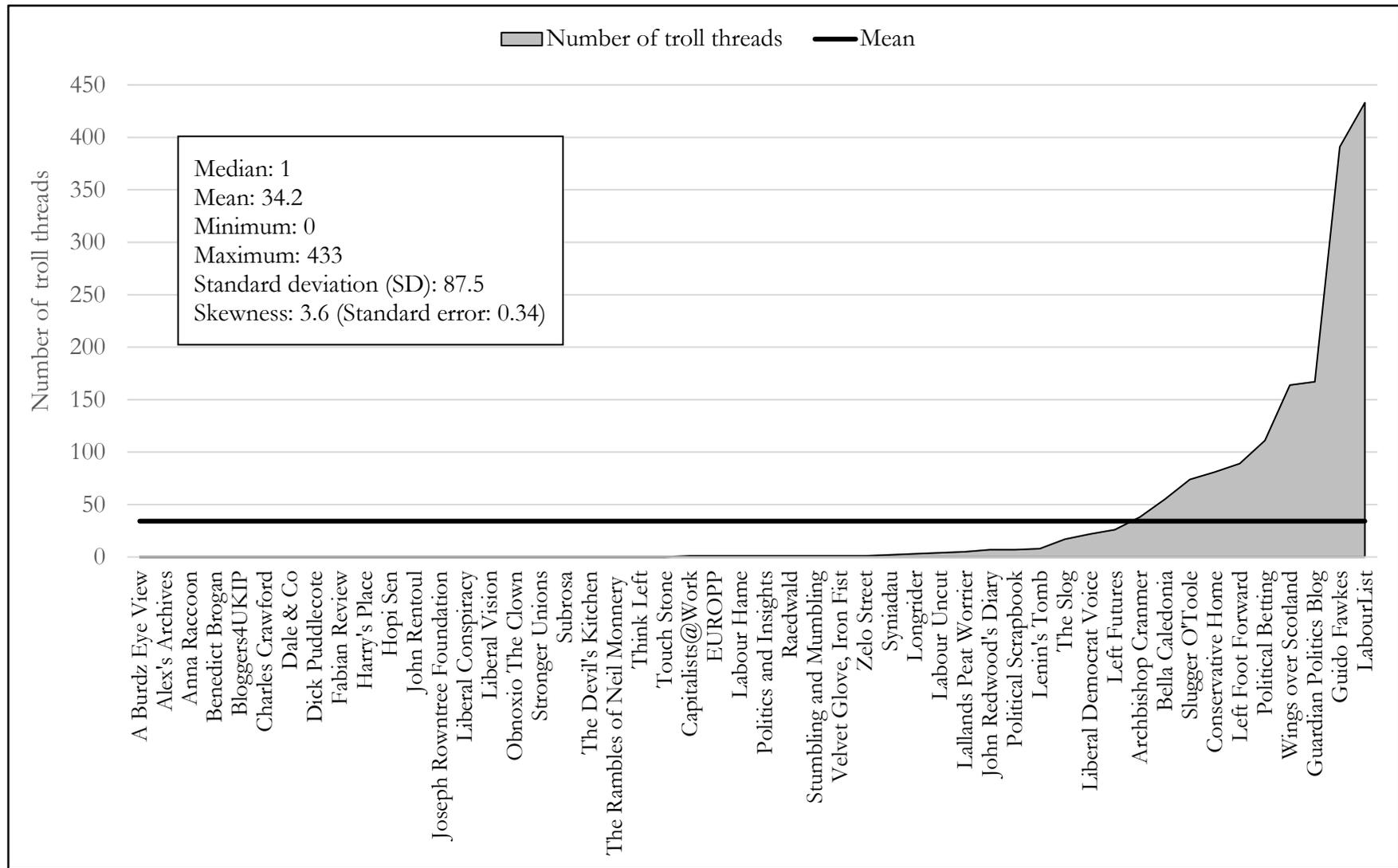


Figure 4.4. The distribution of the British troll threads

Figure 4.4 shows that the distribution of the British troll threads is extremely uneven as the shortlisted blogs highly differ in the number of their troll threads. Instead of 25, only ten blogs had more troll threads than the mean (34.2). This is also supported by a skewness score of 3.6, which indicates that the distribution is strongly positively skewed, suggesting that most of the examined blogs had fewer troll threads than the mean.

It is not surprising that the shortlisted British blogs highly differ in the number of their troll threads if we consider that they also greatly differ in the total number of their comment threads. Figure 4.5 shows that the examined threads were unevenly distributed across the shortlisted British blogs (skewness: 2.1). There were four blogs that published no more than ten blog posts in 2015 and eleven other blogs that hosted no more than 100 comment threads. At the same time, 65.8% of the examined threads were published on only ten blogs whilst 37 blogs out of 50 had fewer comment threads than the mean (536.1).

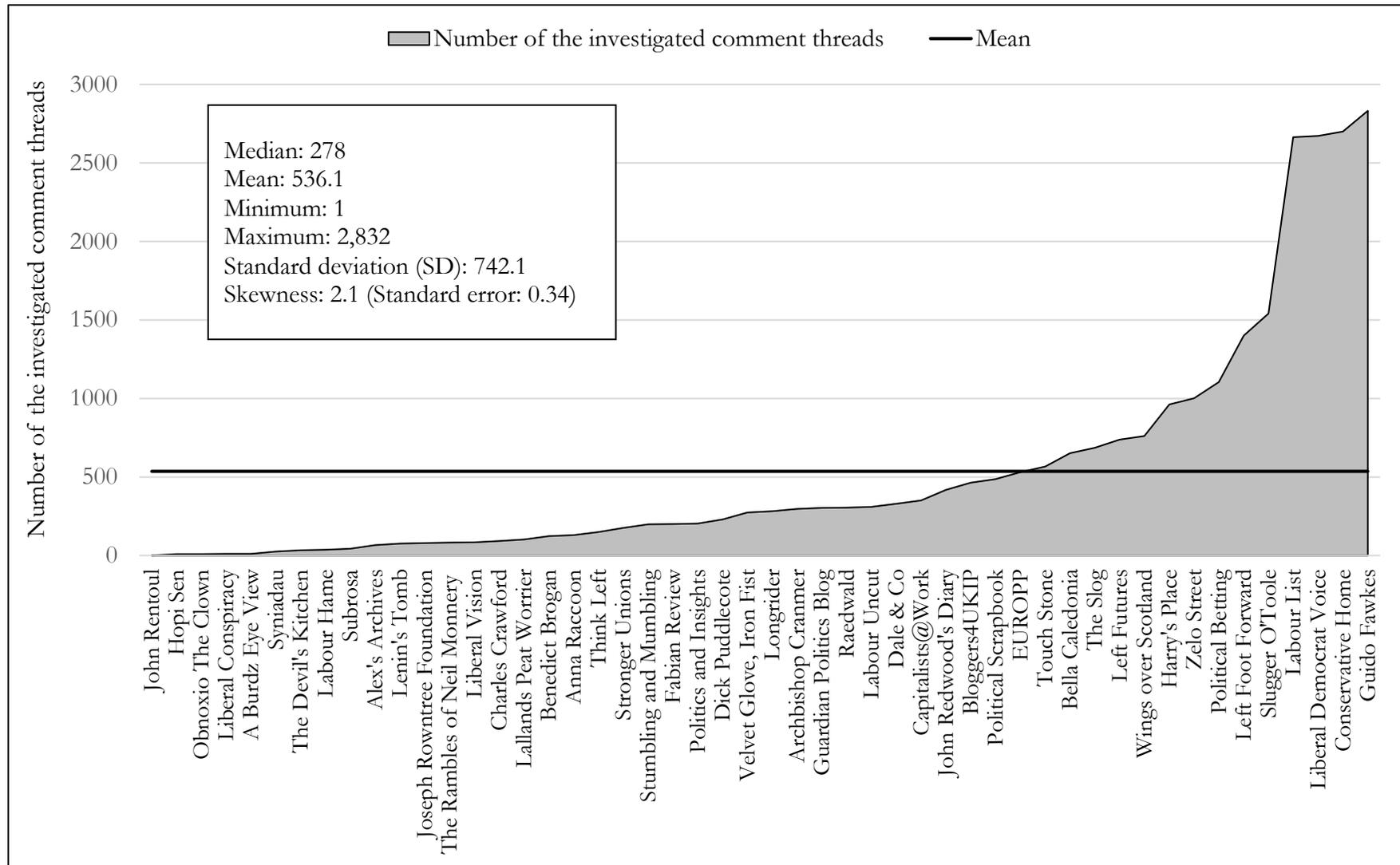


Figure 4.5. The distribution of the examined British comment threads

However, one cannot conclude that if a blog hosted more comment threads, then it also had more troll threads. Figure 4.6 displays how the number of troll threads on a blog relates to the total number of investigated comment threads on the same blog.

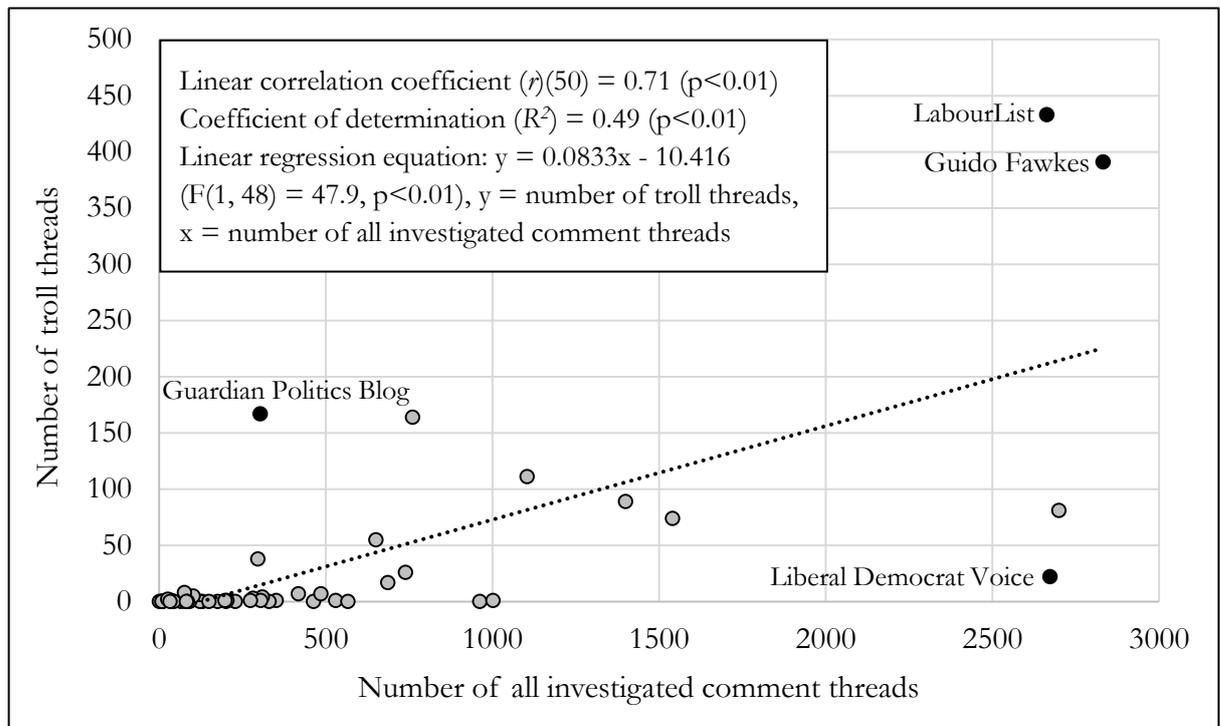


Figure 4.6. The relationship between the number of troll threads and the total number of comment threads on a British blog

Figure 4.6 shows that most data points are concentrated in the bottom left corner of the scatter plot. This means that the blogs with few comment threads tend to have no or only a few troll threads. At the same time, the two blogs with the most troll threads, *Guido Fawkes* and *LabourList*, are also among the most active blogs. However, there are some exceptions. For instance, *Liberal Democrat Voice* hosted 2,673 comment threads but it had only 22 troll threads whereas *Guardian Politics Blog* had only 304 comment threads but 167 of these were troll threads.

I also conducted a linear regression analysis to decide whether there is a linear statistical relationship between the number of troll threads and the total number of comment threads on a blog. The linear correlation coefficient (0.71) seems to indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between these two variables. This would mean that if a blog has more comment threads, then it also has more troll threads.

However, the coefficient of determination (0.49) shows that the linear regression model, which describes this positive statistical relationship in the form of an equation, can only predict 50% of the observed variation in the number of troll threads. This suggests that the linear regression model, which is indicated by the dotted slanted line, is an inaccurate representation of the statistical relationship between the two variables. Consequently, there is no positive linear relationship between the number of troll threads and the total number of comment threads. Figure 4.6 does not show either that there would be an obvious nonlinear relationship between these two variables.

Nevertheless, it is possible that some blogs have more troll threads than others for others reasons. For instance, it seems reasonable to assume that if a blog has long and unmoderated threads, it will also have more troll threads. However, as this thesis does not aim to explain why some political blogs have more troll threads than others, this question will not be discussed further.

Table 4.3 displays the number of threads that I examined and the number of troll threads that I have found on the shortlisted Hungarian blogs. The percentages within round, square, and curly brackets here and also in all further tables in this subsection should be interpreted in the same way as in Table 4.2.

Table 4.3. The number of examined threads and collected troll threads on the shortlisted Hungarian political blogs

Name of the blog	Number of examined comment threads	Number of troll threads
In total	5,542 (100%), {100%}	519 [100%], {9.4%}
1000 A Mi Hazánk	258 (4.7%), {100%}	56 [10.8%], {21.7%}
A Körúton Kívül	7 (0.1%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
A TASZ jelenti	88 (1.6%), {100%}	10 [1.9%], {11.4%}
Annyit	17 (0.3%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Alternatíva	90 (1.6%), {100%}	8 [1.5%], {8.9%}
Átlagpolgár	52 (0.9%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}

Átlátszó blog	304 (5.5%), {100%}	10 [1.9%], {3.3%}
Boldogok a sajtókészítők	28 (0.5%), {100%}	1 [0.2%], {3.6%}
Dinamó Műhely	172 (3.1%), {100%}	3 [0.6%], {1.7%}
DiploMaci	218 (3.9%), {100%}	5 [1%], {2.3%}
Egyenlítő/B1	642 (11.6%), {100%}	61 [11.8%], {9.5%}
Egyszeregypol	2 (0.04%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Falmentaparlament	21 (0.4%), {100%}	2 [0.4%], {9.5%}
Fideszfigyelő	1 (0.02%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Figyelő jehu	34 (0.6%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Föld S. Péter blog	67 (1.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
IFL, Az őszinte gazdaság	163 (2.9%), {100%}	12 [2.3%], {7.4%}
Jobbegyenes	92 (1.7%), {100%}	11 [2.1%], {12%}
Kard	28 (0.5%), {100%}	5 [1%], {17.9%}
Kérdezz bátran!	51 (0.9%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Kettős Mérce	938 (16.9%), {100%}	19 [3.7%], {2%}
Konzervatórium	2 (0.04%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Köznapló	13 (0.2%), {100%}	2 [0.4%], {15.4%}
Lehetmemberrelpolitizálni	26 (0.5%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Lokális klímaváltozás	9 (0.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Mandiner blog	489 (8.8%), {100%}	70 [13.5%], {14.3%}
Nívó	10 (0.2%), {100%}	2 [0.4%], {20%}
Örülünk, Vincent?	254 (4.6%), {100%}	49 [9.4%], {19.3%}
Páholy	2 (0.04%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Piroslap	31 (0.6%), {100%}	2 [0.4%], {6.5%}
Pogátsa Zoltán blogja	35 (0.6%), {100%}	3 [0.6%], {8.6%}

Policity	10 (0.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Polipraktika	107 (1.9%), {100%}	7 [1.3%], {6.5%}
Politikafüggő	50 (0.9%), {100%}	2 [0.4%], {4%}
Politikáról azoknak, akiket érdekel a véleményem	13 (0.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Politikazabáló	9 (0.2%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Politológusblog	12 (0.2%), {100%}	2 [0.4%], {16.7%}
PolMA Progresszív	1 (0.02%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Progresszív blog	18 (0.3%), {100%}	2 [0.4%], {11.1%}
Radical Puzzle	56 (1%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Radikális BAL oldal	293 (5.3%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Szegedi Kattintós	166 (3%), {100%}	41 [7.9%], {24.7%}
Szembesítés	1 (0.02%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Ténytár	219 (4%), {100%}	37 [7.1%], {16.9%}
Törökgáborelem	1 (0.02%), {100%}	1 [0.2%], {100%}
Törvénygyártók	6 (0.1%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
Varánusz	222 (4%), {100%}	68 [13.1%], {30.6%}
Vastagbőr	133 (2.4%), {100%}	11 [2.1%], {8.3%}
Victorism	47 (0.8%), {100%}	0 [0%], {0%}
W	34 (0.6%), {100%}	17 [3.3%], {50%}
In total	5,542 (100%), {100%}	519 [100%], {9.4%}

Table 4.3. The number of examined threads and collected troll threads on the shortlisted Hungarian political blogs

Table 4.3 shows that 5,542 comment threads were examined on the shortlisted Hungarian blogs and 519 troll threads were found. These 519 troll threads constitute the Hungarian corpus as discussed in Subsection 4.2.4. These numbers also indicate

that 4.8 times more comment threads and 3.3 times more troll threads were found on the British blogs than on their Hungarian counterparts.

The fact that only 9.4% of the Hungarian threads are troll threads suggests that similarly to the British commenters, the Hungarian commenters only rarely call others trolls. Although the proportion of the Hungarian troll threads (9.4%) is slightly higher than that of the British troll threads (6.4%), this is not a major difference as the numbers are very close to each other.

Note that it would be meaningless to test whether the difference between these two proportions is statistically significant. This is because the purpose of significance testing is to determine whether an observed difference between two or more statistically representative samples is only a product of sampling error or it reflects an actual difference between those populations that the samples represent. Thus, significance testing assumes that our datasets are statistically representative samples of wider populations. However, the examined 26,804 British and 5,542 Hungarian comment threads are not statistically representative samples of any wider populations. For instance, it would be incorrect to say that the investigated British threads constitute a statistically representative sample of all comment threads on the shortlisted British political blogs or of all comment threads on all British political blogs. Therefore, the findings of this thesis only apply to the examined comment threads and cannot be extrapolated (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 361). Consequently, significance testing was deemed inappropriate and was not used.

Similarly to the British threads, the 519 Hungarian troll threads come from only 29 blogs. In fact, 73.6% of the Hungarian troll threads were published on only seven blogs. These seven blogs, *1000 A Mi Hazánk*, *B1*, *Mandiner*, *Örüülünk*, *Vincent?*, *Szegedi Kattintós*, *Ténytár*, and *Varánusz*, are the key Hungarian political blogs for my analysis.

Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of the Hungarian troll threads compared to that of the British troll threads. Every examined Hungarian blog is represented, including those without any troll threads. The values between round brackets in the text box indicate how the distribution measures of the Hungarian troll threads (median, mean, minimum, maximum, standard deviation, skewness) relate to their British counterparts. For instance, 'Median: 2 (+1)' means that the median number of Hungarian troll threads per blog is two, which is one more than the median number of British troll threads per blog.

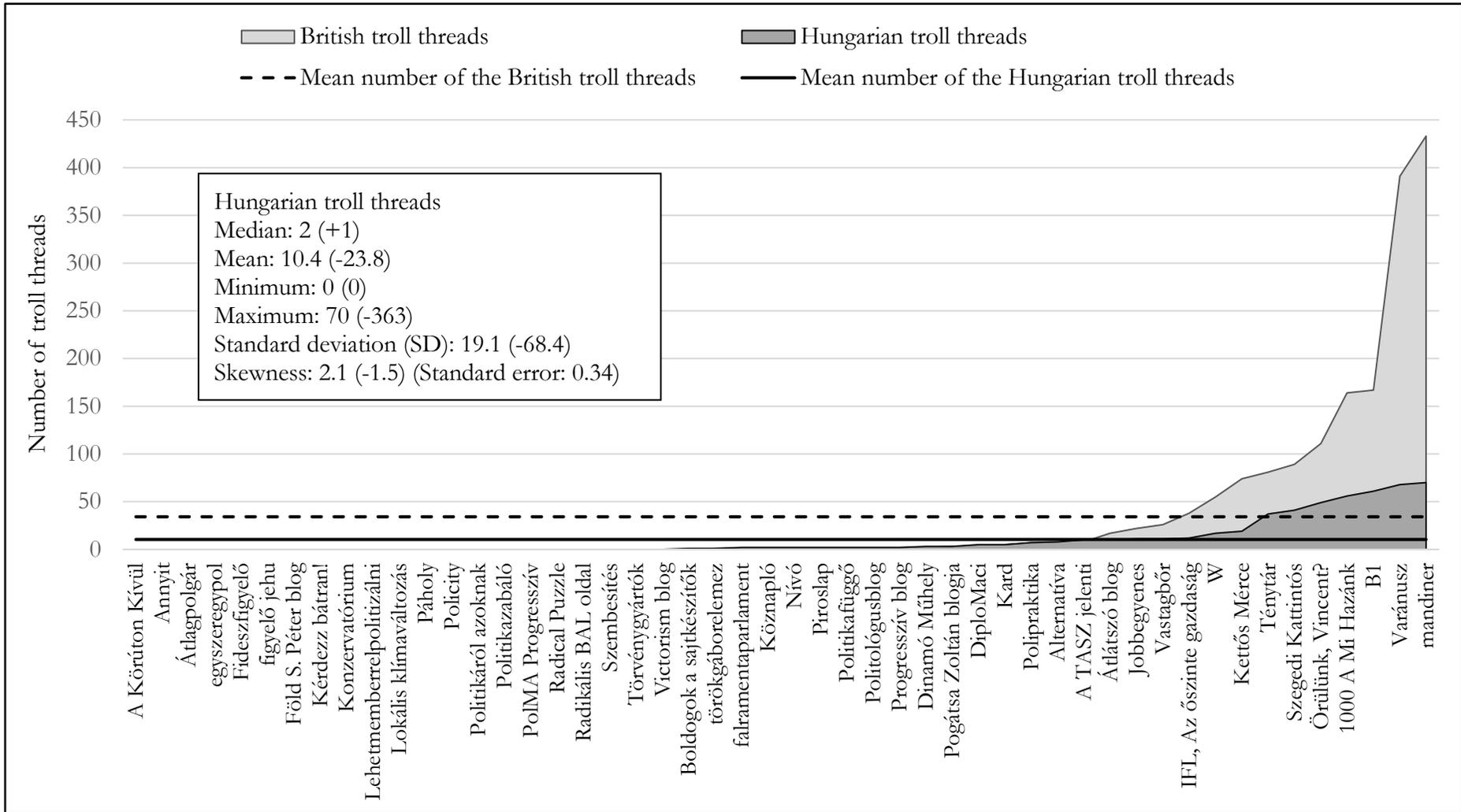


Figure 4.7. The distribution of the Hungarian troll threads compared to that of the British troll threads

Figure 4.7 points out that similarly to the British troll threads, the distribution of the Hungarian troll threads is strongly uneven. Instead of 25, there are only 12 Hungarian blogs that had more troll threads than the mean (10.4). This is also supported by a skewness score of 2.1, which indicates that the distribution is clearly positively skewed, suggesting that most of the examined Hungarian blogs had fewer troll threads than the mean.

With the exception of the median and the minimum, the Hungarian troll threads have lower distribution measures than their British counterparts. These differences stem from the fact that the top 13 British blogs had 3.6 times as many troll threads as the top 13 Hungarian blogs. There are also eight British blogs that had more troll threads than the top Hungarian blog, *mandiner*. This is visually represented by the light grey area in Figure 4.7. In fact, the top two British blogs with the most troll threads, *Guido Fawkes* and *LabourList*, had more troll threads than the Hungarian blogs combined. Figure 4.7 also displays that the difference in the number of troll threads between the British and the Hungarian blogs is the product of the above-discussed difference between the top 13 British and the top 13 Hungarian blogs. As the British and Hungarian corpora include all collected troll threads, the light grey area also visually represents the size difference between the two corpora.

Figure 4.8 presents the distribution of the examined Hungarian threads compared to that of the examined British comment threads. As in Figure 4.7, the values between round brackets in the text box indicate how the distribution measures of the examined Hungarian threads relate to their British counterparts.

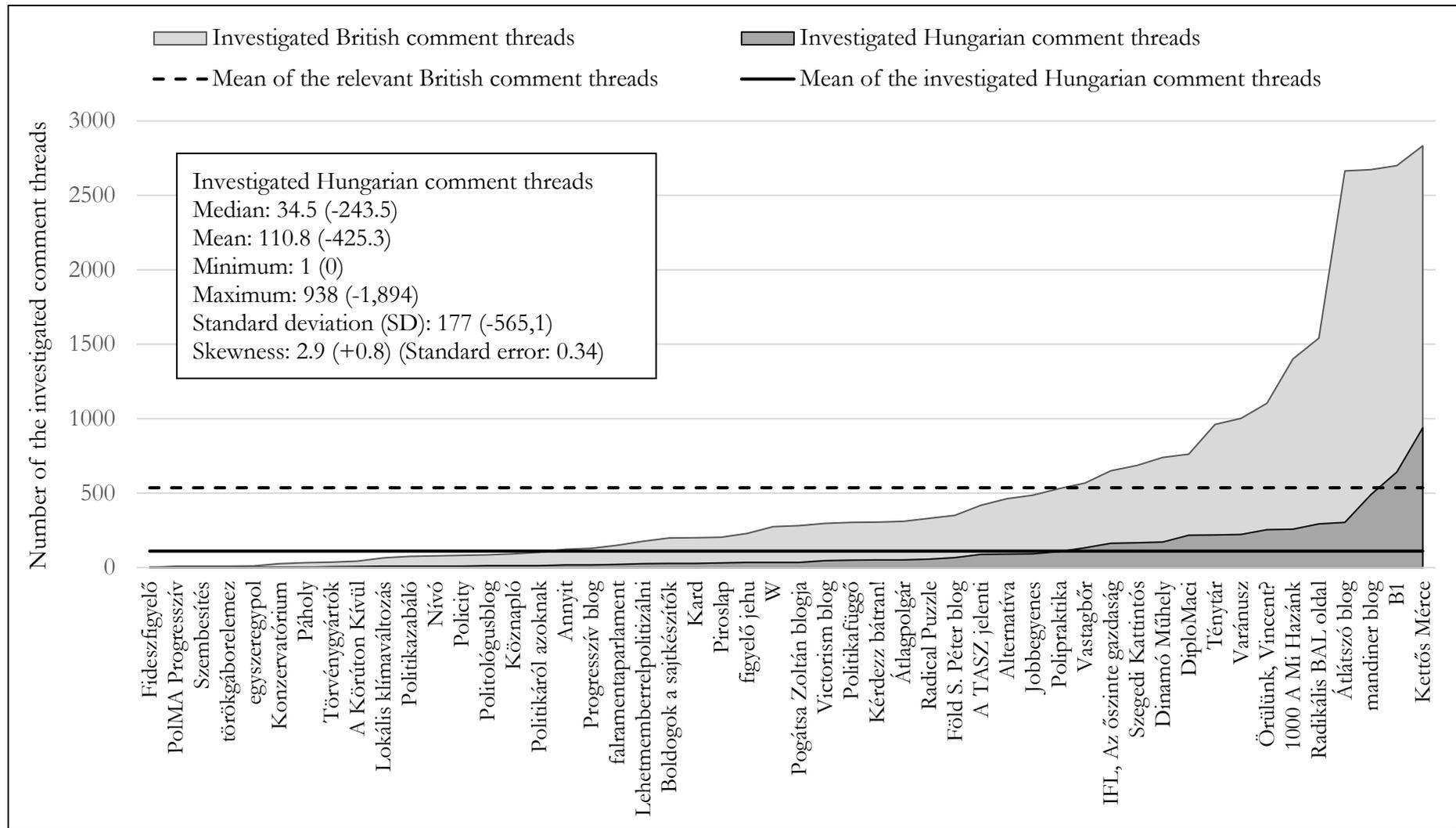


Figure 4.8. The distribution of the examined Hungarian threads compared to that of the examined British threads

Figure 4.8 shows that while the shortlisted Hungarian blogs were generally less active in 2015 than the British blogs, similarly to their British counterparts, they differ not only in the number of their troll threads but also in the total number of their comment threads (skewness: 2.9). There were 13 Hungarian blogs that published no more than ten blog posts in 2015 and 22 further blogs that hosted no more than 100 comment threads. Again, 69.3% of the examined Hungarian threads were created on ten blogs, which is 20% of the shortlisted blogs.

With the exception of minimum and skewness, the examined Hungarian threads have lower distribution measures than the British ones. These differences stem from the fact that the shortlisted British blogs had 4.8 times more comment threads than their Hungarian counterparts. Moreover, there were nine British blogs that had more comment threads than the top Hungarian blog, *Kettős Mércse*. As in Figure 4.7, this is visually represented by the light grey area. The slightly higher skewness value of the Hungarian dataset indicates that the distribution of the examined Hungarian threads is a little more asymmetrical than that of the British ones. However, as both datasets are strongly positively skewed, this difference does not have any implications.

As with the British blogs, the fact that a Hungarian blog had more comment threads does not mean that it also had more troll threads. Figure 4.9 represents how the number of troll threads on a particular Hungarian blog relates to the total number of comment threads on the same blog.

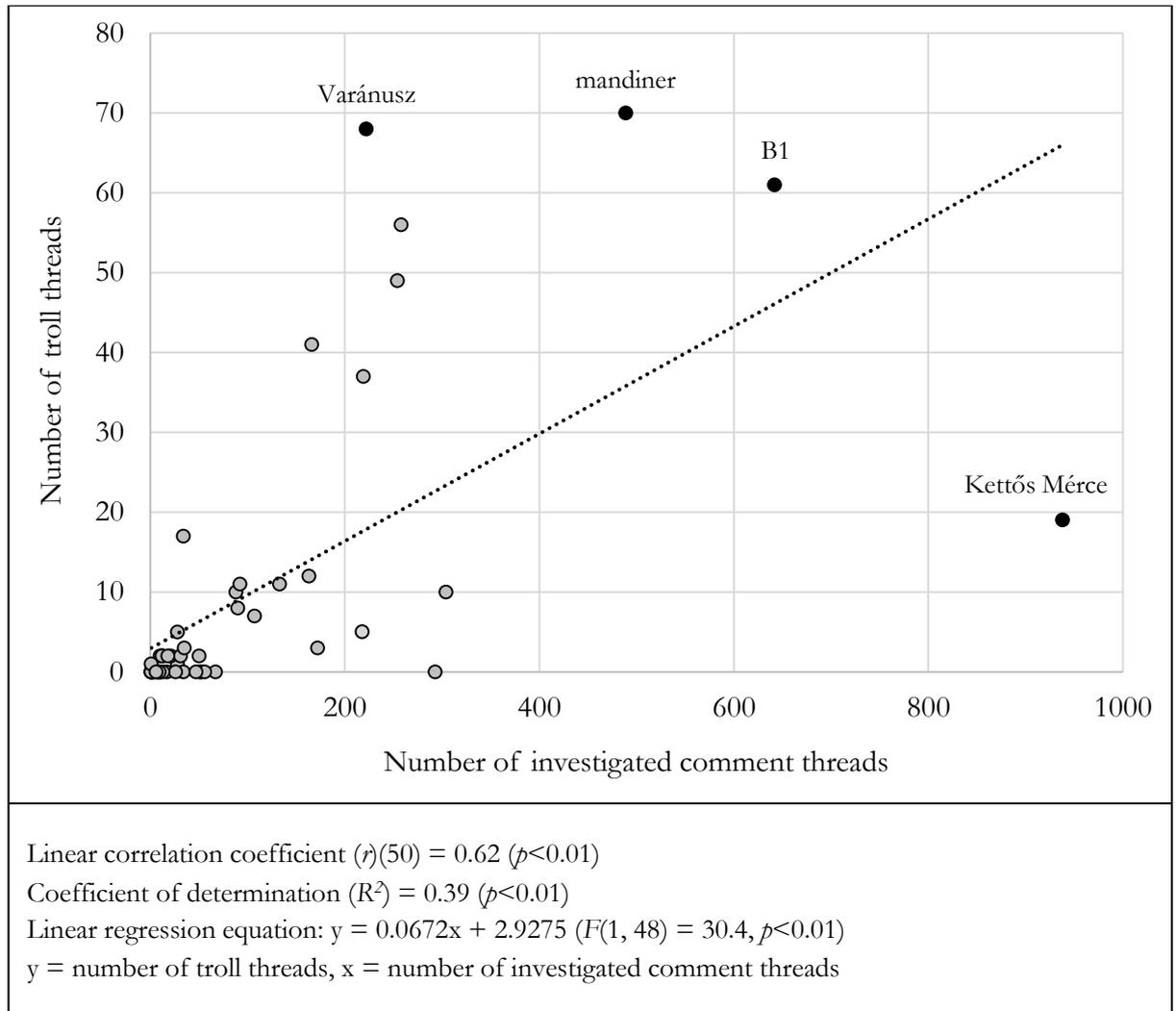


Figure 4.9. The relationship between the number of troll threads and the total number of comment threads on a Hungarian blog

Figure 4.9 shows that similarly to the British blogs, most data points are concentrated in the bottom left corner of the scatter plot, which means that the blogs with few comment threads tend to have no or only a few troll threads. At the same time, *B1* and *mandiner* were the second and third most active Hungarian blogs while they were also among those with the most troll threads. However, there are some exceptions. For instance, *Kettős Mércse* hosted 938 comment threads but only 19 of these were troll threads whereas *Varánusz* had only 222 comment threads but 68 of these were troll threads.

The linear regression analysis also confirmed that there is no linear statistical relationship between the number of troll threads and the total number of comment threads on a Hungarian blog. Although the correlation coefficient (0.62) seems to indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between the two variables, the

coefficient of determination (0.39) shows that the linear regression model can only predict 39% of the observed variation in the number of troll threads. This implies that the linear regression model, indicated by the dotted slanted line, is an inaccurate representation of the statistical relationship between the two variables. Figure 4.9 also suggests that there is no obvious nonlinear relationship between these two variables.

As discussed in Section 4.2.2, the shortlisted British and Hungarian political blogs are distributed across the left–right political spectrum and across the different author types in the exact same way. However, to give a full account of the datasets, I shall examine the political and author-type distribution of the examined comment threads and the troll threads as well. Table 4.4 gives the political distribution of the shortlisted British and Hungarian blogs, the examined comment threads, and the collected troll threads.

Table 4.4. The political distribution of the shortlisted British and Hungarian blogs, examined comment threads, and collected troll threads

Political position	British blogs (100%=50)	British comment threads (100%=26,804)	British troll threads (100%=1,712)	Hungarian blogs (100%=50)	Hungarian comment threads (100%=5,542)	Hungarian troll threads (100%=519)
Radical right	2%	1.7%	0%	2%	1%	0%
Right-wing	18%	26.2%	30.2%	18%	17.3%	27.9%
Centre-right	6%	4.3%	1.1%	6%	2.9%	1.7%
Centrist	14%	23.5%	12.2%	14%	9.4%	8.7%
Centre-left	12%	15.4%	44.7%	12%	5.8%	5.2%
Left-wing	46%	28.6%	11.3%	46%	58.4%	56.5%
Radical left	2%	0.3%	0.5%	2%	5.3%	0%

Table 4.4 shows that the British and Hungarian comment threads and troll threads have a somewhat different political distribution. However, as most of the differences are very small, only those above 10% will be discussed.

If we first focus on the British blogs and compare the first three columns, we can see that although 46% of the British blogs associate themselves with the political left, only 28.6% of the comment threads and only 11.3% of the troll threads were posted on left-wing blogs. At the same time, while only 12% of the blogs are centre left, 44.7% of the troll threads were found on these blogs. In addition, despite the fact that only 18% of the British blogs are right wing, 30.2% of the troll threads come from right-wing blogs.

Consequently, left-wing blogs are under-represented while centre-left and right-wing blogs are over-represented in the British dataset. However, this is simply because some blogs have more troll threads than others. For instance, the centre-left blogs are over-represented only because three centre-left blogs, *Guardian Politics Blog*, *LabourList*, and *Wings over Scotland*, are among those with the most troll threads. However, the other three British centre-left blogs, *Alex's Archives*, *Anna Raccoon*, and *Stumbling and Mumbling*, had only one troll thread altogether. Consequently, certain political positions are over-represented in the British dataset not because all their member blogs have an equally large number of troll threads but because there are large individual differences between the blogs in the number of their troll threads.

Turning to the Hungarian blogs, Table 4.4 demonstrates that although only 46% of the Hungarian blogs are left wing, 58.4% of the comment threads and 56.5% of the troll threads were found on these blogs. Similarly, while only 18% of the Hungarian blogs have right-wing leanings, 27.9% of the troll threads come from these blogs. Therefore, both the left-wing and the right-wing blogs are over-represented in the Hungarian dataset. Similarly to the British dataset, this is because three left-wing blogs, *Örülünk*, *Vincent?*, *Szegedi Kattintós*, and *Varánusz*, and two right-wing blogs, *1000 A Mi Hazánk* and *mandiner*, happen to be among the seven key Hungarian blogs with the most troll threads.

Finally, there is a seemingly major difference between the British and the Hungarian troll threads. While 44.7% of the British troll threads come from centre-left blogs and only 11.3% were collected from left-wing ones, only 5.2% of the Hungarian troll threads were found on centre-left blogs but 56.5% on left-wing ones.

Although this may seem to be a crucial difference between the two datasets, we should consider two factors. Firstly, there is no clear boundary between the centre-left and the left-wing political positions as these labels are based on self-categorisation. Secondly, if we add the centre-left and the left-wing troll threads together, the difference almost disappears as the combined proportion of the British centre-left and left-wing troll threads is 56.5% while its Hungarian counterpart is 61.7%. In sum, the political distribution of the British and Hungarian troll threads is largely similar. 56.5% of the British and 61.7% of the Hungarian troll threads come from the left side of the political spectrum. 31.3% of the British and 29.6% of the Hungarian troll threads were published on blogs associated with the political right. Finally, the remaining 12.2% of the British and 8.7% of the Hungarian troll threads are from centrist blogs. Thus, both datasets contain almost twice as many troll threads from the left as from the right. Table 4.5 gives the author-type distribution of the British and Hungarian blogs, the examined comment threads, and the collected troll threads.

Table 4.5. The author-type distribution of the shortlisted British and Hungarian blogs, examined comment threads, and collected troll threads

Author type	British blogs (100%=50)	British comment threads (100%=26,804)	British troll threads (100%=1,712)	Hungarian blogs (100%=50)	Hungarian comment threads (100%=5,542)	Hungarian troll threads (100%=519)
Private person	26%	14%	11.3%	26%	7.8%	9.2%
Journalist	12%	6.7%	9.2%	12%	5.2%	4.8%
Political analyst	10%	3.2%	0.5%	10%	8.5%	13.7%
Political institute	2%	2%	0.06%	2%	0.1%	0%
Other organisation	8%	3.8%	0%	8%	5%	2.5%
Multi-authored	42%	70.3%	78.9%	42%	73.3%	69.7%

Table 4.5 shows that the British and Hungarian comment threads and troll threads have a somewhat different author-type distribution. However, the differences almost always remain under 10%. The only notable exception is that only 0.5% of the British troll threads but 13.7% of the Hungarian troll threads come from blogs written by a political analyst. This difference is caused by a relatively popular Hungarian blog, *1000 A Mi Hazánk*, which is among the top seven Hungarian blogs with the most troll threads.

Focusing on the British blogs and comparing the first three columns, we can see although 26% of the British blogs are written by a single private person, only 14% of the examined threads and merely 11.3% of the collected troll threads were posted on these blogs. However, whilst only 42% of the blogs have more than one author, 70.3% of the examined comment threads and 78.9% of the collected troll threads come from multi-authored blogs.

The Hungarian blogs follow a similar tendency. Although 26% of the Hungarian blogs are written by a private person, only 7.8% of the comment threads and 9.2% of the troll threads were found on these blogs. Meanwhile, despite the fact that 42% of the Hungarian blogs have more than one author, 73.3% of the comment threads and 69.7% of the troll threads were collected from multi-authored blogs. Single-authored blogs are therefore under-represented while multi-authored blogs are over-represented in both datasets. In sum, more than two thirds of both the British and the Hungarian troll threads come from multi-authored blogs.

In conclusion, 1,713 British and 519 Hungarian troll threads have been collected. The British dataset consequently contains 3.3 times more troll threads than the Hungarian. However, while there is a considerable size difference between the two datasets, their political and author-type distribution is very similar.

4.2.4. Corpus construction

The final step of data collection was to build two corpora from the collected 1,712 British and 519 Hungarian troll threads. First, I saved the troll threads as separate UTF-8 txt files. The British corpus therefore consists of 1,712 files while the Hungarian corpus includes 519 files, with each file containing a single thread. The URL, the hosting blog's name, the number of comments, and the collection date have also been recorded for each thread. This metadata can be found in Appendix C. Each

thread has been provided with an ID. These have also served as file names for the corpus files. The IDs follow a ‘name of the blog_identification number’ structure. For instance, the ID *conservativehome_12* means that this is the twelfth thread collected from the blog *Conservative Home*. The Hungarian threads were collected between 19 and 23 December 2016 and the British threads between 3 January and 14 February 2017.

Note that the British Psychological Society and the British Sociological Association ethical guidelines both state that behaviours enacted in a public space, where individuals do not hold a reasonable expectation of privacy, do not require consent from participants (Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society, 2009: 13; Sugiura, 2016: 3). As this data is drawn from publicly available online comment threads which do not require membership to view, it was deemed to meet this ethical standard (see Coles & West, 2016a: 46). To protect the anonymity of the commenters (Markham & Buchanan, 2012: 9), I have decided not to make the corpora publicly accessible and I have also removed all usernames from the comments that I analyse in this thesis (Sugiura, 2016: 7). However, similarly to Herring et al. (2002), Hopkinson (2013), and Hardaker (2015), the comments have not been changed in any other way. This is because none of the analysed comments contain potentially sensitive personal information and I categorically do not accuse any of the commenters of engaging in criminal behaviour. Consequently, I have no reason to believe that the direct quotes given in this thesis would cause any harm to the commenters (Markham & Buchanan, 2012: 10; Sugiura, 2016: 7).

Five corpus versions were then created for each corpus. Version one is a raw version that consists of complete threads as found on the blogs. This version includes all blog posts, URLs, emoticons, embedded Tweets, HTML tags, and metadata, such as usernames, posting dates, and email addresses. Version two is the cleansed form of version one. It also includes complete threads but without the blog posts, URLs, emoticons, Tweets, HTML tags, and metadata. These have been removed by using a series of regular expressions in the text editor *Notepad++*. These regular expressions are listed in Appendix D.

Using XML tags, the troll comments (<tc>...</tc>) and the troll tokens (<tt>...</tt>) were also coded in version two since the analysis directly focused on these. To annotate the troll comments and the troll tokens, I manually examined each concordance line of the search term **troll** using the corpus analysis package

AntConc (Anthony, 2016). This returned 10,359 hits in the British corpus and 1,821 hits in the Hungarian corpus. I annotated those comments as troll comments in which the commenter called at least one participant a troll or described at least one comment as trolling using a word form of the lexeme TROLL. In turn, those tokens of the lexeme TROLL were deemed to be troll tokens that referred to commenters, their comments, or their discursive behaviour in general. The annotation process is illustrated by Examples (4.1)–(4.5).

As the commenters' gender is not generally identifiable from their usernames (except when they use an evidently gendered username), all posters will be referred to as 'he'. This is not to imply that all posters are male. Rather it is a convention adopted from Coles & West (2016b).

(4.1) [guardian_1_724]⁶
<tc>**He's a typical Tory** <tt>troll</tt>, dishonesty is in their DNA.</tc>

(4.2) [guido_17_710]
<tc>[...] **I know you are simply** <tt>trolling</tt> **me**, and others, but at least get your facts straight first of all.</tc>

(4.3) [politicalbetting_94_2047]
Excellent trolling of the French by the Belgians. New €2 coin featuring Waterloo. The French are unimpressed, bless 'em.

(4.4) [wingsoverscotland_154_1347]
I don't believe [username] is a troll, I believe he is very passionate about Independence but in a different way from most who post here.

(4.5) [labourlist_102_58]
Whatever advantage **trolley buses** have over trams are blown away by the fact that they need 6x as many highly paid drivers.

As the XML tags show, Examples (4.1) and (4.2) were annotated as troll comments since the commenter calls another user a troll in Example (4.1) whereas the

⁶ The head of each example gives the comment ID between square brackets. The comment ID follows a 'comment thread ID_ the line where the comment starts in the version two corpus file' structure. For instance, *guardian_1_724* means that the comment can be found in the *guardian_1* corpus file and it starts in line 724. The names have been anonymized. Otherwise, the comments have not been changed.

commenter describes another user's discursive behaviour as trolling in Example (4.2). However, although Examples (4.3), (4.4), and (4.5) also include the *troll* character string, these were not identified as troll comments. This is for different reasons. In Example (4.3), *trolling* does not refer to a participant's behaviour but to Belgium's attempt to issue a new €2 coin commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, one of the most severe defeats in French military history. In Example (4.4), the commenter only uses the word *troll* to point out that he does not believe another user to be a troll. Finally, *trolley* is clearly a false hit in Example (4.5). After cleansing the corpus files and annotating the troll comments and tokens, the number of troll comments and word count with and without the blog post have been recorded for each corpus file as well. These can be found in Appendix C.

The third and fourth corpus versions have been compiled from version two. Version three comprises only the troll comments whilst version four contains only the non-troll comments. Therefore, version three and version four are completely distinct from each other as no comment appears in both of them. Version five, which is essentially a word list, only contains the troll tokens and it has been created from version three. The regular expressions that were used to create these versions can also be found in Appendix D. All five versions of both the British and the Hungarian corpus are available in Appendix E. The different versions were used at different stages of the analysis as discussed in Section 4.4.

4.3. Data description

Table 4.6 presents the content, the word count, and the number of threads, comments, troll comments, and troll tokens for each version of the British and Hungarian corpora. *Br* refers to the British corpus while *Hun* stands for the Hungarian corpus in the table. Corpus version one has been excluded from Table 4.6 as it is the uncleaned version of the corpora and therefore, its data would not be informative.

Table 4.6. An overview of the different versions of the British and Hungarian corpora

Corpus version	Content	Comment threads	Comments	Troll comments	Troll tokens	Word count
2	Cleansed threads without blog posts	Br: 1,712	Br: 740,841	Br: 6,129	Br: 6,897	Br: 32.2m
		Hun: 519	Hun: 107,719	Hun: 1,118	Hun: 1,242	Hun: 5.3m
3	Troll comments	Br: 1,712	Br: 6,129	Br: 6,129	Br: 6,897	Br: 320,534
		Hun: 519	Hun: 1,118	Hun: 1,118	Hun: 1,242	Hun: 64,798
4	Non-troll comments	Br: 1,712	Br: 734,712	Br: 0	Br: 0	Br: 31.9m
		Hun: 519	Hun: 106,661	Hun: 0	Hun: 0	Hun: 5.2m
5	Troll tokens	Br: 1,712	N/A	N/A	Br: 6,897	Br: 6,897
		Hun: 519			Hun: 1,242	Hun: 1,242

The second version of the British corpus contains 740,841 comments from 1,712 comment threads whereas the Hungarian corpus includes 107,719 comments from 519 comment threads. Thus, the British corpus contains 6.9 times more comments than the Hungarian corpus. The mean number of comments per thread is 432.7 for the British corpus and 207.6 for the Hungarian corpus. This shows that the British corpus not only includes 3.3 times as many comment threads as the Hungarian corpus but on average, the British comment threads are also 2.1 times longer than their Hungarian counterparts. In terms of their word count, the British corpus is 6.1 times larger than the Hungarian as the British corpus contains approximately 32.2 million words while the Hungarian corpus comprises around 5.3 million words. Although the above difference in word count largely confirms the difference in the number of comments between the two corpora, word count can be a flawed size measurement for online interactions as participants frequently quote earlier utterances.

As I pointed out in Chapter 3, the troll threads deal with a wide range of public matters. However, the main recurring topics are the 2015 UK General Election, the 2015 Labour Party leadership election, the Brexit referendum, and Scottish

independence in the British corpus and the 2014 Hungarian General Election, the Hungarian government's handling of the refugee crisis and its persistent anti-migration campaign, Russia's influence on Hungarian politics, and the war in the Donbass region of Ukraine in the Hungarian corpus.

6,129 British comments and 1,118 Hungarian comments were identified as troll comments. Thus, the second and third versions of the British corpus include 5.5 times more troll comments than their Hungarian counterparts. Overall, 0.8% of the British comments and 1% of the Hungarian comments are troll comments. These almost identical and rather low proportions show that participants only rarely call others trolls in either corpus. However, many of the blogs where these comment threads were published are actively moderated and consequently, the initial proportion of the troll comments might have been somewhat higher as at least some of the comments that can be perceived as trolling by the participants and the responses in which these comments are described as trolling might have been deleted. The British troll comments include 6,897 troll tokens while the Hungarian ones contain 1,242. These troll tokens constitute the fifth version of the corpora. On average, both the British and the Hungarian troll comments have 1.1 troll tokens, which means that the word *troll* is only used once in most troll comments.

With regard to the distribution of comments and troll comments in the corpora, three main patterns can be observed. Firstly, the comments and the troll comments are rather unevenly distributed both across the comment threads and across the blogs in both corpora. That is, while a large number of (troll) comments come from only a handful of threads and blogs, the overwhelming majority of the threads and blogs have only a few comments and one or two troll comments. Secondly, there is no linear correlation between the number of comments and the number of troll comments in a thread in either corpus. That is, comment threads with more comments do not necessarily contain more troll comments. Thirdly, there is, however, a linear correlation between the number of comments and the number of troll comments on a blog in both corpora. That is, if a blog has more comments, it will also have more troll comments. Figure 4.10 illustrates the distribution of comments across threads in the British and Hungarian corpora.

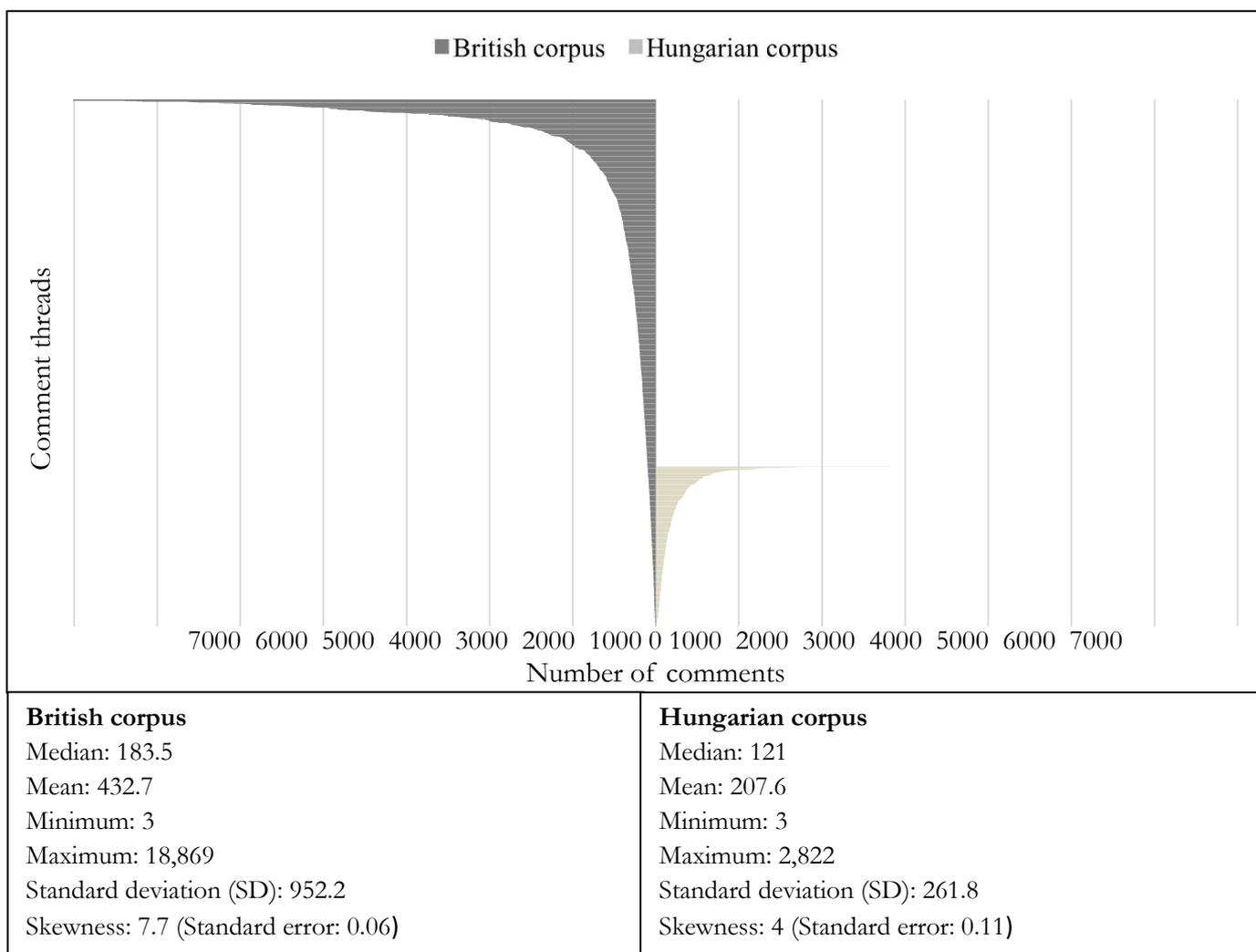


Figure 4.10. The distribution of comments across threads in the British and Hungarian corpora

Figure 4.10 shows that the comments are unevenly distributed across the comment threads in both corpora. While 91% of the British threads consist of fewer than 1,000 comments, 53% of the comments come from that 9% of the threads which include at least 1,000 comments. The British corpus also includes five threads with more than 7,000 comments. For practical reasons, these have not been displayed in Figure 4.10. Nevertheless, since the figure presents both the number of comments and the number of comment threads, it gives a very accurate visual representation of the second version of the corpora.

Similarly, while 91% of the Hungarian threads include fewer than 500 comments, 37% of all Hungarian comments come from that 9% of the threads which have more than 500 comments. As the skewness scores also show, the distribution of comments

is slightly more uneven in the British corpus than in the Hungarian. However, this difference is mainly caused by an extreme outlier in the British dataset, a thread from *Guardian Politics* with 18,869 comments. Without this thread, the British dataset would have a skewness score of only 5.1 rather than 7.7.

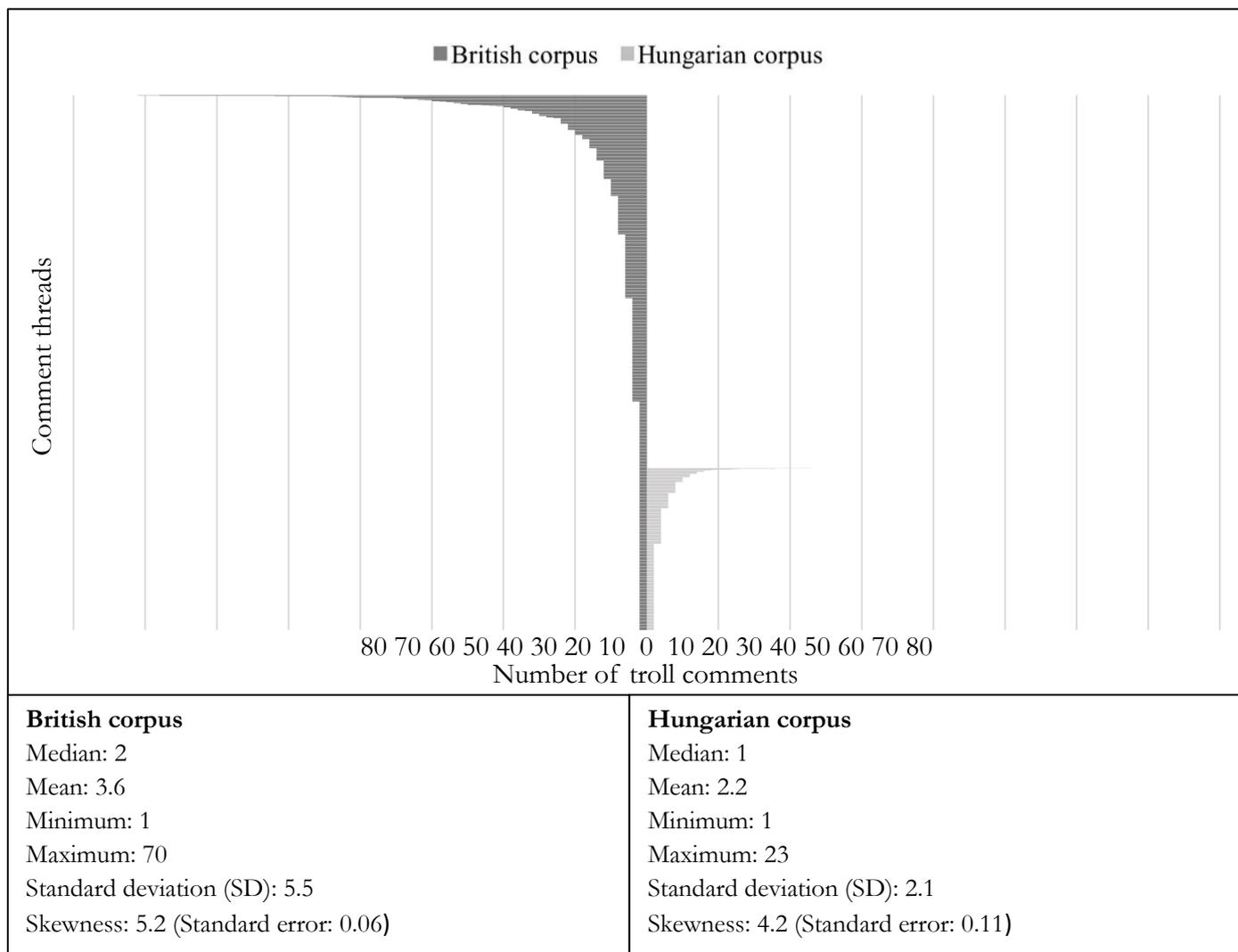


Figure 4.11. The distribution of troll comments across threads in the British and Hungarian corpora

Figure 4.11 gives a visual representation of the third version of the corpora. It reveals that, similarly to the comments, the troll comments are also unevenly distributed across the threads in both corpora. 45% of all British troll comments come from the top 10% of the British threads with the most troll comments whereas the top 10% of the Hungarian threads contain 32% of the Hungarian troll comments. The British corpus is slightly more skewed than the Hungarian. This is mostly because the British

dataset has a much higher range (1 to 70) than the Hungarian (1 to 23). If we compare Figures 4.10 and 4.11, we can see that the comments and the troll comments are rather similarly distributed in both corpora. Hence, one could assume that the number of troll comments in a thread positively correlates with the number of comments in the same thread. That is, if a thread contains more comments, it will also include more troll comments. This hypothesis was tested by a linear regression analysis. Figure 4.12 presents the relationship between the number of comments and the number of troll comments.

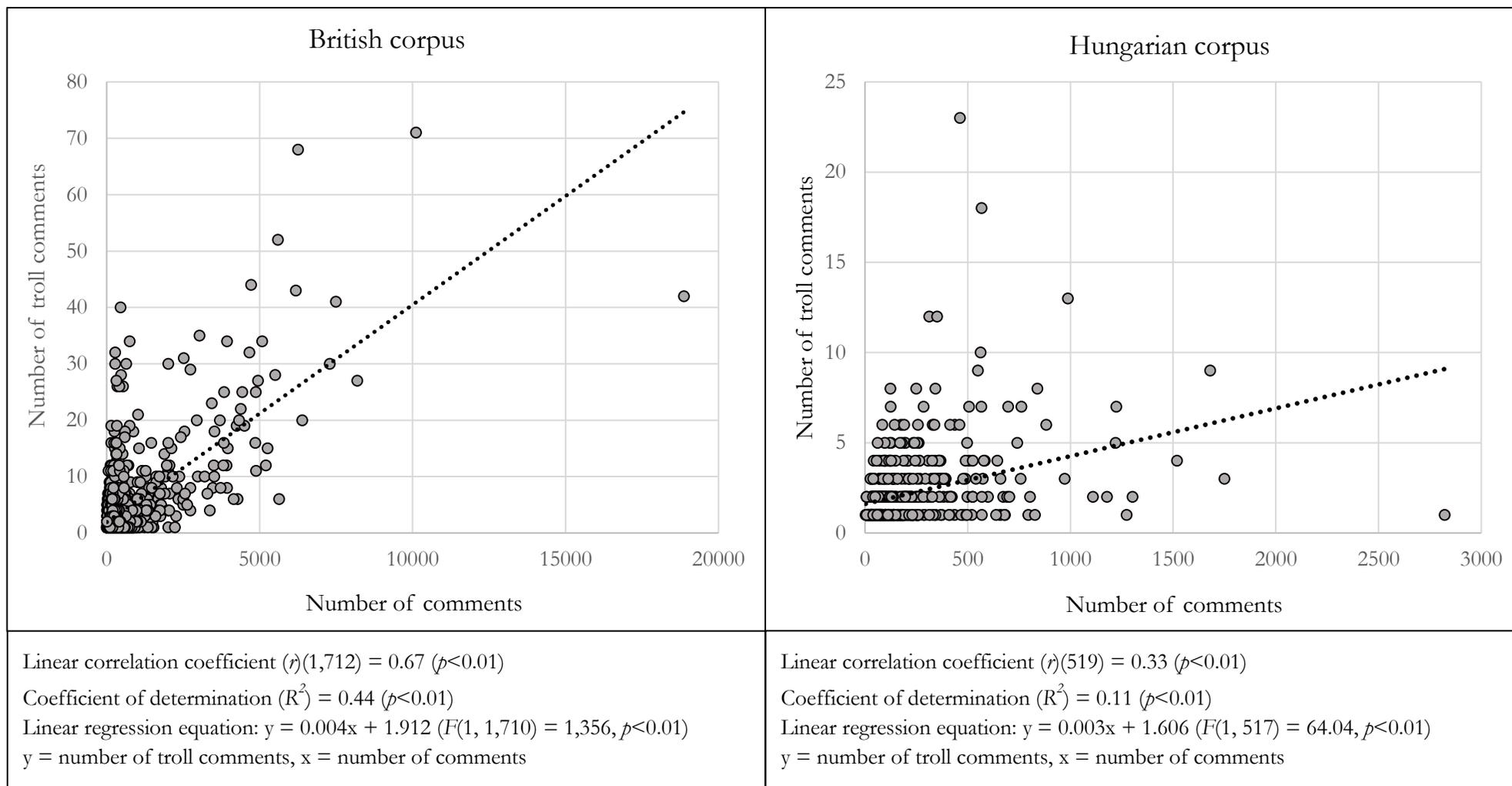


Figure 4.12. The relationship between the number of comments and the number of troll comments in a thread in the British and the Hungarian corpora

Figure 4.12 shows that the linear regression analysis did not support the hypothesis that there would be a positive linear relationship between the number of comments and the number of troll comments in a thread in either corpus. The scatter plot for the Hungarian corpus on the right clearly shows that there is no observable relationship between the two variables. This conclusion is also supported by the low linear correlation coefficient (0.33) and coefficient of determination (0.11).

However, the linear correlation coefficient for the British corpus (0.67) seems to indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. One might also recognise this tendency in the scatter plot. However, the scatter plot also shows that there are several outliers in the British dataset while the coefficient of determination (0.44) implies that the linear regression model can only predict 44% of the observed variation in the number of troll comments. Thus, the linear regression model cannot be considered an accurate representation of the statistical relationship between the two variables and it cannot be concluded that there is a positive linear relationship between the number of comments and the number of troll comments. Figure 4.12 does not suggest either that there would be a nonlinear relationship between these two variables in either corpus. Table 4.7 summarises the distribution of comments and troll comments across blogs in the British and Hungarian corpora.

Table 4.7. The distribution of comments and troll comments across blogs in the British and Hungarian corpora

British corpus			Hungarian corpus		
Blog	Comments (100%=740,841)	Troll comments (100%=6,129)	Blog	Comments (100%=107,719)	Troll comments (100%=1,118)
Archbishop	9,698	79	1000 A Mi Hazánk	10,541	122
Cranmer	(1.3%)	(1.3%)			(9.8%)
Bella Caledonia	3,839	135	A TASZ jelenti	873	15
	(0.5%)	(2.2%)		(0.8%)	(1.3%)
Capitalists@Work	25	1	Alternatíva	657	15
	(0.003%)	(0.02%)		(0.6%)	(1.3%)

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Conservative Home	5,972 (0.8%)	132 (2.2%)	Átlátszó	573 (0.5%)	11 (1%)
EUROPP	8 (0.001%)	1 (0.02%)	B1/Egyenlítő	5,448 (5.1%)	118 (10.6%)
Guardian Politics blog	374,604 (50.6%)	1,738 (28.4%)	Boldogok a sajtókészítők	91 (0.08%)	2 (0.2%)
Guido Fawkes	170,610 (23%)	900 (14.7%)	Dinamó Műhely	183 (0.2%)	3 (0.3%)
John Redwood's Diary	998 (0.1%)	13 (0.2%)	DiploMaci	147 (0.1%)	9 (0.8%)
Labour Home	61 (0.008%)	2 (0.03%)	falmentaparlament	382 (0.4%)	2 (0.2%)
LabourList	72,568 (9.8%)	1,840 (30%)	IFL Gazdaság	1,136 (1.1%)	17 (1.5%)
Labour Uncut	116 (0.02%)	6 (0.1%)	Jobbegyenes	1,006 (0.9%)	12 (1.1%)
Lallands Peat Worrier	274 (0.04%)	9 (0.1%)	Kard	690 (0.6%)	9 (0.8%)
Left Foot Forward	3,547 (0.5%)	152 (2.5%)	Kettős Mércé	1,896 (8.8%)	24 (2.1%)
Left Futures	732 (0.1%)	37 (0.6%)	Köznapló	122 (0.1%)	4 (0.4%)
Lenin's Tomb	341 (0.05%)	12 (0.2%)	Mandiner	11,773 (10.9%)	128 (11.4%)
Liberal Democrat Voice	1,479 (0.2%)	36 (0.6%)	Nívó	690 (0.6%)	11 (1%)
Longrider	38 (0.005%)	7 (0.1%)	Örülünk, Vincent?	9,521 (8.8%)	111 (9.9%)

PoliticalBetting	44,325 (6%)	171 (2.8%)	Piroslap	214 (0.2%)	2 (0.2%)
Political Scrapbook	99 (0.01%)	10 (0.2%)	Pogátsa Zoltán blogja	274 (0.3%)	4 (0.4%)
Politics and Insights	11 (0.001%)	1 (0.02%)	Polipraktika	526 (0.5%)	10 (0.9%)
Raedwald	20 (0.003%)	1 (0.02%)	Politikafüggő	134 (0.1%)	7 (0.6%)
Slugger O'Toole	9,313 (1.3%)	139 (2.3%)	Politológus	96 (0.09%)	2 (0.2%)
Stumbling and Mumbling	22 (0.003%)	1 (0.02%)	Progresszív	282 (0.3%)	2 (0.2%)
Syniadau	39 (0.005%)	4 (0.07%)	Szegedi Kattintós	6,465 (6%)	75 (6.7%)
The Slog	886 (0.1%)	31 (0.5%)	Ténytár	3,427 (3.2%)	81 (7.2%)
Velvet Glove, Iron Fist	23 (0.003%)	2 (0.03%)	Törökgáborelemz	2,822 (2.6%)	1 (0.09%)
Wings Over Scotland	41,187 (5.6%)	667 (10.9%)	Varánusz	40,342 (37.5%)	230 (20.6%)
Zelo Street	6 (0.0008%)	2 (0.03%)	Vastagbőr	696 (0.6%)	21 (1.9%)
			W	6,712 (6.2%)	70 (6.3%)

Table 4.7. Distribution of comments and troll comments across blogs in the British and Hungarian corpora

Table 4.7 shows that both the comments and the troll comments are unevenly distributed across the blogs in both corpora. 95% of all British comments have been

collected from only five blogs, *Guardian Politics*, *Guido Fawkes*, *LabourList*, *Political Betting*, and *Wings over Scotland*. In fact, 51% of all comments come from *Guardian Politics*, which clearly dominates the British corpus. Similarly, 79% of the Hungarian comments were found on six blogs, *1000 A Mi Hazánk*, *Mandiner*, *Örülünk*, *Vincent?*, *Szegedi Kattintós*, *Varánusz*, and *W. Varánusz* is the dominant blog in the Hungarian corpus as 37.5% of the Hungarian comments were posted there. The dominant British and Hungarian blogs have been highlighted in Table 4.7.

As the analysis directly focuses on the troll comments, their distribution is even more important than that of the comments. 84% of all British troll comments have been identified in the threads of only four blogs, *Guardian Politics*, *Guido Fawkes*, *LabourList*, and *Wings over Scotland*. Hence, these are the key British blogs for this study. Interestingly, while more than half of the collected comments were posted on *Guardian Politics*, *LabourList* had the most troll comments. This is because there was a single participant on *LabourList* who called other participants trolls much more frequently than any other participant in the British corpus and consequently, this commenter considerably increased the total number of troll comments on this blog. This also demonstrates that since only a small minority of the participants call others trolls, their individual behaviour and habits may have crucial impact on the distribution of troll comments and indeed on the qualitative and quantitative results of this study.

84% of the Hungarian troll comments were posted on eight blogs, *1000 A Mi Hazánk*, *BI*, *Mandiner*, *Örülünk*, *Vincent?*, *Szegedi Kattintós*, *Ténytár*, *Varánusz*, and *W*. Thus, these are the key Hungarian blogs for my analysis. *Varánusz* gives 21% of the troll comments in the Hungarian corpus. Therefore, it dominates the Hungarian corpus in terms of the number of troll comments as well. Similarly to the individual threads, the hypothesis that there is a positive linear correlation between the number of comments and the number of troll comments on a blog was tested by a linear correlation analysis. Figure 4.13 displays the results of this analysis and it also shows the key blogs on a scatter plot to demonstrate that they can easily be distinguished from the other blogs.

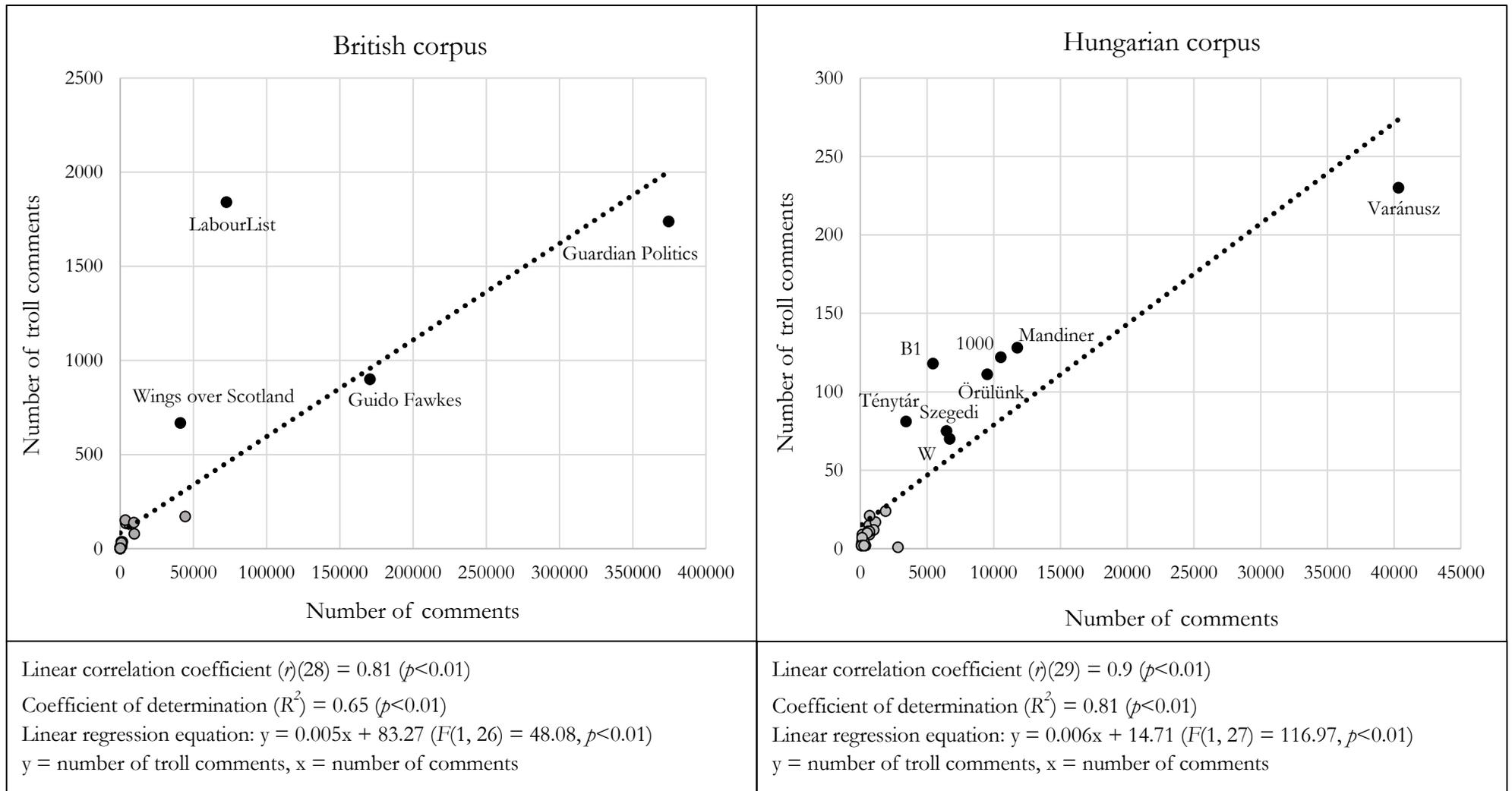


Figure 4.13. The relationship between the number of comments and the number of troll comments on a blog in the British and the Hungarian corpora

Figure 4.13 demonstrates that there is a positive linear correlation between the number of comments and the number of troll comments on a blog in both corpora. As the high linear correlation coefficient (0.9) and the coefficient of determination (0.81) show, this correlation is strong in the Hungarian corpus whereas the British corpus has slightly lower r (0.81) and R^2 (0.65) scores, which indicates a somewhat more moderate but still valid correlation. These lower scores are clearly the results of an outlier in the British dataset, namely *LabourList*, which has the most troll comments (1,840) but far fewer comments than *Guido Fawkes* or *Guardian Politics*. In sum, we can draw the slightly unsurprising, yet evidence-based conclusion that if a blog has more comments, it will also have more troll comments.

4.4. Data analysis

In line with the research questions, the main goals of the analysis were to identify the actions, aims, and motives that commenters attribute to the trolls and to describe how trolling is conceptualised in the troll comments. Data analysis comprised seven main steps, which are discussed in Subsections 4.4.1–4.4.4. These were as follows:

- (1) extracting the troll comments from the corpora;
- (2) selecting the troll action, aim, and motive comments;
- (3) identifying the actions, aims, and motives attributed to the trolls in the troll action, aim, and motive comments;
- (4) annotating the troll action, aim, and motive comments;
- (5) calculating the number of troll comments in which the various troll actions, aims, and motives were mentioned;
- (6) describing how trolling is conceptualised in the troll action, aim, and motive comments;
- (7) selecting the troll comments that are used as examples in the thesis.

4.4.1. Extracting the troll comments and selecting the troll action, aim, and motive comments

The first step of data analysis was to extract the 6,129 British and 1,118 Hungarian troll comments from the second version of the corpora as the analysis focused on these. Using the `<tc>...</tc>` troll comment tags, I saved the British and Hungarian troll

comments in two separate Excel spreadsheets, which can be found in Appendix F. The comment IDs of the troll comments, such as *guardian_1_343*, the corpus files that they have been extracted from, such as *guardian_1*, and the name of the blogs where they were originally posted, such as *Guardian Politics blog*, have also been recorded.

The second step was to select those troll comments in which the commenters associate at least one action, aim, or motive with trolling. I refer to these troll comments as *troll action comments*, *troll aim comments*, and *troll motive comments*, respectively. To select the troll action, troll aim, and troll motive comments, I qualitatively analysed and annotated all troll comments as shown in Appendix F. The criterion for selection was that the troll comments had to include at least one word, phrase, or clause that marked an action, aim, or motive associated with trolling to be deemed troll action, aim, or motive comments. The selection process is illustrated by Examples (4.6)–(4.9).

(4.6) [leninstomb_4_23]

Go AWAY, troll.

(4.7) [archbishop_28_448]

*stop being a **TROLL** and **spewing vicious lies** or **GOD** will damn you.*

(4.8) [sluggerotoole_44_111]

*He/she is just a **troll** who posts **to provoke**. Ignore*

(4.9) [guido_40_308]

*No wonder [username] keeps **trolling** here. He must be **bored witless**.*

Example (4.6) has not been annotated as a troll action, aim, or motive comment as the commenter merely calls another participant a troll and orders him away without discussing the troll's assumed actions, aims, or motives. On the other hand, Example (4.7) has been classified as a troll action comment as the noun phrase *spewing vicious lies* marks continuous lying as a discursive action associated with trolling and depicts trolling as a deceptive behaviour. Similarly, Example (4.8) has been annotated as a troll aim comment as the infinitive *to provoke* suggests that the troll is believed to post comments to elicit reactions from the other participants and consequently, trolling is constructed as a goal-driven behaviour. Finally, Example (4.9) has been categorised as a troll motive comment as the adjectival phrase *bored witless* indicates that the

addressed troll is believed to be trolling because he is unbearably bored and thus, trolling is constructed as an emotionally motivated behaviour.

(4.10) [leftfootforward_10_157]

*Don't feed the trolls – they just crave your attention. They get paid for visibility. Yes, I am indeed making an assumption – when it gets **ad hominem**, that's a troll.*

Example (4.10) illustrates that the troll action, aim, and motive comments have not been treated as mutually exclusive categories. Based on the verb phrase *crave your attention* in the first sentence, this comment has been annotated as a troll aim comment as it suggests that the troll's goal is to attract other participants' attention. However, the comment has also been categorised as a troll motive comment as the verb phrase *get paid for visibility* in the second sentence indicates that the troll is believed to be trolling because he is getting paid for it and thus, it constructs trolling as a financially motivated behaviour. Finally, Example (4.10) has also been classified as a troll action comment as the adjective *ad hominem* in the third sentence implies that trolls are directly attacking other participants and consequently, it depicts trolling as an offensive behaviour.

4.4.2. Identifying the troll actions, aims, and motives in the troll comments

The third step of data analysis was to identify the actions, aims, and motives that commenters attribute to the trolls in their comments. The aim of this step was to establish a transparent and comprehensive taxonomy of these actions, aims, and motives based on the qualitative analysis of all troll action, aim, and motive comments in the second version of the corpora.

First, I created a preliminary taxonomy of the accused trolls' actions, aims, and motives. As Table 4.8 shows, this taxonomy included the actions, aims, and motives associated with trolling in the academic literature (see Chapter 2 for further details).

Table 4.8. A preliminary taxonomy of the trolls' actions, aims, and motives

Troll actions	Troll aims	Troll motives
(1) repeating the same utterance	(1) attracting other users' undivided attention	(1) emotional reasons
(2) posting irrelevant or meaningless information	(2) triggering strong unpleasant emotions	(2) political beliefs
(3) posting misleading or factually incorrect information	(3) eliciting potentially offensive responses from others	(3) being employed by a political body
(4) disseminating bad or dangerous advice	(4) causing, perpetuating, or escalating conflict	
(5) ignoring, despising, rejecting, or attacking the core values of the interaction	(5) deceiving others	
(6) (hypo)criticising others	(6) disrupting the interaction	
(7) directly insulting, threatening, or attacking others		

After this, I selected all those British and Hungarian troll comments that had been annotated as troll action comments in the spreadsheets mentioned above. I read the first British troll action comment in the spreadsheet and, as already illustrated in Examples (4.6)–(4.10), I identified those words, phrases, or clauses in the comment that marked at least one discursive action associated with trolling. After this, I specified the action(s) mentioned in the comment based on the content of the relevant comment parts. As troll comments tend to refer back to other comments in the same thread, I also opened the comment in the second version of the British corpus to consider the direct context of the comment as well. Then, I tried to annotate the comment using the preliminary taxonomy of the troll actions. If the taxonomy already included the action(s) mentioned in the comment, I annotated the comment accordingly and did not change the taxonomy itself. However, if the comment did not fit into any category, I modified one of the categories in the taxonomy or set up a new

one before annotating the comment and moving on to the next one. I repeated the same process with each British and Hungarian troll action comment.

At the end of this first round, I had a modified but still preliminary taxonomy. To ensure that this modified taxonomy indeed gives a full account of the actions mentioned in the comments, I read all troll action comments again and adjusted the taxonomy as required. After this second round, I finalised the taxonomy. I followed the same process with the troll motive and troll aim comments as well. The final taxonomies are presented in Chapters 5–7. To make this inherently interpretative process more transparent, I discuss the in-depth analysis of 69 troll action, 72 troll motive, and 34 troll aim comments in Chapters 5–7 with the relevant units consistently highlighted in all examples.

As illustrated in Examples 5.45–5.50 in Chapter 5 and in Examples 7.15–7.17 in Chapter 7, the thesis draws on multiple discourse analytical approaches, such as argumentation theory with a focus on logical fallacies (Walton, 1989) and cognitive metaphor theory (Kövecses, 2002), to identify the actions, motives, and aims that users associate with trolling in their comments. I discuss argumentation theory in Section 5.5.1 and I give an overview of cognitive metaphor theory in Section 7.3. However, due to the diversity of the troll comments and the data-driven nature of this thesis, I decided not to apply a single analytical framework, such as computer-mediated conversation analysis or other interactionally motivated discourse analytical approaches, to all comments. Instead, I assessed every comment separately and depending on the nature of the comment at hand, I selected the analytical approach most suitable for answering the research questions as specified in Chapter 1, which resulted in a diverse and data-informed analytical toolkit.

4.4.3. Annotating the troll action, aim, and motive comments

The fourth step was the final manual annotation of the troll action, aim, and motive comments. The units of annotation were the comments themselves and not particular words, phrases, or clauses within these as the qualitative analysis demonstrated that we need to examine the whole comment to identify the actions, aims, and motives attributed to the trolls.

First, I created a tagset from the final troll action, aim, and motive taxonomy, which was used during the annotation of the troll action, aim, and motive comments.

In this tagset, each action, aim, and motive listed in the final taxonomy was coded as a distinct tag. Consequently, the troll comments were annotated based on the actions, aims, and motives that the commenters attributed to the trolls at least once within them.

Then, to make the annotation process more principled and consistent, I collected those recurring key items from the troll comments that the commenters used for describing the trolls' actions, aims, and motives. I focused on those *troll token n-grams*, *troll token collocates*, and *troll comment keywords* that marked a troll action, aim, or motive on their own and consequently, could effectively be used during the annotation of the troll comments. I refer to these as 'action-, aim-, and motive-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords', respectively.

I defined *troll token n-grams* as 2–4 word long multiword expressions that included a troll token, i.e. a word form of the lexeme TROLL referring to a participant or comment, and occurred at least five times in the British or at least three times in the Hungarian troll comments in corpus version 3. By definition, the troll token n-grams were key items in the troll comments as the non-troll comments did not contain troll tokens and consequently, all troll token n-grams only occurred in the troll comments. I set up a lower minimum frequency for the Hungarian troll token n-grams than for the British ones as the British corpus includes 5.5 times more troll comments than the Hungarian.

To collect the troll token n-grams, I opened the version 3 corpus files, which include only the troll comments, in the corpus analysis package *AntConc* (Anthony, 2016) and using the 'Clusters/N-grams' tool (n-gram size: 2–4, minimum frequency: 5 for the British corpus and 3 for the Hungarian), I extracted all those 2-grams, 3-grams, and 4-grams that occurred at least five times in the British or at least three times in the Hungarian troll comments. I refer to these as *troll comment n-grams*. I saved the British and Hungarian troll comment n-grams in two separate Excel spreadsheets together with their frequency and range values and selected those which included a troll token, thus getting the troll token n-grams.

I defined *troll token collocates* as words that occurred at least five times around the British troll tokens or at least three times around the Hungarian ones within a 5L-5R window span and were at least twice more frequent around the troll tokens than in the second version of the corpora in general. Again, I set up a lower minimum

frequency for the Hungarian troll token collocates than for the British ones because the British corpus includes 5.6 times more troll tokens than the Hungarian.

To collect the troll token collocates, I opened the version 2 corpus files, which include complete troll threads, and using the ‘Collocates’ tool in *AntConc* (search term: `<tt>*troll*</tt>`, window span: 5L-5R, minimum collocate frequency: 5 for the British corpus and 3 for the Hungarian), I collected those words which occurred at least five times around the British or at least three times around the Hungarian troll tokens. I refer to these as *candidate troll token collocates*. I saved the British and Hungarian candidate troll token collocates in two separate Excel spreadsheets along with their absolute frequencies around the troll tokens and calculated their normalised frequencies per thousand words around the troll tokens using the following formula:

$$C_{12} = \left(\frac{C_{11}}{N_1} \right) \times 1000$$

where C_{12} is the normalised frequency of the candidate collocate around the troll tokens, C_{11} is the absolute frequency of the candidate collocate around the troll tokens, and N_1 is the number of tokens around the troll tokens within a 5L-5R window span.

After this, using the ‘Word List’ tool in *AntConc*, I calculated the absolute frequencies of the candidate collocates in the second version of the corpora, saved these frequencies in the above-mentioned spreadsheets, and calculated the normalised frequencies of the candidate collocates per thousand words in the whole corpus by dividing the absolute frequencies of the candidate collocates in the whole corpus by the number of tokens in the whole corpus and multiplying these values by 1,000. Finally, I calculated the Log Ratio scores of the candidate collocates with the following formula:

$$LR_c = \log_2 \frac{C_{12}}{C_{22}}$$

where LR_c is the Log Ratio score of a candidate collocate, C_{12} is the normalised frequency of the candidate collocate around the troll tokens, and C_{22} is the normalised frequency of the candidate collocate in the whole corpus. The formula shows that Log Ratio is the binary logarithm of the ratio of the normalised frequencies of a candidate collocate around the troll tokens and in the whole corpus. Thus, Log Ratio is a very transparent effect size measure as it shows how many times more or less frequent the

candidate collocate is around the troll tokens than in the whole corpus in general. If the Log Ratio score is 0, the candidate collocate has the same normalised frequency around the troll tokens and in the whole corpus in general. If LR_c is 1, the candidate collocate is twice more frequent around the troll tokens than in the whole corpus. However, if it is -1, the candidate collocate is only half as frequent around the troll tokens as in the whole corpus. For the purposes of this study, the candidate collocates with a Log Ratio score of at least 1 were considered actual troll token collocates.

Finally, I defined *troll comment keywords* as words that occurred at least five times in the British or at least three times in the Hungarian troll comments in corpus version 3 and were at least twice more frequent in the troll comments than in the non-troll comments in corpus version 4.

To collect the troll comment keywords, I opened the version 3 corpus files in *AntConc*, and using the ‘Word List’ tool, I listed those words that occurred at least five times in the British troll comments or at least three times in the Hungarian ones. I refer to these as *candidate troll comment keywords*. I saved the British and Hungarian candidate troll comment keywords with their absolute frequencies and calculated their normalised frequencies per thousand words in the troll comments, which is their absolute frequencies divided by the number of tokens in the troll comments multiplied by 1,000. Then, I opened the version 4 corpus files in *AntConc* and using the ‘Word List’ tool again, I calculated the absolute frequencies of the candidate keywords in the non-troll comments. I saved the absolute frequencies in the above-mentioned spreadsheets, and calculated the normalised frequencies of the candidate keywords per thousand words in the non-troll comments by dividing the absolute frequencies by the number of tokens in the non-troll comments and multiplying these values by 1,000. Finally, similarly to the collocates, I calculated the Log Ratio scores of the candidate keywords with the following formula:

$$LR_k = \log_2 \frac{K_{12}}{K_{22}}$$

where LR_k is the Log Ratio score of a candidate keyword, K_{12} is the normalised frequency of the candidate keyword in the troll comments in corpus version 3 and K_{22} is the normalised frequency of the candidate keyword in the non-troll comments in corpus version 4. In this case, the Log Ratio score shows how many times more or less frequent a candidate keyword is in the troll comments than in the non-troll comments.

Similarly to the collocates, the candidate keywords with a Log Ratio score of at least 1 were deemed actual troll comment keywords.

Table 4.9 shows the number of British and Hungarian troll comment n-grams, troll token n-grams, candidate troll token collocates, troll token collocates, candidate troll comment keywords, and troll comment keywords. All of these can be found in Appendices G and H together with their frequencies and Log Ratio scores. In fact, as the definitions of the troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords also reveal, a particular item could be classified as a troll token n-gram, a troll token collocate, and a troll comment keyword at the same time. For instance, the word *Tory* occurred 1,700 times in the British troll comments, within this, it appeared 1,447 times around the British troll tokens in a 5L-5R window span, and within this, it occurred 693 times directly before the word *troll*. Moreover, it was 3.9 times more frequent in the British troll comments than in the non-troll comments and 14.7 times more frequent around the troll tokens than in the whole British corpus. Therefore, the bigram *Tory troll* has been classified as a troll token n-gram while the word *Tory* has been categorised as a troll token collocate and a troll comment keyword as well.

Table 4.9. The number of British and Hungarian troll comment and troll token n-grams, (candidate) troll token collocates, and (candidate) troll comment keywords

	British corpus	Hungarian corpus	Overall
troll comment n-grams	11,823	2,814	14,637
troll token n-grams	837	148	985
candidate troll token collocates	1,432	517	1,949
troll token collocates	569	295	864
candidate troll comment keywords	4,717	2,716	7,433
troll comment keywords	989	1,118	2,107

After collecting the troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords, I identified the action-, aim-, and motive-related items. First, I opened the

version 3 corpus files in *AntConc* and read the concordance lines of each British and Hungarian n-gram, collocate, and keyword. When analysing the concordance lines, I focused on whether a particular n-gram, collocate, or keyword is repeatedly used to mark a specific troll action, aim, or motive in the comments. If the item under inspection satisfied this criterion, it was annotated as action-, aim-, or motive-related, depending on whether it marked an action, an aim, or a motive in the troll comments. The items were also provided with one or more action-, aim-, or motive-related tags, indicating the specific action(s), aim(s), or motive(s) that they marked in the troll comments. The annotated action-, aim-, and motive-related n-grams, collocates, and keywords are listed in Appendices G and H. These are also discussed in Chapters 5–7.

After this, similarly to step three, I selected all British and Hungarian troll action comments in the spreadsheets. I read the first British troll action comment again in the spreadsheet and I identified those words, phrases, or clauses in the comment that marked at least one discursive action associated with trolling. After this, I checked whether the comment included action-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, or troll comment keywords and I looked at whether these indeed marked a troll action in this particular comment. Finally, I specified the troll action(s) mentioned in the comment based on the content of the relevant comment parts and based on the annotation of the action-related n-grams, collocates, or keywords present in the comment. I also opened the comment in the second version of the British corpus to consider the direct context of the comment again. Then, I provided the comment with one or more action-related tags, depending on how many different troll actions were mentioned in the comment.

I repeated the same process with each British and Hungarian troll action comment and then, with all troll aim and troll motive comments. As discussed in Subsection 4.4.1, several troll comments have been classified as troll action, aim, and motive comments at the same time. Thus, these troll comments were provided with action-, aim-, and motive-related tags as well. To ensure the transparency of the annotation process, the annotation of all troll action, aim, and motive comments is presented in Appendix F.

Finally, using the tags that the troll action, aim, and motive comments were provided with, I calculated the number of those troll comments in which the various troll actions, aim, and motives were mentioned.

4.4.4. Describing the discursive construction of trolling in the troll comments and selecting the troll comments discussed in the thesis

The sixth step of data analysis focused on how trolling as a behaviour and the trolls as individuals are constructed in the troll comments, depending on the various actions, aims, and motives that the commenters attribute to the trolls. The aim of this step was to find correspondences between the specific troll actions/aims/motives and the various ways in which the commenters construct trolling and the trolls in the troll comments.

First, I selected all those British and Hungarian troll action comments that had been provided with the first troll action tag. I read the first qualifying British comment again and based on the content of the words, phrases, or clauses, including the troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords, that marked the first troll action, I identified the attributes associated with trolling and with the addressed troll(s) in this particular comment. Then, using these attributes, I described how trolling and the troll(s) are depicted in the comment. I followed the same process with the other qualifying British and Hungarian comments and considering the new attributes identified in these comments, I adjusted the description of trolling and that of the trolls after each comment, thus getting a final set of attributes associated with trolling and the trolls in the troll comments with the first troll action tag. I repeated the same process with the troll comments annotated with the other troll action, aim, and motive tags.

The final step was to select those troll action, aim, and motive comments that are analysed as examples in the thesis. To be selected as examples, the comments had to meet four criteria. Firstly, they had to focus on a particular action, aim, or motive that the commenters attributed to the trolls. Therefore, all comments that focused on topics other than trolling and only marginally mentioned a troll action, aim, or motive have been excluded. Secondly, the comments had to be easy to understand and not misleading on their own, with only a limited context provided. Therefore, all comments that were hard to interpret or were misleading without also reading other comments in the same thread have been excluded. Thirdly, the comments had to be concise. Thus, all overly verbose comments have been excluded. Finally, the comments had to represent the various blogs covered in the corpora. Consequently, although most examples come from the blogs with the most troll comments, whenever

I had the opportunity to choose between two very similar comments from two different blogs, I chose the comment that was published on the blog with the fewer troll comments. After having discussed data collection and analysis in Chapter 4, Chapter 5 will focus on the communicative actions users associate with trolling.

5. The actions associated with trolling

Chapter 5 discusses the perceived communicative actions that commenters associate with trolling. It also focuses on how trolling and trolls are constructed in the troll action comments, depending on the actions attributed to trolls. Table 5.1 presents the number of comments, troll comments, and troll action comments in the British and Hungarian corpora.

Table 5.1. The number of comments, troll comments, and troll action comments in the British and Hungarian corpora

	British corpus	Hungarian corpus
Comments	740,841 (100%)	107,719 (100%)
Troll comments	6,129 (0.8%)	1,118 (1%)
Troll action comments	2,144 (0.3%)	428 (0.4%)

Table 5.1 shows that 2,144 British and 428 Hungarian comments (a total of 2,572) have been identified as troll action comments, indicating that only 0.3% of the British and 0.4% of the Hungarian comments overall are troll action comments. Compared to the entirety of the troll comments, 35% of the British and 38.3% of the Hungarian troll comments are troll *action* comments, suggesting that when commenters call others trolls, they discuss the trolls' actions around a third of the time. These percentages also show that the proportion of troll action comments is similar in the two corpora. Although the British corpus includes five times more troll action comments than the Hungarian corpus, this difference in raw frequencies largely stems from the fact that the British corpus is 6.9 times larger than the Hungarian.

5.1. Reasoned debate as the normative behaviour on political blogs

A common feature of both the British and the Hungarian troll action comments is that users make a clear distinction between ‘trolling’ and ‘engaging in intelligent and reasoned debate’, suggesting that trolls do not contribute to the ongoing debate since they do not post constructive or cooperative comments (Herring et al., 2002: 376).

(5.1) [guardian_3_5443]

*There are definitely some who are blatantly **Tory trolls**. **They don't come here for debate, they don't add anything useful to the discussion, they just post something anti-Corbyn or anti-Labour and wait to be torn to shreds.** [Username] was one, [username] is another, [username], [username] (or whatever he's called) [username] too. Not sure about [username] or [username], but **they have some attributes of a Tory troll**. The same bullshit repeated ad nauseam, **no interest in reasoned, intelligent debate**, desperate to veer the discussion away from what is actually in the article by saying Corbyn is a terrorist sympathiser or hard left or unelectable or a joke, etc, etc. It stands out a mile, because **there is no wit or verve to their posts**. They feel churned out, repetitive, tedious, pre-scripted. It's quite sad, really. **I'm all for people having different opinions, but some of the people** who post btl [i.e., below the line] on politics-related articles **have absolutely no interest in that**. [Username] is the worst offender, but there are plenty who infest these boards.*

(5.2) [mandiner_52_958]

*[Username] azért "áll velem szóba" és veled meg nem, mert **te nem vagy vitaképes**. K.rvaanyázó, ad hominem kirohanásokra senki nem fog érdeemben válaszolni. Ha már elmúltál 12 éves (szellemileg is), akkor ezt magadtól is tudnod kellene. Szövegértési képességeid igen alacsonyak, prekoncepcióid vannak és személyeskedsz, **érdemi észrevételeid, érveid, saját értékelhető véleményed, meglátásaid nincsenek, magad értelmesen kifejezni nem tudod**. Ezért nem beszélnek veled a kommentelők. Minek? 12 egy tucat **fórumtroll vagy, aki semmit nem tud hozzáadni egy beszélgetéshez**.*

‘The reason why [username] ‘falls into conversation’ with me but not with you is that **you’re unable to debate anything**. No one will actually reply to foul-mouthed, ad hominem outbursts. If you’re over 12 (mentally as well), then you should know this by yourself. Your reading comprehension skills are very poor, you have preconceptions, and you are insulting others, **you don’t have any meaningful remarks, arguments, independent and reasonable opinions or ideas, you are unable to express yourself clearly**. That’s why the commenters don’t speak to you. What would be the point? **You’re a ten-a-penny forum troll who is unable to contribute anything to a discussion.**’

In Examples (5.1) and (5.2), the users contrast ‘trolling’ with ‘contributing to a reasoned debate’. They create this contrast between the two behaviours with the clause [*the Tory trolls*] *don’t come here for debate, they don’t add anything useful to the discussion* and the noun phrase *no interest in reasoned, intelligent debate* in Example (5.1) and with the clauses *te nem vagy vitaképes* (‘you’re unable to debate anything’) and *fórumtroll vagy, aki semmit nem tud hozzáadni egy beszélgetéshez* (‘you’re a forum troll who is unable to contribute anything to a discussion’) in Example (5.2). By focusing on what the trolls do not do, these negative sentences construct ‘engagement in a reasoned debate’ as the opposite of trolling (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364).

Both commenters mention some essential constituents of debates. In Example (5.1), the user points out that in his view, disagreement is a natural part of any debate (*I’m all for people having different opinions*), thus implying that trolling falls outside the scope of debate not because the trolls disagree with others but because they keep repeating the same unreasonable points (*[t]he same bullshit repeated ad nauseam*) and they unfairly criticise political parties and politicians, namely the Labour Party and its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, in this case (*they just post something anti-Corbyn or anti-Labour and saying Corbyn is a terrorist sympathiser or hard left or unelectable or a joke*).

Similarly, the clauses *érdemi észrevételeid, érveid, saját értékelhető véleményed, meglátásaid nincsenek, magad értelmesen kifejezni nem tudod* (‘you don’t have any meaningful remarks, arguments, independent and reasonable opinions or ideas, you are unable to express yourself clearly’) in Example (5.2) suggest that those involved in a debate express themselves clearly, make meaningful arguments, and share their independent and reasonable opinions or ideas (Herring et al., 2002: 380). However, as

the user argues, this is not what the addressee does, which renders him a troll, who does not contribute to the ongoing discussion but instead swears and insults others (*K.rvaanyázó, ad hominem kirohanások* ('foul-mouthed, ad hominem outbursts') and *személyeskedsz* ('you are insulting others')).

(5.3) [bellacaledonia_45_114]

*“There’s a huge difference of scale between the state “monitoring” those who speak out against it, and Bella [i.e, the blog Bella Caledonia] “monitoring” dissident voices” - yeah, just a bit. **Bella remains an open platform for free debate.** However we defend the right to stop deliberate attempts to distort and attack this website from aggressive trolling and professional shit-stirrers. We also value the challenge of alternative voices, in fact it’s what we are all about. Some of these voices may not be as ‘alternative’ as they seem.*

(5.4) [varanusz_17_1037]

*Még egyszer. **Vitatkozhat, nyugodtan! Érvelhetsz az igazad, vagy vélt igazad mellett! Idézhet, is hozzá! Támadhat, más a rossz nézőpontja miatt! Védhet bármit érveiddel és egy lehet, hogy sokkal jobb nézőpontból, mint akármelyikünk alkalomadtán.** ([Username] és [username] cimbikéd ezeket nem szokta.) Nem személyeskedj, az adminnal meg pláne a hülyeség határa, persze lehet játszani, mint ma este is. Ne linkelj be egész más témába csak azért valamit, mert a politikai érdeked az kívánja, nagy ívben leszarva a blog témáját. Ne erőszakoskodj a témával, ne terej, ne téríts! **Ne légy troll.***

*‘Once again. **Feel free to debate! You can argue for your opinion or for what you think is right! You can also give quotes in support! You can criticise others for their flawed point of view! You can defend anything with your arguments** and it’s possible that sometimes from a much better point of view than any of us. (These are the things that your mates [username] and [username] never do.) Don’t insult others, especially the admin because that really verges on foolishness, of course you can play just like this evening. Don’t post links into a completely unrelated topic just because this is what your political interest dictates while not giving a shit about the blog topic.*

Don't push the topic around, don't divert the topic, don't try to convert others! **Don't be a troll!**

Examples (5.3) and (5.4) also emphasise that participants can disagree when debating with one another and they are welcome to argue for their opinions or against those they disagree with. This is expressed by the sentences *Bella* [Caledonia] *remains an open platform for free debate* and *[w]e also value the challenge of alternative voices, in fact it's what we are all about* in Example (5.3) and by the sentences *Vitatkozhatasz nyugodtan! Érvelhetsz az igazad, vagy vélt igazad mellett! [...] Támadhatsz mászt a rossz nézőpontja miatt! Védhetsz bármit érveiddel* ('Feel free to debate! You can argue for your opinion or for what you think is right! You can criticise others for their flawed point of view! You can defend anything with your arguments') in Example (5.4). However, similarly to Examples (5.1) and (5.2), both comments construct trolling as the opposite of debate. In Example (5.3), the commenter depicts trolling as an attack against the blog whereas in Example (5.4), after discussing what debate is, the user lists some actions that he associates with trolling, such as insulting others and posting irrelevant comments.

There is, however, an important difference between Examples (5.1)–(5.2) and Examples (5.3)–(5.4). Although all of these criticise the trolls, the first two examples only describe what the trolls do and do not do while the last two point out what the users can or should do on the blogs where they are posting. This is because the first two comments were posted by regular users whereas the last two were by the moderators of the two host blogs (Cheng et al., 2015: 1), the Scottish *Bella Caledonia* and the Hungarian *Varánusz*. Thus, the fact that Examples (5.3) and (5.4) discuss what the commenters can or should do suggests that they construct 'reasoned debate' not only as the opposite of trolling but also as the appropriate or normative behaviour on these blogs (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364) whereas trolling is depicted as a non-normative behaviour (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 163).

Based on the analysed four comments, 'reasoned debate' as the normative behaviour on political blogs has three components. Firstly, users post 'reasonable' opinions and they make 'meaningful' arguments to support them. Secondly, in case of disagreement, which is not only allowed but also encouraged, they argue against those comments they disagree with. Finally, they express themselves 'clearly' throughout the debate (Herring et al., 2002: 380). This is a vague description rather than a formal

definition and the quotation marks also indicate that the labels ‘reasoned’, ‘reasonable’, ‘meaningful’, and ‘clearly’ are subjective and context-dependent (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366).

This is because the analysed comments construct ‘reasoned debate’, similarly to ‘trolling’, as a folk concept that the commenters use to assess others’ contributions (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 33). Thus, it does not have transparent or straightforward criteria and every user can freely decide and share whether they consider a comment to be ‘reasonable’, ‘meaningful’, or ‘clear’ (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 177). Thus, one should not expect all users to agree on whether a comment is appropriate and contributes to the ongoing debate or whether it is only an act of trolling (Hardaker, 2010: 237). Of course, users can discuss and negotiate their assessments with one another and some of them can even reach agreement (Herring et al., 2002: 377) but their assessments nevertheless remain subjective (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366). Moreover, on actively moderated blogs, moderators can delete comments if they find them inappropriate without necessarily justifying their decision (Cheng et al., 2015: 1).

The fact that ‘reasonable debate’ as a normative behaviour and ‘trolling’ as a non-normative behaviour are constructed as opposites in the troll action comments also implies that when describing the actions that users associate with trolling, we also reconstruct the behaviour that they perceive as normative in the comment threads of political blogs. This demonstrates that trolling is worth analysing not only in its own right but also because it can help us reconstruct the assumed norms of those interactions in which trolling takes place (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 163).

5.2. A taxonomy of the actions associated with trolling

Four non-normative activities associated with trolling emerged during the qualitative analysis of the British and Hungarian troll action comments. These perceived activities are (I) spamming, (II) ignoring or withholding information, (III) flaming, and (IV) dishonesty, which in total include sixteen specific actions as outlined below:

(I) Spamming (Hardaker, 2010: 233)

- (1) posting too many (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 266), very long (Spruds et al., 2016: 77), or unusually short comments (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6944)
- (2) posting (near-)identical comments (Hardaker, 2010: 232)

- (3) extensively citing external sources (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 261)
 - (4) posting irrelevant comments (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364)
 - (5) posting incoherent or incomprehensible comments (Synnott et al., 2017: 74)
- (II) Ignoring or withholding information** (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 360)
- (6) ignoring the original post or other comments when posting (Herring et al., 2002: 376)
 - (7) giving vague or evasive answers to the questions directed at them
 - (8) refusing to support their statements with evidence or arguments or to argue against the statements that they disagree with (Synnott et al., 2017: 74)
 - (9) refusing to share any personal information about themselves and hiding their previous comments (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364)
- (III) Flaming** (Cruz, Seo, & Rex, 2018: 17)
- (10) making or supporting statements and arguments perceived as untrue (Morrissey, 2010: 75), potentially misleading (Donath, 1999: 47), unreasonable (Hardaker, 2013: 73), or contrarian (Hopkinson, 2013: 10)
 - (11) directly belittling, insulting, threatening, harassing, or otherwise attacking other participants (Hardaker, 2015: 201)
 - (12) asking personal or loaded questions (Utz, 2005: 50)
 - (13) using “incorrect” or “inappropriate” language (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 267)
- (IV) Dishonesty** (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 33)
- (14) making insincere statements (Hopkinson 2013: 14)
 - (15) making contradictory statements
 - (16) posting comments from multiple accounts or from an account also used by others (Binns, 2012: 557)

In line with the above taxonomy, I describe perceived trolling as a complex communicative behaviour that includes four activities, which comprise sixteen actions. Consequently, I treat *activities* as extended sets of conceptually related specific *actions*. The four trolling activities and the sixteen actions that constitute these are discussed in

Sections 5.3–5.6. When discussing the individual actions, I also point out how these differ from one another.

The references in the troll action taxonomy indicate that fourteen of the communicative actions that the British and Hungarian users associate with trolling have already been identified in the academic literature, suggesting that these actions are perceived as trolling in other contexts as well. However, while many of these actions are only dealt with in brief comments in the academic works on trolling, Chapter 5 gives a comprehensive and evidence-based analysis of these. I also discuss two highly context-dependent troll actions, giving vague or evasive answers to questions and making contradictory statements, which have not been mentioned in previous research. A possible explanation as to why these actions appear in the troll action comments in this data is that users expect others to engage in reasoned political debate (see Section 5.1), which is impossible without giving direct answers to questions and maintaining one's intellectual integrity.

Examples (5.5)–(5.68) below also demonstrate that all the listed trolling actions are present in both the British and the Hungarian troll action comments. In the majority of the discussed examples, commenters associate more than one action with trolling, which means that the above sixteen actions are not mutually exclusive categories. However, when analysing the comments, I always focus on only the perceived trolling action currently under discussion. This decision renders my account of the examples necessarily partial but at the same time, it makes the argumentation easier to follow.

5.3. Trolling activity (I): spamming

The first trolling activity is spamming (Barron, 2006), which is directed at the flow and integrity of the ongoing discussion (Hardaker, 2013: 69). It includes five perceived communicative actions: (1) posting too many, very long, or unusually short comments, (2) posting (near-)identical comments, (3) extensively citing external sources, (4) posting irrelevant comments, and (5) posting incoherent or incomprehensible comments. The five actions are discussed in Subsections 5.3.1–5.3.5.

5.3.1. Trolling action (1): posting too many, very long, or very short comments

The first perceived trolling action relates to the amount and length of the trolls' comments. Users suggest that trolls post too many (Cheng et al., 2015: 3), extremely long (Baraniuk, 2017: 241), or unusually short comments (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 260), thus maximising the amount of their own contribution and damaging the flow of the ongoing discussion (Broniatowski et al., 2018: 1380).

(5.5) [guido_110_2499]

*Eleven posts out of the last 51. You're like a auto-CCHQ-bot. It's relentless, you boring caMoron-ite Fuckwit. Just Fuck Off. Go away back to the Scummygragh, where you came from. Where you're at home with the Marxist Dave Lovers. How the Fuck you're not banned for **Trolling and Spamming** is a Fucking mystery. Cunt.*

[CCHQ stands for the Conservative Campaign Headquarters, caMoron is a blend of *moron* and David Cameron's surname, *Dave* refers to David Cameron whereas *Scummygragh* is a blend of *scum(my)* and The Daily Telegraph.]

(5.6) [atlatszo_2_133]

Bagoly mondja. Ha olvasni is megtanítottak, lesz. [légy szíves] nézd már vissza csak itt magadat, és emeld ki a nagyképű, másokat leszóló dumádból az érdemi tartalmat, te nagyképű fasz! Lesz 3 szónál több? Egyébként jól fizet a trollkodás? Mert az oly hangsúlyosan fontos munkád mellett ennyit [sic] hozzászólást írni. ha ezt ingyen teszed, annál is hülyébb vagy, mint amilyenek eddig gondoltalak.

'The pot calling the kettle black. If you've also been taught how to read, please look at what you've done here and highlight the noteworthy content in your arrogant, belittling drivel, you arrogant dick! Will it be more than three words? **Does trolling pay well** otherwise? Because **writing so many comments** when having such an extremely important job. If you're doing this for free, you're even more stupid than I thought.'

In Examples (5.5) and (5.6), the users argue that the trolls post more comments than appropriate. The noun phrase *[e]leven posts out of the last 51* in Example (5.5) contrasts the number of comments the troll has posted with the amount of comments posted by other participants, pointing out that the troll has posted too many comments compared to others. This comment is consistent with the finding of Cheng et al. (2015: 3) that those accused of trolling in the comment threads of *CNN.com* post twelve times more comments than ordinary users. Similarly, the noun phrase *ennyit [sic] hozzászólást írni* ('writing so many comments') in Example (5.6) suggests that the troll has contributed an unusually high number of comments but without specifying the exact amount (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 266).

The statement *[y]ou're like a auto-CCHQ-bot* in Example (5.5) and the question *[e]gyébként jól fizet a trollkodás?* ('does trolling pay well otherwise?') in Example (5.6) have a similar function in the two comments. Both give an explanation as to why the trolls maximise their contribution, while also reinforcing the idea that the trolls post too many comments (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 266). As *CCHQ* refers to the Conservative Campaign Headquarters, the sentence *[y]ou're like a auto-CCHQ-bot* likens the troll to a computer program created by the Conservative Campaign Headquarters to disseminate the political messages of the Conservative Party. Thus, it suggests that the troll is posting more comments than one would expect from an average commenter because he does not behave like a human being but like a piece of software (Broniatowski et al., 2018: 1382). Consequently, this expression is also used to dehumanise the troll. Similarly, the question *[e]gyébként jól fizet a trollkodás?* ('does trolling pay well otherwise?') in Example (5.6) implies that the troll has posted many more comments than appropriate because, unlike other commenters, he is paid for posting (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399).

(5.7) [labourlist_292_349]

***Tory troll alert.** New readers beware. NB [nota bene]: Twice banned recently from Disqus under other names and all posts (chiefly **bulk spam**) deleted.*

[Disqus is the third-party comment system that *LabourList* uses.]

(5.8) [orulunk_46_161]

[username] egy kitűnő troll én nagyon nagyra tartom. béndek péter blogján aktív, ott kisesszéket ír, itt sajnós csak ilyen rövidekkel

trollkodik. fő mondanivalója mindig ugyanez, szerintem évek óta nyomja, erős regionalizáció szükségesség, balkáni cigány-zsidókeresztény szembenállás és országrontás, ez a két fő tétele. remélem szórakoztatja majd az itteni olvasókat is

‘[Username] is an excellent troll. I hold him in very high regard. He is active on Péter Béndek’s blog. **He writes short essays there. Unfortunately, he is trolling with only short ones here.** His main point is always the same. I think he’s been doing this for years. A need for strong regionalisation, Gypsy–Judeo-Christian conflict in the Balkans and deprivation of the country. These are his two main points. I hope he will entertain the readers on here as well.’

(5.9) [sluggerotoole_63_150]

The one liner response tactic, very troll

Examples (5.7), (5.8), and (5.9) focus on the length of the trolls’ contributions, suggesting that the trolls post extremely long (Spruds et al., 2016: 77) or unusually short comments (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6944). The noun phrase *bulk spam* in Example (5.7) and the clause *ott kisesszéket ír* (‘he writes short essays there’) in Example (5.8) imply that the trolls post longer comments than appropriate whereas the clause *itt sajnos csak ilyen rövidekkel trollkodik* (‘unfortunately, he is trolling with only short ones here’) in Example (5.8) and the noun phrase *one liner response tactic* in Example (5.9) point out that the trolls are also perceived to post shorter comments than expected by the commenters. *One liner response tactic* also refers to the practice when trolls keep the length of their comments to the minimum in an attempt to maximise the number of their comments (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 260). Thus, writing short comments is represented as a way of maximising the trolls’ overall input to the thread.

Finally, Examples (5.5)–(5.9) illustrate that although users suggest that trolls post more, longer, or shorter comments than one should, they do not specify the appropriate number or length of the comments. Instead, commenters use vague labels, such as *ennyi* (‘so many’) or *bulk*, when assessing the amount of the trolls’ contributions. This implies that although the appropriate amount of one’s contribution could be quantified in principle, users construct it as a flexible and

subjective concept in their comments. Moreover, most of the relatively long or short comments are not described as trolling and most users who post considerably more comments than others are not called trolls by the commenters in either the British or the Hungarian corpus.

5.3.2. Trolling action (2): posting (near-)identical comments

The second trolling action relates to repetition as a communicative and argumentative technique (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 34). Users suggest that trolls post identical comments, using the exact same expressions (Cook et al., 2018: 3329), or near-identical ones, repeating the same points but slightly changing the wording of their posts (Broniatowski et al., 2018: 1380).

(5.10) [labourlist_111_61]

OMG [i.e., Oh my God], you're not using 'Calm down dear' again? I thought repetition was the mark of a troll. Another troll signifier, since I have clearly been calm throughout my career as an LL [i.e., LabourList] commenter, is the use of a stock phrase that is not suitable to the occasion.

(5.11) [w_1_683]

bemácsolhatod újra, meg újra, [username], semmit nem változtat a tényeken. ahogy az elején mondtam, fegyvertelen vagy, kicsi troll.

'you can keep pasting this [i.e., one of your earlier comments] again and again, [user name], it doesn't change the facts. As I said at the beginning, you're unarmed, little troll.'

In Example (5.10), the user points out that the troll keeps reusing the same sentence, 'Calm down dear', in his comments. The clauses *I thought repetition was the mark of a troll* and *[a]nother troll signifier [...] is the use of a stock phrase* also explicitly associate repetition with trolling at a more general level (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 363). Similarly, the clause *bemácsolhatod újra, meg újra* ('you can keep pasting this again and again') in Example (5.11) suggests that the troll reposts one of his earlier comments over and over again without any alteration.

(5.12) [labourlist_364_639]

Ignore the troll. Literally every single one of his comments is rambling on about how he hate all Jews and Israel and how they are the source of every ill of this word. Just a really hateful person.

(5.13) [tenytar_8_814]

Sajnálom a fideszes trollokat. Nem kéne már kitalálni valami újat? Mindenre ballibezés, gyurcsányozás, meg bajnaizás a válasz? Ez szánalmas és végtelenül ostoba. Okosabbak nincsenek köztetek? (válasz: nincs, mert még mindig EZ a pártpropaganda, újat nem tudunk kitalálni)

‘I pity the Fidesz trolls. Shouldn’t you find out something new? Is saying left-liberal, [Ferenc] Gyurcsány, and [Gordon] Bajnai the answer to everything? This is pathetic and absolutely foolish. Aren’t there some smarter ones among you? (Answer: There aren’t because **THIS is still the party propaganda and we can’t find out anything new.**)

[Fidesz (full name: Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség (‘Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance’)) is a Hungarian right-wing national conservative party. It has been the main governing party in Hungary since 2010. Ferenc Gyurcsány and Gordon Bajnai are two left-wing politicians, who served as the 58th and 59th Prime Ministers of Hungary from 2004 to 2009 and between 2009 and 2010, respectively. Both were supported by the left-wing *Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP)* (‘Hungarian Socialist Party’) during their terms.]

While Examples (5.10) and (5.11) associate literal repetition with trolling, Examples (5.12) and (5.13) instead stress that the trolls reiterate the same points in their comments but without implying that their comments are completely identical (Llevellyn et al., 2018: 361). In Example (5.12), the user argues that the troll repeatedly attacks the Jews and Israel but the comment does not suggest that the troll would simply repost his earlier comments. Similarly, Example (5.13) points out that regardless of the topic, the Fidesz trolls continuously speak about left-liberalism as well as about Ferenc Gurcsány and Gordon Bajnai, two former

left-wing prime ministers of Hungary. However, this only implies that the trolls' comments are of similar content. Consequently, Examples (5.12) and (5.13) illustrate that users perceive not only literal repetition but also non-literal content repetition as a trolling action (Broniatowski et al., 2018: 1380).

(5.14) [guardian_35_602]

*You're the one that's not listening. Not that I care. But I prefer a conversation where I make a point and the other person responds to it. Not **pointlessly repeat their original post** when they didn't get the reply they were expecting. **Go troll someone else.** You're out of your depth.*

Finally, Example (5.14) demonstrates that commenters also refer to repetition as a fallacious argumentative practice that the trolls engage in. Here, the user claims that instead of responding to his points, the troll simply repeats his original post, thus committing the logical fallacy of *argument by repetition* (Gilabert et al., 2013: 2860).

5.3.3. Trolling action (3): extensively citing external sources

The third trolling action relates to the perceived lack of originality the trolls display in their comments (Fornacciarì et al., 2018: 261). Users suggest that instead of writing original comments and sharing their own opinion, trolls extensively cite external sources, such as newspaper articles or political party messages (Baraniuk, 2017: 241), thus maximising the amount of unoriginal content in their comments (Spruds et al., 2016: 77).

(5.15) [leftfutures_20_60]

*But we are not in the USA are we, so yet another **trolling cut and paste from someone who only knows how to criticise using someone else's words and never has anything** useful, positive or interesting to say of **their own.***

(5.16) [pogatsazoltan_1_54]

Ez csak [username] a 168 óra, Népszava trollja, soha nem volt képes önálló gondolkozásra, véleményre, csak a jobbos uszító sajtóból másol, jól mutatja értelmi képességét, hogy mindig önmagát lójolja.

‘This is just [username], the troll of 168 Óra and Népszava. He has never been able to think independently or to form his own opinion. He just keeps copying from the hate-inciting right-wing press. The fact that he always likes his own comments clearly shows his mental capacities.’

[168 Óra and Népszava are two Hungarian left-wing political newspapers.]

In Example (5.15), the user accuses the troll of directly copying a text from someone else but without specifying that source. This is conveyed by the noun phrases *trolling cut and paste* and *using someone else’s words*. The commenter also points out the troll’s perceived lack of originality when discussing what the troll does not do in the clause *[the troll] never has anything useful, positive or interesting to say of their own*. As this clause not only focuses on originality but also contrasts ‘saying useful, positive, or interesting things’ with trolling, it constructs the former as an expected communicative behaviour in the ongoing interaction (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 33). However, as the user does not explain what he considers ‘useful’, ‘positive’, or ‘interesting’ in this particular comment thread, the appropriate discursive behaviour that trolling is contrasted with remains vague.

In Example (5.16), the user claims that instead of forming and sharing his own opinion, the troll only copies from the ‘hate-inciting’ right-wing press. Thus, similarly to Example (5.15), Example (5.16) constructs ‘writing original comments and sharing one’s own opinion’ as an appropriate discursive behaviour whereas extensively citing external sources is considered trolling (Baraniuk, 2017: 241). The pejorative adjective *usztító* (‘hate-inciting’) before the noun *sajtóból* (‘from the press’) suggests that the comment not only specifies the source that the troll copies from but also constructs the Hungarian right-wing press as a dubious source that should not be quoted. Therefore, the troll is not only criticised because he never writes original comments (*soha nem volt képes önálló gondolkozásra, véleményre* (‘he has never been able to think independently or to form his own opinion’)) but also because he cites from sources perceived as unreliable (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 261).

(5.17) [conservativehome_27_130]

*I know I don't always take my own advice but **don't feed the troll. This one** in particular has few brains and **is only able to recite Labour slogans**. Arguing with it is pointless.*

(5.18) [politologus_1_205]

*Fölösleges magyarázkodni "ennek". Érti ő, csak úgy tesz mintha mégsem, közben provokál és **a fideszes agitpropot terjeszti. Fizetett fideszes bértroll őkelme.***

'It's pointless to explain yourself to "this". He understands it but he acts as if he didn't. Meanwhile he is being provocative and **spreads the Fidesz agitprop. This gentleman is a paid Fidesz wage troll.**'

In Examples (5.17) and (5.18), the clauses [*the troll*] *is only able to recite Labour slogans* and [*a troll*] *a fideszes agitpropot terjeszti* ('[the troll] spreads the Fidesz agitprop') suggest that instead of contributing original comments, the trolls merely cite and disseminate the messages of political parties, that is, the Labour Party in Example (5.17) and Fidesz, the main Hungarian governing party, in Example (5.18).

These party messages are depicted as inappropriate sources in both comments. As Example (5.17) was posted on *Conservative Home*, a blog that overtly supports the Conservative Party, the slogans of the Labour Party, the main political rival of the Conservative Party, are deemed unworthy of being mentioned on the blog and thus, citing them is considered trolling. Similarly, the noun *agitprop* ('agitation and propaganda') in Example (5.18) indicates that the user considers the referred Fidesz party messages to be intentionally misleading and consequently unfit for being quoted in the comment thread.

5.3.4. Trolling action (4): posting irrelevant comments

The fourth trolling action relates to the perceived irrelevance of the trolls' comments (Hardaker, 2010: 232). Users argue that trolls post stand-alone comments that are unrelated to the main topic of the discussion or to the comment that they reply to (Cheng et al., 2017: 1221). Thus, trolls are perceived to maximise the amount of irrelevant comments in the analysed threads (Morrissey, 2010: 77).

(5.19) [labourlist_116_369]

*There are **rules of netiquette**: one is sticking to the main discussion topic. Not doing so is usually referred to as **spamming or trolling**.*

(5.20) [1000amihazank_43_597]

*“különösen ha hozzászólsz a témához” A **témához nem szólt hozzá; pusztán trollkodik**, amit próbál mélyenszántó metaelemzésnek feltüntetni.*

*“especially if you comment on the topic” **He didn’t comment on the topic; he’s merely trolling**, which he tries to portray as a sophisticated meta-analysis’*

In Examples (5.19) and (5.20), the users contrast the appropriate discursive action of posting relevant comments with trolling. The sentence [*t*]here are rules of netiquette: one is sticking to the main discussion topic in Example (5.19) constructs ‘commenting on the main discussion topic’ as an expected action in online interactions, however without specifying how the main topic of a discussion can be defined. Then, the second sentence depicts trolling as the opposite of this, thus associating irrelevant comments with trolling (Synnott et al., 2017: 74). Similarly, the negative statement [*a troll a*] témához nem szólt hozzá (‘[the troll] didn’t comment on the topic’) in Example (5.20) points out that the trolls’ comments do not relate to the topic under discussion, thus implying that the troll only contributes off-topic content to the thread (Golf-Papez & Peer, 2017: 1337).

(5.21) [archbishop_29_223]

*What an ignorant little troll you repeatedly prove yourself to be, [username]. **Nothing to say on the substance of the article?** The sexual exploitation of innocent children in a world that has lost its moral compass and where the fulfilment of desire is the idol of the secularists and atheists. Then, what could you say that would hold together as a coherent argument? Best stay silent or you’ll just make yourself look more ridiculous.*

(5.22) [varanusz_58_964]

A blog témája nem az ukrán háború! Nem bírsz hozzászólni? A propagandaműsorral, trollkodással és provokálással mész a lefolyóba! SZÓLTAM!

‘The blog topic is not the Ukrainian war! Are you unable to comment on that? You will be flushed out [i.e., you will be banned] with this propaganda show, trolling, and provocation! I TOLD YOU!’

While Examples (5.19)–(5.20) only focus on the fact that the trolls’ comments deviate from the main discussion topic, Examples (5.21) and (5.22) also point out that the main discussion topic is defined by the blog post. In Example (5.21), the user describes the topic of the blog post, referred to as *the article*, as ‘the sexual exploitation of children’ whilst the question *[n]othing to say on the substance of the article?* implies that the troll’s comments do not discuss this topic, which renders them irrelevant.

Instead of directly specifying the topic of the blog post, Example (5.22) focuses on the topic of the troll’s post, which is the Ukrainian war. However, similarly to Example (5.21), the statement *[a] blog témája nem az ukrán háború* (‘the blog topic is not the Ukrainian war’) and the following question *[n]em bírsz hozzászólni?* (‘are you unable to comment on that [i.e., the actual blog topic]?’) suggest that the user perceives a discrepancy between the topic of the blog post and the topic that the troll is concerned with, thus implying the the troll’s post is irrelevant because it digresses from the main discussion topic as defined by the blog post (Synnott et al., 2017: 74).

(5.23) [labourlist_193_360]

I’m sorry but what does this have to do with the comment you replied to? Are you just trolling?

Finally, the question *what does this have to do with the comment you replied to?* in Example (5.23) demonstrates that users perceive trolls as irrelevant not only when the trolls’ comments in general do not adhere to the main discussion topic but also when their posts do not relate to the comment they reply to (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6944). This suggests that users expect those who reply to their comments to reflect on the content of those comments in their replies instead of introducing entirely new topics.

5.3.5. Trolling action (5): posting incoherent or incomprehensible comments

The fifth trolling action relates to the perceived incoherence and incomprehensibility of the trolls' comments (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364). Users suggest that trolls post unclear comments that are very difficult or impossible to decipher since they lack inner coherence and consequently, these comments do not add anything meaningful to the discussion (Herring et al., 2002: 380). Thus, trolls are perceived to minimise the coherence and clarity of their comments.

(5.24) [labourlist_229_1249]

Confused nonsense and even the bits that are understandable do not ring true. In my opinion you are a hard right Tory and have no clue what Labour is about, but merely spout half-understood and ridiculous slogans to make noise. I have come to the conclusion you are a troll and not even an entertaining one. You really must do better.

(5.25) [ataszjelenti_6_52]

Ha tényleg ennyire ostoba vagy akkor őszintén sajnállak. Vagy csak trollkods? Miféle vagyont védenek, a szemetet az árok széléről? Ne keverd a szeszont a fazonnal, a kommentednek semmi értelme, csapongsz különböző témák közt céltalanul. Olvasd el a Naih vonatkozó ajánlását és ha lesz amiről konkrétan vitázzunk akkor gyere és írd be.

'If you are really this dense then I genuinely feel sorry for you. Or **are you just trolling?** What kind of wealth are they [i.e., the City Council of Ózd, a Hungarian town] protecting, the rubbish from the edge of the ditch? You've got the wrong end of the stick, **your comment doesn't make any sense, you're aimlessly wandering between different topics.** Read the relevant NAIH recommendation and if there is something you actually want to debate on then come and post it.'

[NAIH (Nemzeti Adatvédelmi és Információszabadság Hatóság) is the Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information.]

The noun phrase *[c]onfused nonsense* in Example (5.24) and the clause *a kommentednek semmi értelme* ('your comment doesn't make any sense') in Example (5.25) indicate that the users perceive the trolls' comments as devoid of clarity (Herring et al., 2002: 380). As it will be discussed in Subsection 5.5.1, commenters also use the word *nonsense* to express that they find the trolls' assertions unreasonable. However, the noun phrase *even the bits that are understandable* after *nonsense* in Example (5.24) contrasts the comprehensible and incomprehensible parts of the troll's comment, suggesting that in this comment, *nonsense* is used to call the troll out for posting a mostly incomprehensible comment.

The clause *csapongsz különböző témák közt céltalanul* ('you're aimlessly wandering between different topics') in Example (5.25) explains that the user finds the troll's comment incomprehensible (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6944) because the alleged troll attempts to discuss several unrelated topics without a clear line of reasoning, which renders the troll's comment incoherent. Furthermore, the clause *ha lesz amiről konkrétan vitázzunk* ('if there is something you actually want to debate on') implies that the troll has not contributed anything specific that is worth being debated, suggesting that the troll's comment falls outside the scope of reasonable debate.

5.4. Trolling activity (II): ignoring or withholding information

The second trolling activity is ignoring (Herring et al., 2002: 376) or withholding information (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 360), which is primarily directed at the information shared in the ongoing discussion (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6945). It includes four perceived actions that the trolls engage in: (1) ignoring the original blog post or other comments when posting, (2) giving vague or evasive answers to the questions directed at them, (3) refusing to support their statements with evidence or arguments or to argue against the statements that they disagree with, and (4) refusing to share any personal information about themselves and hiding their previous comments. These four actions are discussed in Subsections 5.4.1–5.4.4.

5.4.1. Trolling action (6): ignoring the blog post or other comments

When associating the sixth action with trolling, users suggest that trolls do not read or take into account the original blog post or other users' contributions when posting their own comments (Herring et al., 2002: 376). Thus, trolls are perceived to only focus on their own input while ignoring the information others have posted in the thread (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 362).

Trolling actions (4) and (6) are closely related but there is a key difference between them. When associating action (4) with trolling, users compare the content of the trolls' comments with the content of the blog post or other comments and point out the discrepancy between them, suggesting that the trolls' comments are irrelevant because they do not relate to the blog post or to other comments in the thread (Hardaker, 2010: 233). Yet, users do not overtly attribute mental states, such as beliefs or emotions, to the trolls in this case. However, when discussing action (6), users focus on the trolls' suspected attitude towards the blog post and other comments, assuming that the trolls pay no attention to or deliberately disregard others' contributions (Herring et al., 2002: 376). Therefore, users attribute the mental state of indifference towards the blog post or other comments to the trolls when associating action (6) with trolling while they only concentrate on the perceived irrelevance of the trolls' posts in action (4).

(5.26) [guardian_139_10906]

If you had bothered reading the blog before commenting you would know where it [i.e., Labour Party politician Harriet Harman's pink campaign bus] is. Usual uninformed BS [i.e., bullshit] from a troll.

(5.27) [b1_9_75]

szóval szimpla troll vagy. Mert ugye ami nem illik az elméletedbe (én, mi a fejlődés, felújítás ellen vagyok/vagyunk) azt ignorálsz. Egyáltalán nem az a baj, ha épül valami vagy rendbetesznek egy épületet, közteret. Az a baj, ahogy ezt művelik az elvtársaid. A tudatos rombolás mindenhol. Mást ne mondjak a Kossuth tér vagy a Margit-híd szétbarmolása.

'So you're a simple troll. Because you ignore what doesn't fit into your theory (according to which I am/we are against progress and renovation). The problem is obviously not when something is built or

when a building or public space gets sorted out. The problem is how your comrades execute this. The deliberate destruction everywhere. Not to mention other examples, messing up Kossuth Square or Margaret Bridge.’

In Example (5.26), the user argues that the troll’s comment is inappropriate (*uninformed BS*) since the troll has ignored a fact that was mentioned in the original blog post, namely the location of former Labour Party Deputy Leader Harriet Harman’s pink campaign bus that she used during the 2015 General Election campaign to address female voters. The past conditional [*if you had bothered reading the blog before commenting*] implies that in the commenter’s view, the troll has disregarded the above information because he did not read the blog post, suggesting that the user expects others to read the blog post before commenting and to take heed of the information posted (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 362).

The clause *ami nem illik az elméletedbe (én, mi a fejlődés, felújítás ellen vagyok/vagyunk) azt ignorárod* (‘you ignore what doesn’t fit into your theory (according to which I am/we are against progress and renovation)’) in Example (5.27) accuses the troll of ignoring the fact that the user did not argue against renovation projects in general but specifically criticised the way in which these projects are executed in Budapest. Thus, while Example (5.26) focused on the trolls’ perceived indifference towards the original blog post, Example (5.27) demonstrates that users also perceive trolls to deliberately disregard other comments (Herring et al., 2002: 376).

(5.28) [guardian_137_1385]

Oh come off it. Multiple times I’ve seen you spout ‘Labour and the Tories are the same’ rhetoric, and multiple times I’ve seen people provide detailed responses pointing out that the two parties are further apart than they have been for 30 years. You never engage with these responses. You just move on to the next thread and continue posting the same tired old spiel. If you can’t be bothered to engage in discussion they [sic] you are just trolling. Go back to Wings Over Scotland.

(5.29) [wingoverscotland_67_353]

[Username] has his answer but, as ever, he does not even realise he has been answered: or he ignores the fact that he has been answered.

He is a troll: ignore

(5.30) [varanusz_64_325]

“Viszont unióon kívülről valóban ne áramoljanak ide tömegek.” Khm se te, se más trollolo nem válaszolt az első kommentemben feltett kérdésre: daher pierre fideszes képviselő úr is meg lett kérdezve erről? tudod, libanoni bevándorló, és magyar orvosok elől veszi el magánpraxisával a kenyeret. megélhetési bevándorló.

““But masses indeed shouldn’t swarm here from outside the [European] Union.” Er, **neither you nor any other troll has answered the question I asked in my first comment:** Has Fidesz MP Mr Pierre Daher been asked about this? You know, he is a Lebanese immigrant, and he takes the Hungarian doctors’ living with his private practice. He is an economic immigrant.’

Examples (5.28)–(5.30) illustrate three common situations where users perceive trolls to ignore others’ comments. In Example (5.28), the user argues that the troll fails to respond to the criticism that one of his earlier claims has received. The clause *I’ve seen you spout ‘Labour and the Tories are the same’ rhetoric* specifies the troll’s original statement. The clause *I’ve seen people provide detailed responses* then notes that the troll’s statement has been widely criticised for being untrue. Finally, the clauses *[y]ou never engage with these responses* and *[y]ou just move on to the next thread* indicate that instead of reflecting on the criticism received, the accused troll leaves the thread altogether but remains active in other threads, which suggests that the alleged troll deliberately ignores the comments his statement has triggered (Herring et al., 2002: 376). As the sentence *[i]f you can’t be bothered to engage in discussion they [sic] you are just trolling* contrasts the normative behaviour of ‘engaging in discussion’ with trolling, it suggests that the user expects others to respond to those who criticise their comments. Thus, this sentence reinforces the idea that users may construct interactional norms by associating discursive actions with non-normative behaviours, such as trolling.

In Example (5.29), the user points out that the troll fails to pay attention to the answers that other commenters have given to his earlier question. The sentence *he does not even realise he has been answered or he ignores the fact that he has been answered* gives two possible explanations as to why the troll does not react to these answers. The main difference between the two explanations is that they attribute different mental states to the troll. According to the first clause, the troll is not aware of the fact that the answers exist whereas the second clause suggests that he is but he decided to deliberately ignore them. Thus, only the second clause implies conscious decision-making. Interestingly, whilst Example (5.29) criticises the troll for ignoring others' comments, the user advises others to ignore the troll's contribution. This shows that those who call others trolls may engage in the same communicative actions that they associate with trolling. Especially if they believe that the trolls' inappropriate behaviour justifies their own actions (Cook et al., 2018: 3337). Therefore, although users depict trolling as a non-normative behaviour, there is in fact no clear line between the actions that the alleged trolls and those who call others trolls engage in (Cruz, Seo, & Rex, 2018: 24).

Finally, Example (5.30) suggests that trolls ignore not only the answers their questions receive but also others' questions. The clause *daher pierre fideszes képviselő úr is meg lett kérdezve erről?* ('has Fidesz MP Mr Pierre Daher been asked about this?') refers back to a question the commenter asked in his first comment while the clause *se te, se más trollolo nem válaszolt az első kommentemben feltett kérdésre* ('neither you nor any other troll has answered the question I asked in my first comment') points out that the trolls active in the thread have failed to answer this question.

5.4.2. Trolling action (7): giving vague or evasive answers

The seventh trolling action relates to the perceived vagueness and evasiveness of the answers that trolls give to the questions directed at them. Users suggest that in question-answer sequences, trolls tend to post oblique replies to questions, which do not count as appropriate answers since they do not give the information requested in the questions. This is one of those actions that have not been associated with trolling in the academic literature. As questions can be conceptualised as requests for information, when trolls avoid giving direct answers to questions, they are perceived to minimise the information they share in the thread.

The seventh trolling action is closely related to actions (4) and (6) but there are some crucial differences between these. The key difference between actions (4) and (7) is that when associating action (4) with trolling, users stress that trolls post irrelevant comments (Hardaker, 2013: 69) whereas action (7) does not imply that the trolls' answers would be completely irrelevant. Instead, it suggests that trolls technically address other users' questions but they fail to answer them directly, which renders these answers inappropriate but not entirely irrelevant. Similarly, the main difference between actions (6) and (7) is that when attributing action (6) to the trolls, users argue that the trolls completely ignore others' contribution (Herring et al., 2002: 376), such as their questions as discussed in Example (5.30). However, action (7) does not imply that the trolls ignore others' questions. It instead points out that trolls do reply to questions but not in the way users expect them to.

(5.31) [w_14_1611]

Egy troll sohasem fog egyenes kérdésre egyenes választ adni. De ha adna, annak sem lenne semmi jelentősége.

'A troll will never give a straight answer to a straight question. But even if he did, that wouldn't matter at all.'

(5.32) [wingsoverscotland_29_169]

Can I take it [username] is a troll? Each time I read this sort of nonsense I ask the simple question. Can we launch a nuclear strike against the US using Trident? If not, it's not an independent deterrent. Still waiting for an answer that amounts to more than abusive comments. And if you are going to launch insults, might be best if you can get your spelling right. Hope you're not in charge of inputting data when the missiles are fired.

The negative statement [*e*]gy troll sohasem fog egyenes kérdésre egyenes választ adni ('a troll will never give a straight answer to a straight question') in Example (5.31) argues that when facing direct questions, trolls tend to only give indirect answers. Notably, this sentence only suggests that trolls give vague answers to questions but it does not imply that they completely ignore questions and avoid answering them altogether as Example (5.30) did. Furthermore, as the sentence associates vague

answers with trolling, it also constructs specific and informative answers as appropriate comments in the threads of political blogs.

In Example (5.32), the commenter first suggests that another user is a troll (*[c]an I take it [username] is a troll?*) and he specifies the polar question that he wants others to answer (*[c]an we launch a nuclear strike against the US using Trident?*). The sentence *[s]till waiting for an answer that amounts to more than abusive comments* then suggests that instead of giving a concrete yes-no answer to this question, the troll has engaged in personal abuse (Donath, 1999: 47). As it will be discussed in Subsection 5.5.2, personal abuse is a communicative action that users associate with trolling in its own right (Coleman, 2012: 112). However, as the above sentence frames abuse as a discursive technique the troll employs to evade the question, it constructs abuse as an evasive and thus inappropriate answer to the question mentioned in Example (5.32).

5.4.3. Trolling action (8): refusing to engage in meaningful argumentation

The eighth trolling action relates to the perceived lack of appropriate argumentative techniques in the trolls' comments (Synnott et al., 2017: 74). Users suggest that trolls minimise the amount of relevant information they share in their comments (Dlala et al., 2014: 1) as they do not give evidence or form arguments to support their statements. Users also accuse the trolls of rejecting others' statements without justifying their criticism (Herring et al., 2002: 376). Thus, users depict the trolls' comments as a set of unsupported statements devoid of argumentation (Synnott et al., 2017: 74) and portray trolls as individuals unable/unwilling to engage in evidence-based debate, demonstrating that users expect others to argue for their own statements and argue against others' assertions if they overtly disagree with them.

(5.33) [guardian_41_1918]

*I have never claimed that it has been implemented. Please stop lying and **provide evidence to back up your claims or you are condemning yourself as a nationalist troll**. Sharing the general intelligence level and honesty of the worst nationalists throughout history.*

[The pronoun *it* in the first sentence refers to David Cameron's, Ed Miliband's, and Nick Clegg's joint promise ('the Vow') that the Scottish Parliament would be given new powers, including the right to

decide how much is spent on the NHS in Scotland, if Scotland remains in the UK.]

(5.34) [tenytar_28_122]

*lehet, az én böngészőmmel van a baj, de valahogy **nem jelentek meg benne a hozzászólásodban felsorolt érvek, amivel vélelmedet alátámasztottad.** Mert, gondolom, írtál ilyeneket, **nem pedig egy agyalágyult trollként ideköpted bármiféle ismeret nélkül alkotott véleményedet félrészegen***

‘The problem might lie with my web browser but the arguments you backed up your assertion with somehow didn’t appear in it. Because, I presume, you wrote such things **instead of half-drunkenly spouting your opinion formed without any knowledge whatsoever like a brainless troll.**’

In Examples (5.33) and (5.34), the users accuse trolls of making untrue or unreasonable statements without justifying them (Morrissey, 2010: 75). In Example (5.33), the user first points out that contrary to the troll’s assertion, the user did not claim that David Cameron’s, Ed Miliband’s, and Nick Clegg’s promise of giving more legislative powers to the Scottish Parliament if Scotland remains in the UK has since been implemented. The clause *[p]lease stop lying* implies that in the commenter’s view, the troll is aware of this but decided to deliberately misrepresent what the commenter posted (Herring et al., 2002: 376). However, the imperative *provide evidence to back up your claims or you are condemning yourself as a nationalist troll* indicates that the user criticises the troll not only for making an untrue and dishonest statement but also for not supporting his claim with evidence.

Similarly, the noun phrase *bármiféle ismeret nélkül alkotott véleményedet* (‘your opinion formed without any knowledge whatsoever’) in Example (5.34) depicts the troll’s opinion as uninformed and unreasonable (Maltby et al., 2016: 461). However, the clause *nem jelentek meg benne a hozzászólásodban felsorolt érvek, amivel vélelmedet alátámasztottad* (‘the arguments you backed up your assertion with somehow didn’t appear in it [i.e., in the user’s web browser]’) demonstrates that the user considers the troll’s comment to be inappropriate not only because the troll made an unreasonable statement but also because he did not justify this statement with arguments.

(5.35) [guardian_53_7083]

*Clearly **your response** to anything positive is **simply to decry it & dismiss out of hand without giving any reason or explanation for doing so**. **Trolling I think is what it's called**. Well done.*

(5.36) [w_1_637]

*tehát **meg sem kísérelted bebizonyítani, hogy miért nem helytálló**. **ennek egy oka van, hogy nincs önálló gondolat, vélemény**, csak az ostoba kekeckedés. [username], te menekülsz az érdemi véleménynyilvánítás elől, mert **egy ostoba troll vagy**. ezt úgy hívják, hogy totális szellemi kapituláció, [username].*

*'So **you are not even trying to prove why it** [i.e., the commenter's prediction that Fidesz will lose the next general election in Hungary] **isn't sound**. **This is only because there is no independent thought or opinion**, only foolish taunting. [Username], you're running away from expressing your actual opinion because **you are a witless troll**. This is called total intellectual capitulation, [username].'*

In Examples (5.35) and (5.36), the users focus on those instances where the trolls are characterised as condemning other users' statements without justifying their criticism (Herring et al., 2002: 376). The first sentence of Example (5.35) points out that the troll does not explain why he disagrees with some of the statements others have posted in the thread. This is expressed by the prepositional phrases *out of hand* and *without giving any reason or explanation*. The second sentence then depicts the inappropriate discursive action of expressing disagreement without arguing against the statements one disagrees with as trolling.

Similarly, the negative statement *meg sem kísérelted bebizonyítani, hogy miért nem helytálló* ('*you are not even trying to prove why it* [i.e., the user's prediction that Fidesz will lose the next general election in Hungary] *isn't sound*') in Example (5.36) criticises the troll not for disagreeing with the commenter but for not giving counter-arguments that would back up his disapproving remark (Synnott et al., 2017: 74). The clauses *ennek egy oka van, hogy nincs önálló gondolat, vélemény* ('this is only because there is no independent thought or opinion'), *te menekülsz az érdemi véleménynyilvánítás elől*

(‘you’re running away from expressing your actual opinion’), and *ezt úgy hívják, hogy totális szellemi kapituláció* (‘this is called total intellectual capitulation’) then portray the troll as someone who is unable to form and express his views, implying that the troll does not defend his point because he is intellectually incapable of doing so, which renders him intellectually inferior to the user whose claim he has rejected (Coles & West, 2016b: 240).

5.4.4. Trolling action (9): refusing to share any personal information

The ninth trolling action relates to the perceived lack of personal information the trolls share about themselves (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6945). Users argue that trolls maximise their anonymity in the threads by withholding personal information, such as their legal names, social media profiles, and previous comments in other threads (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364). Therefore, those users who associate action (9) with trolling depict the sharing of personal information as an appropriate discursive action in the threads. As Examples (5.37) and (5.38) illustrate, users associate withholding personal information with trolling typically on those blogs that use third-party commenting systems, such as a Facebook or Disqus comment plugin, which require or at least allow participants to use their social media accounts for posting.

(5.37) [kettosmerce_10_371]

[Username] Megint csak troll, kamuprofíl, fénykép nincs, névjegy üres, 6 ismerős. Ugyan, már miért is vitatkoznék egy elefánttal?

‘[Username] is just another troll, fake profile, no picture, “about” section is empty, 6 friends. Why on earth would I argue with an elephant?’

[The user refers to the troll as an ‘elephant’ because his username includes the word *elefánt* ‘elephant’.]

In Example (5.37), the commenter calls another user a troll, pointing out that the troll uses a fake Facebook profile without a profile picture or personal introduction and has an unusually low number of friends. The noun *elefánttal* (‘with an elephant’) also refers to the troll’s Facebook name, indicating that the user criticises the troll for not using his legal name. Importantly, the question *[u]gyan, már miért is vitatkoznék egy elefánttal?* (‘why on earth would I argue with an elephant?’) portrays the troll as an illegitimate

user who is not worth arguing with because he is devoid of transparency due to the lack of personal information on his Facebook profile (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 360).

The reason why the user focuses on the alleged troll's Facebook profile is that *Kettős Mérce*, the blog where Example (5.37) was posted, uses a Facebook comment plugin and thus, participants can only post comments through their Facebook accounts. Consequently, while commenters only use a username and are in fact semi-anonymous to other participants on most blogs analysed in this thesis, *Kettős Mérce* commenters make their personal information available to one another via their Facebook profiles and as Example (5.37) illustrates, failing to do so can be perceived as a sign of trolling (Coles & West, 2016a: 46).

(5.38) [labourlist_1_269]

*I don't think it's being anonymous so much as **hiding posting histories**, because whether it's justified or not **a hidden history still indicates that a poster may be a political troll who is unwilling to let people see activity patterns and consistency**. Unfair in many cases I'm sure, but **a legitimate cause for concern for many people** regardless.*

The clause *a hidden [posting] history still indicates that a poster may be a political troll* in Example (5.38) suggests that trolls tend to hide their posting histories on Disqus, which is the comment hosting service *LabourList* uses. As the next clause *who is unwilling to let people see activity patterns and consistency* explains, the user believes that the trolls refuse others to see their previous comments in other threads because those would expose the trolls' recurring discursive actions, which would make their trolling activity in the current thread less efficient. However, the commenter does not claim that all users who hide their previous comments are trolls. Nevertheless, the noun phrase *a legitimate cause for concern for many people* depicts the practice of hiding one's comment history as an inappropriate action, suggesting that trolls can make use of the relative anonymity created by a hidden comment history (Binns, 2012: 547) and thus, users who wish to demonstrate that they are not trolls should let others see their earlier comments.

5.5. Trolling activity (III): flaming

The third trolling activity is flaming (Hutchens et al., 2015: 1204), which is primarily directed at the participants' personal relations (Herring et al., 2002: 380). Users suggest that when engaging in flaming, trolls maximise the level of disagreement and personal conflict among participants (Hopkinson, 2013: 7). This also shows that although Herring et al. (2002) and Dynel (2016) describe trolling and flaming as two distinct yet equally complex behaviours, users conceptualise flaming as only one of the four main ways in which trolling may manifest itself, suggesting that, at least in the users' view, flaming is a less diverse behaviour than trolling (Cheng et al., 2017: 1218; Cook et al., 2018: 3335).

Flaming as a perceived trolling activity includes four actions: (1) making or supporting statements and arguments perceived as untrue, potentially misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian, (2) directly belittling, insulting, threatening, harassing, or otherwise attacking other participants, (3) asking personal or loaded questions, and (4) using language perceived as "incorrect" or "inappropriate". These four actions are discussed in Subsections 5.5.1–5.5.4.

5.5.1. Trolling action (10): making statements and arguments perceived as untrue, potentially misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian

The tenth trolling action relates to the perceived inappropriateness of the statements and arguments the trolls make. Users argue that trolls are bad debaters, who post untrue (Morrissey, 2010: 75), potentially misleading (Donath, 1999: 47), unreasonable (Hardaker, 2013: 73), or contrarian (Hopkinson, 2013: 10) statements. Trolls are also accused of committing various fallacies in argumentation (Walton, 1989: 16), such as *hasty generalisation* (Walton, 1999), *false dichotomy* (Tomic, 2013), *undistributed middle* (Tindale, 2005), *false analogy* (Walton, 1989: 260–263), *straw man argument* (Macagno & Walton, 2017), and *appeal to common practice* (Walton et al., 2008: 314), thus maximising the amount of inappropriate statements and fallacies in their comments.

5.5.1.1. Factually incorrect and potentially misleading statements

Examples (5.39)–(5.44) demonstrate that although, as discussed in Chapter 2, the academic literature on trolling focuses on the factually incorrect (Tepper, 1997: 40) or potentially misleading statements (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364) the trolls make, users in both the British and Hungarian corpora also associate unreasonable and contrarian claims with trolling while those accused of trolling argue that users regard the expression of simple disagreement as trolling (Hopkinson, 2013: 10). When analysing Examples (5.39)–(5.44), I point out the differences between the factually incorrect, potentially misleading, unreasonable, and contrarian statements that users attribute to the trolls but I overall argue that users do not always make a clear distinction between these statement types and this is why I discuss these in the same section.

(5.39) [1000amihazank_28_518]

“te ugyanígy mondod, hogy a magyar gazdaság mennyit fejlődött 1925 után” Te azt állítottad hogy “a kiegyezés után az első [világ]háborúig talán igen, de utána nem”. Megmutattam hogy ez nem igaz: hogy ismét csak trollkodtál.

“You also say that the Hungarian economy improved a lot after 1925.”
You claimed that “it maybe did after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 until the First [World] War but it didn’t improve later.” I have shown that this is not true: that you were just trolling again.’

In Example (5.39), the user refers back to a statement (*a kiegyezés után az első háborúig talán igen, de utána nem* (‘[the Hungarian economy] maybe improved after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 until the First [World] War but it didn’t improve later’)) that the troll made and points out that this statement is untrue. As economic growth is measurable, the troll’s claim can be considered a factual statement that can be falsified by counter-evidence. The sentence *[m]egmutattam hogy ez nem igaz: hogy ismét csak trollkodtál* (‘I have shown that this is not true: that you were just trolling again’) associates untrue statements with trolling (Llevellyn et al., 2018: 361) but without implying that the troll is aware of the fact that he is factually incorrect. Thus, the comment only condemns the troll for making a false statement but it does not portray him as a dishonest individual who is deliberately lying.

(5.40) [leftfootforward_59_51]

There is nothing particular [sic] odd about Oxford's range of shops. But you are insisting that there is. Because you're just a trolling weirdo who probably hasn't got much else to do. Oxford has all the main supermarkets, in all the sizes. The high street is busy and bustling. It has a Waterstones bookshop and a McDonald's and has all the kinds of chain stores that all towns and high streets have. Why you are making a point that it's somehow different to other such towns I don't know. Just to be an arse I presume.

A key difference between Examples (5.39) and (5.40) is that Example (5.39) focuses on a factually untrue statement the troll made whereas Example (5.40) is concerned with a potentially misleading opinion-based claim. In Example (5.40), the user criticises the troll for claiming that Oxford has an unusual range of shops compared to other similar towns. The user first contrasts his opinion with the troll's assertion in the first two sentences, indicating that he disagrees with the troll. He then argues that Oxford has all the supermarkets and chain stores common in other English towns, implying that the troll's statement is misleading since it ignores the overwhelming similarities between Oxford's shops and those present in other towns. However, the adjectival phrases *particular[ly] odd* in the first sentence and *somehow different* in the seventh sentence suggest that the comment depicts the troll's claim not as a factual statement but as a subjective assessment of the range of shops Oxford offers. Thus, the comment points out that the troll's claim gives a misleading picture of Oxford's shops but it does not imply that it is factually incorrect (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364).

(5.41) [ataszjelenti_8_53]

*Igen, az én véleményem. Ki másé lenne? Hol írtam hogy "nem engedem meg" hogy másnak más véleménye legyen? **Miért teszel úgy mintha ilyet írtam volna? Troll vagy?***

'Yes, this is my opinion. Who else's would it be? Where did I write that "I didn't allow" others to hold a different opinion? **Why are you pretending that this is what I wrote? Are you a troll?**'

Example (5.41) demonstrates that users also accuse the trolls of misrepresenting other commenters' statements and arguments (Hopkinson, 2013: 16). The question [*m]iért teszel úgy mintha ilyet írtam volna?* ('why are you pretending that this is what I wrote?') in Example (5.49) implies that the troll's comment is misleading as it falsely suggests that the user said that he did not allow others to have a different opinion. Therefore, the commenter uses this question to indicate that the troll gave a false account of his earlier comment by attributing a made-up statement to him whereas the question [*t]roll vagy* ('are you a troll') associates the misrepresentation of the commenter's contribution with trolling (Herring et al., 2002: 376).

5.5.1.2. Unreasonable and contrarian statements

Examples (5.41)–(5.43) focus on those comments in which users criticise the trolls for making statements that the users find unreasonable (Hardaker, 2013: 73) or contrarian (Hopkinson, 2013: 13). Due to length constraints, only three examples are discussed in this subsection but users associate a plethora of unreasonable claims with trolling in both corpora. For instance, users suggest that trolls (1) unfairly (hypo)criticise other participants' actions (Binns, 2012: 549), (2) support those perceived as trolls, (3) unfairly criticise political bodies, politicians, or other public figures, and (4) uncritically support or defend political bodies or politicians.

(5.42) [guardian_6_1272]

Nick Clegg will return and the Lib Dems will become the official opposition. I see the comedy act has arrived for the day's trolling. Seriously? They have but 8 MPs.

Example (5.42) demonstrates that users associate not only those statements with trolling that they perceive as untrue or misleading but also those that they consider simply unreasonable (Herring et al., 2002: 375). In the first sentence of Example (5.42), the user quotes a statement from another commenter. The statement suggests that the Liberal Democrats will become the official opposition in the British Parliament after the next general election. As the claim refers to the future, it is not a factual statement or a subjective assessment of the current state of affairs but a prediction.

The second sentence has two functions. The noun phrase *comedy act* suggests that in the user's view, the above prediction is so unreasonable that one would make it only

as a joke while the the noun phrase *the day's trolling* depicts this unreasonable prediction as an act of trolling. The question *[s]eriously?* then reinforces the perceived absurdity of the prediction by implying that the user doubts that one would genuinely believe that the Liberal Democrats will become the official opposition. Finally, the last sentence provides a rationale for the user's assessment by pointing out that the Liberal Democrats have only a handful of MPs.

(5.43) [mandiner_35_159]

“A jobboldal csak a múltban él, nincs reális mondanivalója a polgárok számára az ország és a nemzet jövőjéről.” - De kár ilyen marhaságokkal trollkodnod (ráadásul közvetlenül a szárszói dzseborit követően)

“The right wing completely lives in the past, it doesn't have anything to say to the public about the country's and the nation's future.” – There is no point in **you trolling with this nonsense** (especially directly after the jamboree in Balatonszárszó).’

[The noun phrase *szárszói dzsebori* (‘jamboree in Balatonszárszó’) refers to an annual meeting of dominantly left-wing politicians and intellectuals in the Hungarian village of Balatonszárszó.]

Example (5.43) illustrates that users also suggest that trolls post contrarian statements that contradict the popular opinion on the blog in question (Hopkinson, 2013: 13). In Example (5.42), the user calls the troll's cited statement *marhaság* (‘nonsense’), indicating that he disagrees with the troll's opinion that the Hungarian right wing is unable to offer a future perspective to the Hungarian nation. The noun *marhaság* also suggests that, similarly to Example (5.42), the user finds the troll's statement unreasonable (Golf-Papez & Peer, 2017: 1337). However, considering the fact that *Mandinder*, the blog where the comment was posted, is a right-wing blog, the word *marhaság* also implies that the troll's comment is inappropriate not only because it is generally unreasonable but also because it goes against the view perceived as valid on the blog where it was posted (Hopkinson, 2013: 17).

(5.44.1) [guardian_103_3132]

*Looks like we have a new set of Tory trolls on here today or the same ones with different avatars, **They really are** tiresome, not to mention **incredibly stupid**. Where does Millbank Towers find them?*

[*Millbank Towers* refers to the skyscraper in the City of Westminster where the Conservative Campaign Headquarters was based between 2007 and 2014.]

(5.44.2) [guardian_103_3136]

*You are a typical leftie. **If someone doesn't agree with you they are a Tory troll**. It is you that is rather stupid for **not accepting that people have different opinions and are welcome to express them on CIF**. **Isn't that supposed to be the principle?** It seems that **what you really want is an echo chamber for your own views**.*

[*CIF* denotes the 'Comment is free' section of *The Guardian*.]

(5.44.3) [guardian_103_3138]

***Typical troll** with the same old **tired excuses**.*

Example (5.44) is a sequence of three comments and it demonstrates that disagreeing with others is a discursive action that typically the accused trolls associate with trolling (Hopkinson, 2013: 10). In Example (5.44.1), the first user suggests that some participants are trolls but without specifying whom exactly he regards as such. Although the only action that Example (5.44.1) overtly associates with trolling is posting from more than one account (Binns, 2012: 557), the claim [*the trolls*] are [...] *incredibly stupid* might covertly imply that the first user perceives the trolls' statements as unreasonable (Galán-García et al., 2014: 3).

However, in Example (5.44.2), the second user criticises the first user for calling others trolls merely because they disagree with him. The clauses [*it is you that is rather stupid for not accepting that people have different opinions* and *what you really want is an echo chamber for your own views*] portray the first user as a narrow-minded political bigot, who is unable to tolerate that others' opinions might differ from his own views while the clause [*people*] *are welcome to express them [i.e., their different opinions] on CIF* and the following question [*isn't that supposed to be the principle?*] depict disagreement as the normal state of affairs in the *Guardian* comment threads, suggesting

that those who disagree with the the first commenter obey the local interactional norms but the first commenter violates these by calling others trolls for disagreeing with him. Therefore, the second user associates the expression of disagreement with trolling to point out that the first commenter uses the derogatory label *troll* to unfairly discredit those who disagree with him (Hopkinson, 2013: 10).

Finally, the first commenter calls the second user a troll in Example (5.44.3) as a response to Example (5.44.2). The first commenter uses the noun phrase *tired excuses* to depict the second user's assertion as unreasonable and to imply that he did not call others trolls simply because they made statements that he disagrees with but for other unspecified reasons. Thus, Example (5.44.3) depicts the practice of associating the expression of disagreement with trolling as an unacceptable discursive action trolls employ to reframe trolling as a diminishing label intolerant commenters unjustly use to stigmatise and exclude those otherwise norm-abiding participants they disagree with. Reframing trolling as an unjust stigma given to those who dare to disagree is in fact a powerful discursive device the accused trolls can utilise to discredit those who call them trolls and to portray themselves as legitimate participants. This is because, as illustrated by Examples (5.1)–(5.4), users agree that expressing disagreement is an appropriate discursive action in the comment threads of political blogs.

5.5.1.3. Logical fallacies in argumentation

Beyond the already discussed untrue, potentially misleading, unreasonable, and contrarian statements, users also argue that trolls commit various logical fallacies in argumentation, thus depicting trolling as involving faulty reasoning and portraying the trolls as poor debaters. Examples (5.45)–(5.50) illustrate six fallacies that users associate with trolling in the British and Hungarian corpora. These fallacies are *hasty generalisation*, *false dichotomy*, *undistributed middle*, *false analogy*, *straw man argument*, and *appeal to common practice*. However, there are two further fallacies that I discuss in other sections. These are *argumentum ad nauseam* (Section 5.3.2) and *argumentum ad hominem* (Section 5.5.2).

(5.45) [tenytar_12_420]

oké, megnyerted a nap hülyéje címet, gratulálok, nincs tovább, mára ennyi! minden arab akiről tudsz kivétel nélkül tömeggyilkos, hát ez Pazar Árpikám, ti már komolyan egyenesen a diliházból verbuváljátok a bértrollokat? hová süllyedtek még?

‘Okay, you have won the ‘Idiot of the Day’ title, congratulations. There is nothing more, that’s all for today! **Every single Arab you know of is a mass murderer without exception.** Well, this is amazing, Árpád, my friend. Do you seriously recruit the wage trolls directly from madhouses? What depths will you sink to next?’

[*Árpikám* (‘Árpád, my friend’) refers to Árpád Habony, a political consultant closely associated with Fidesz.]

Example (5.45) focuses on the statement ‘every single Arab is a mass murderer’ the troll made and illustrates that users associate hasty generalisations with trolling. Although the user does not directly assess the troll’s statement, the clauses *megnyerted a nap hülyéje címet* (‘you have won the ‘Idiot of the Day’ title’) and *ti már komolyan egyenesen a diliházból verbuváljátok a bértrollokat?* (‘Do you [i.e., Árpád Habony and his associates] seriously recruit the wage trolls directly from madhouses?’) portray the troll as cognitively impaired (Maltby et al., 2016: 461), implying that this assertion is an unacceptable statement that only someone with cognitive deficits would make. The troll’s criticised statement is inappropriate as it is a hasty generalisation that draws a general conclusion from an insufficiently low number of observations that are also biased. According to its underlying line of reasoning, the fact some mass murderers happen to be Arabs proves that all Arabs are mass murderers, which is factually incorrect as most Arabs are of course not mass murderers.

(5.46) [sluggerotoole_36_46]

*[Username A], [username B] has proven time and time again that he does not understand how elections work. His next step is usually to **make some bigoted comment about Catholics in West Belfast.** Basically, **if you dont vote for SF or the SDLP (I voted for neither, living in East Belfast) you are pro union. His logic is beyond reason, but he trolls away regardless.** You can have fun pointing out **his many mistakes**, he doing exams at the minute but mathematics is obviously not a subject being studied.*

[SF denotes Sinn Féin whereas SDLP stands for the Social Democratic and Labour Party. These are Irish nationalist parties active in Northern Ireland.]

In Example (5.46), the user criticises the perceived troll for suggesting that everyone from Belfast who does not vote Sinn Féin (SF) or the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the two major Irish nationalist parties in Northern Ireland, supports the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The noun phrases *bigoted comment* and *his* [i.e., the troll's] *many mistakes* as well as the clause *his* [i.e., the troll's] *logic is beyond reason* depict the troll's argument as flawed, implying that he committed a logical fallacy. This fallacy is false dichotomy as in the user's view, the troll's statement incorrectly assumes that all nationalists are SF or SDLP voters and consequently all who do not vote these parties are unionists, thus portraying SF/SDLP voters and everyone else as two ideologically distinct groups. However, the user rejects this distinction, suggesting that there are nationalists who are not SF or SDLP voters, which renders the troll's proposed dichotomy invalid.

(5.47) [bellacaledonia_44_156]

*I wish people would stop claiming that **a large vote for the SNP indicates UDI or de facto independence.** We have 3 groups a) Supporters of full independence b) Supporters of the union c) Supporters of a federal UK/More powers etc. A Referendum forces the c) group to face a black and white choice and the group will split depending on the information/disinformation they have been given. A*

Westminster election enables the c) group to move easily towards pro-independence parties such as Greens/SSP/SNP. We have to convince people in group c) of the merits of independence and not insult them by taking their vote for granted. A vote for the SNP in May means nothing more than support for the policies of a political party at Westminster. Misrepresenting these facts means that you are either a blind supporter of independence or a troll trying to scare people off from voting SNP by implying it will lead to Independence. I work hard for the achievement of living in an Independent Scotland but it will be by a Referendum in which my fellow countrymen know fully what they are voting for and NOT by trying to misrepresent a vote for a political party in a Westminster election.

[SNP refers to the Scottish Nationalist Party, UDI stands for ‘Unilateral Declaration of Independence’, and SSP denotes the Scottish Socialist Party.]

In Example (5.47), the user rejects the claim that an overwhelming support of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) by the Scottish electorate in the 2015 UK General Election can be considered a unilateral declaration of independence or de facto independence, suggesting that beyond political fanatics (*‘a blind supporter of independence’*), only trolls would make this statement to discourage people from voting for the SNP. As the user argues, the above statement is misleading since it implies that everyone who votes for the SNP in the General Election would also vote for independence in a Scottish independence referendum while ignoring those SNP voters, referred to as *group c)* in the comment, who only support the devolution of more legislative powers to the Scottish Parliament and thus, might vote to remain in the UK in a referendum. The commenter’s assessment suggests that when making this statement, trolls commit the fallacy of *the undistributed middle* by falsely implying that the fact that independence supporters tend to vote for the SNP means that all SNP voters are independence supporters.

(5.48) [labourlist_147_456]

*Trolls who live in the past- ‘throwbacks’, to use a favourite epithet of theirs. The real reason they are so obsessed with **making bogus 1983 analogies** is that it was when the Tories were at their peak v. [i.e., versus] Labour.*

In Example (5.48), the user criticises the trolls for comparing the current state of the Labour Party to that in 1983. The noun phrase *bogus 1983 analogies* depicts the trolls’ comparison as a *false analogy*, suggesting that the trolls ignore the differences and overemphasise the similarities between the 1983 and 2015 Labour Parties. The second sentence of the comment also points out that the trolls use this false analogy to suggest that similarly to 1983, when the Labour Party suffered their worst election defeat from the Conservative Party since 1918, the Labour Party is in serious crisis, which the user finds unreasonable and disagrees with.

(5.49) [guido_68_258]

*I am not a marxist. I am a libertarian who wants lower taxes, less state, less state intervention, no EU. I would happily obtain my own services via an insurance based scheme- such as schooling, dust bin collection etc. directly without the need for the inefficient state doing these things for me. You see that is a libertarian, not a Marxist. A Marxist wants a bigger state, they see people as zombies who need to be controlled, and advocate high taxes/large state/limited freedom. Basically, Marxism results in hell on Earth.which we are seeing in Greece and other parts of the EU. Yet again, you sound drunk. Please sober up and tell me why I am a marxist when I am a libertarian and **try to not put words into my mouth. You have a habit of stating points I never made and then arguing against them.** Yet no one knows your position on anything. come on **tell us what you believe in other than trolling.***

In Example (5.49), the user argues that contrary to the troll’s assertion, he identifies as a libertarian and not as a Marxist, thus implying that the troll misportrayed his ideological stance (Hopkinson, 2013: 16). The clause *try to not put words into my mouth* suggests that similarly to Example (5.41), the troll misrepresented the user’s earlier comment while the sentence *[y]ou have a habit of stating points I never made and then*

arguing against them depicts the troll's action of distorting the user's statements as a fallacious argumentative tactic by pointing out that the troll never argues against the commenter's actual statements. Instead, the troll attacks claims that he himself fabricated, thus creating a *straw man argument* in which the troll gives a false impression of him refuting the commenter's original statements while he in fact only addresses claims that he invented (Hopkinson, 2013: 16).

(5.50) [varanusz_22_267]

*Mindig ez az egyik utolsó mentsvárunk. A k[e]dvencem az volt, amikor - és előre szólok, hogy ez komolyan megtörtént, nem poénkodok! - azon hírre, hogy a Mészáros Lőrinc-féle cég milyen hanyagul újított fel egy budapesti utca úttestét, ami ráadásul végeredményként a szabályosnál keskenyebb is lett, **egy narancstroll** a lehető legkomolyabb formában **előadta**, hogy a liberálbolsik csak ne ugráljanak, mert **ha abban a kerületben történetesen nem fideszes LENNE a polgármester** (mert az), **hanem mszp-s, akkor is nyilván ELŐFORDULHATNA ugyanez. Tényleg, komolyan. Ez volt az érv.***

'This is always one of their last resorts. My favourite was when, and I'm telling you in advance this is what actually happened, I'm not joking, to the news that Lőrinc Mészáros's company had repaved a street in Budapest without the necessary care and the street had eventually also been made narrower than what the regulations require, **an orange troll told us** in all seriousness that the liberal Bolshies shouldn't have said a word because **if that district had happened to have an MSZP mayor and not a Fidesz one** (because it has a Fidesz mayor), **the same thing could obviously still have happened.** Really, in all seriousness. **This was the argument.**'

[Lőrinc Mészáros is one of the wealthiest Hungarian businessmen and the former Fidesz-supported mayor of Felcsút, Viktor Orbán's home village. Viktor Orbán is the leader of Fidesz, who has been the Hungarian Prime Minister since 2010. Orange is the official colour and (former) symbol of Fidesz. *MSZP* refers to the Hungarian Socialist Party (Magyar Szocialista Párt), a left-wing opposition party.]

Finally, Example (5.50) illustrates that users also associate the fallacy of *appeal to common practice* with trolling. In Example (5.50), the user recalls a news story about a street in Budapest that was repaved improperly and condemns a troll for suggesting that no one should criticise the right-wing Fidesz mayor of the district where the street is because the same thing could also have happened if the district had been led by a left-wing MSZP mayor. The clauses *ez komolyan megtörtént, nem poénkodok* ('this is what actually happened, I'm not joking') and *[t]ényleg, komolyan. [e]z volt az érv* ('really, in all seriousness. this was the argument') depict the troll's argument as unreasonable and unrealistic by stressing that it might be hard to believe but the troll indeed made the above statement.

Although the commenter does not specify why he finds the troll's reasoning flawed, a possible explanation for his assessment is that the troll's statement is unreasonable because it suggests that council-funded construction projects are generally poorly executed and thus, the current mayor is not responsible for the mistakes made in this particular project, despite the fact that the project was completed during his term. Therefore, the troll commits the fallacy of appeal to common practice when making this statement to deny the Fidesz mayor's responsibility for the shortcomings of the project.

5.5.2. Trolling action (11): directly attacking others

The eleventh trolling action relates to the perceived offensive nature of the trolls' comments (Coleman, 2012: 112). Users suggest that instead of engaging in reasoned debate and showing respect towards other commenters, trolls directly belittle, insult, threaten, harass, or otherwise attack others (Hardaker, 2013: 80), thus maximising personal conflict among participants (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366). Users therefore depict trolling as an aggressive behaviour (Hopkinson, 2013: 7) and portray the trolls as abusers (Lumsden & Morgan, 2017: 936) when associating action (11) with trolling.

(5.51) [vastagbor_6_236]

*[Original poster]! Miért nem basszátok már ki innen [username]? Abszolút látszik, hogy **semmi másért nem jár ide, csak trollkodni**. Nem azért kell kidobni, mert véleménykülönbség van, hanem mert idejön, pofátlanul hazudik minden szavával, ignorál mindenkit, majd **minden második szavával sérteget mindenkit**. Ez volna a normális viselkedés itt?*

‘[Original poster]! Why don’t you just get rid of [username] already? It’s absolutely clear that **he only comes here to troll**. He needs to be thrown out not because there is disagreement but because he comes here, he tells blatant lies with his every word, he ignores everyone and then **he insults everyone with his every second word**. Would this be the normal behaviour on here?’

(5.52) [labourlist_83_31]

Again nothing specific, basically your argument is that he has different political views to you therefore he’s a nutter. I’m giving you the benefit of the doubt that your [sic] just a troll, because if your [sic] not and you truly think that way you really are dim

Examples (5.51) and (5.52) demonstrate that users associate verbal abuse with trolling (Lumsden & Morgan, 2017: 928). In Example (5.51), the user calls the original poster to account for not banning another user from the Hungarian blog *Vastagbőr*. The user then argues that the other user should be prevented from posting further comments as he constantly engages in three non-normative actions, including verbal harassment (*minden második szavával sérteget mindenkít* (‘he insults everyone with his every second word’)), that the commenter associates with trolling (*semmi másért nem jár ide, csak trollkodni* (‘he only comes here to troll’)). The question *[e]z volna a normális viselkedés itt?* (‘would this be the normal behaviour on here?’) contrasts trolling with the appropriate behaviour that the commenter expects others to follow, thus depicting trolling as a set of non-normative actions (Cheng et al., 2017: 1218). However, the user also points out that he does not criticise the troll for disagreeing with others, suggesting that he sees disagreement as an essential part of reasoned debate.

In Example (5.52), the user condemns the troll for demeaning another user’s cognitive abilities by calling that user a *nutter*. A crucial difference between Examples (5.51) and (5.52) is that in Example (5.51), the user merely lists verbal insult as a trolling action (Saka, 2018: 169) whereas Example (5.52) frames name-calling not only as a trolling action but also as a fallacious argumentative device (Walton, 1989). This is because the sentence *your argument is that he has different political views to you therefore he’s a nutter* implies that, by calling another participant a nutter, the troll commits the fallacy of *argumentum ad hominem* (Walton, 1989: 134–171) as instead of

challenging the other user's political beliefs, the troll directly insults him in order to personally discredit him.

(5.53) [guardian_64_6212]

*You do realize we can all see **your posting history** and its [sic] **constant copy paste trolling based on fact free attacks that all your opponents are evil and shouty?** When you actually put down anything worth arguing with and realize the irony of **a troll screaming for 50 odd comments that everyone who disagrees with you is a mean troll** - then people will respond to you differently.*

Similarly to Examples (5.51)–(5.52), the user associates personal attacks directed at others commenters with trolling in Example (5.53) (*trolling based on fact free attacks that all your opponents are evil and shouty*). However, the user also criticises the troll for calling those who disagree with him trolls, thus depicting the action of calling others trolls as a personal attack and suggesting that not only otherwise cooperative participants but also perceived trolls engage in this offensive action (Mihaylov et al. 2015: 313).

Example (5.53) also illustrates that it would be problematic to define *trolling* based on the actions that users attribute to the alleged trolls (Hardaker, 2013: 82). This is because if we deemed all 'troll-callers' to be trolls themselves only because some users argue that trolls also accuse others of trolling, then our definition of trolling would be based on the assertions of those whom we recognise as trolls. However, as discussed in Section 5.5.1, users portray trolls as untrustworthy, which means that our definition would be of no practical or theoretical use as it would rely on unreliable sources.

(5.54.1) [wingsoverscotland_99_1892]

*[Username]: OK [username], I've tried normal conversational language format, but you seem incapable of basic understanding and comprehension. **Another classic hallmark of the troll – boosting self-importance by demeaning all others.** Its [sic] the 55% that are your problem. Crap grammar aside, but the problem is yours and others of EDL, BNP 'unionist' affiliation. The figure is too close to 50% to relax, the reason you persist in dropping by to belittle posters.*

[*EDL* refers to the English Defence League, a far-right street protest movement whereas *BNP* stands for the British National Party, a far-right political party.]

(5.54.2) [wingsoverscotland_99_1914]

... and “***Another classic hallmark of the troll – boosting self-importance by demeaning all others.***” in which case [username], ***you must have a doctorate in trolling!***

Example (5.54) demonstrates that although those who call others trolls attempt to distinguish themselves from the alleged trolls (Coles & West, 2016b: 240), the ‘troll-callers’ and the alleged trolls do not form two separate groups in the analysed comment threads (Cruz, Seo, & Rex, 2018: 24). This is because there are several instances where commenters mutually refer to each other as trolls and accuse each other of engaging in the same non-normative actions (Cook et al., 2018: 3332).

In Example (5.54.1), the first user criticises the second user for being unable or unwilling to comprehend his previous comments (*you seem incapable of basic understanding and comprehension*) and for disparaging other participants (*demeaning all others* and *you persist in dropping by to belittle posters*). The sentence [*a*]nother classic hallmark of the troll – boosting self-importance by demeaning all others also implies that the first user considers the second user to be a troll and suggests that trolls tend to verbally degrade others, thus depicting trolling as involving attempts at humiliation (Tsantarliotis et al., 2017: 1).

In his response, the second user neither rejects the first user’s assertion of him being a troll, nor does he deny that he belittled others. However, he quotes the above sentence from Example (5.54.1) and portrays the first user as a hypocritical troll who condemns him for belittling others but is nonetheless guilty of the same offence as he also demeans the second user by calling him a troll (Mihaylov et al., 2015: 313). The clause *you must have a doctorate in trolling* might also imply that in the second user’s view, the first user is even more guilty of trolling than himself.

5.5.3. Trolling action (12): asking personal or loaded questions

The twelfth trolling action relates to the questions that the trolls ask (Turner et al., 2005). Users argue that instead of putting forward thoughtful questions that bear on the ongoing discussion, trolls ask personal questions designed to elicit personal information from others and loaded questions that are based on untrue or unreasonable implicit assumptions (Utz, 2005: 50). As the trolls' personal questions may reduce the anonymity of the targeted users (Paananen & Reichl, 2019: 152) whereas their loaded questions may demean or unfairly criticise other participants (Hardaker, 2013: 71), users suggest that trolls trigger or escalate personal conflicts among participants with these inappropriate questions (March, 2019: 133).

(5.55) [1000amihazank_37_2321]

Nincs szándékomban lelki tanácsod adni. A kérdéseim arra irányultak, hogy mutass valamit magadból, ami trollkodás céljából felhasználható ellened. Ha már egyszer Te magad ezt a módszert követed.

‘I have no intention of giving you any emotional advice. **My questions were aimed at getting something personal from you that can be used against you for the purposes of trolling.** Given that **this is the method you yourself also follow.**’

In Example (5.55), the user suggests that trolls ask personal questions in order to obtain potentially sensitive personal information about other participants that they can later exploit when trolling these participants (Paananen & Reichl, 2019: 152). Thus, the commenter depicts the trolls' personal questions as malicious discursive devices that the trolls employ to provoke others into exposing themselves to personal abuse (Hopkinson, 2013: 7). As the sentence [*a*] *kérdéseim arra irányultak, hogy mutass valamit magadból, ami trollkodás céljából felhasználható ellened* (‘my questions were aimed at getting something personal from you that can be used against you for the purposes of trolling’) refers to the commenter’s own questions, Example (5.55) also demonstrates that participants occasionally identify themselves as trolls (Saka, 2018: 164). However, the clause [*t*] *e magad ezt a módszert követed* (‘this is the method you yourself also follow’) also portrays the addressee as a troll who asks personal questions designed to disempower others, thus framing the user’s self-confessed trolling as a

reasonable counter-attack in which the user merely turns the addressee's own strategy against him (Coles & West, 2016b: 239).

(5.56) [labourlist_51_499]

Ask me another loaded question sad Tory Troll. Like, when did you stop beating your wife.

Examples (5.56) and (5.57) illustrate the loaded questions that users associate with trolling (Utz, 2005: 50). In Example (5.56), the user accuses the troll of asking him loaded questions and gives a specific example but he does not explain why he considers the question *when did you stop beating your wife [?]* to be loaded. The most likely explanation is that the commenter finds the above question inappropriate because it falsely implies that the commenter is guilty of domestic abuse, thus portraying him as an immoral and violent husband, irrespective of his reply (Tsantarliotis et al., 2017: 1). It is also worth noting that although the verb phrase *[a]sk me another loaded question* suggests that the troll posted at least one loaded question in the thread, Example (5.56) does not imply that the troll did indeed ask the user when he had stopped beating his wife. In fact, if we consider that for instance, Walton (1989: 29) refers to the above spouse-beating question as a classic example of loaded questions, it is likely that the commenter only uses it to point out that the troll's previous questions are based on untrue or unreasonable assumptions and are designed to personally discredit him. Unfortunately, as the troll's comments were deleted from the thread, it remains unclear whether the spouse-beating question in Example (5.56) refers back to one of the troll's previous comments or it is only mentioned to exemplify loaded questions in general.

(5.57) [wingsoverscotland_3_808]

*Ah, well done, [username A]! You outed **the troll who asks on this site why people are being so 'beastly' to him, when abuse is banned.** I have the same objection to [username B]. To his ego we here are ants to be crushed. **The boring [username C, the troll], caught wearing a policeman's uniform when in reality he's nothing more than an unemployed toilet brush.** Hope you enjoy this: [URL]*

In Example (5.57), the commenter praises A for pointing out that C is a troll, implying that he agrees with A's assessment of C's discursive behaviour. The noun phrase *the troll who asks on this site why people are being so 'beastly' to him, when abuse is banned* refers back to a question the troll posted but similarly to Example (5.56), the commenter does not explain why he associates this question with trolling. A possible explanation is that the commenter finds this question inappropriate because it falsely implies that other users are bullies who verbally abuse C and thus, violate the local interactional norms that prohibit personal abuse. Consequently, Example (5.57) suggests that the troll used a loaded question to demean other users by unfairly criticising their discursive behaviour (Hardaker, 2013: 71).

5.5.4. Trolling action (13): using “incorrect” or “inappropriate” language

The thirteenth trolling action relates to the trolls' language (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 365). Users argue that trolls employ spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, or grammar that they perceive as “incorrect” or “inappropriate” (Baraniuk, 2017: 241), thus denouncing the troll's language as unacceptable and portraying the trolls as non-normative or incompetent language users (Baker 2001). Users also suggest that the trolls' non-normative language may annoy or even personally insult others and consequently, they depict it as a means of creating or amplifying personal conflict among participants (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 258). Examples (5.58)–(5.61) illustrate the four main areas of language, including spelling, punctuation, grammar, and vocabulary, that trolls are criticised for whereas Table 5.2 gives an overview of the specific linguistic features that are associated with trolling in the troll action comments.

(5.58) [guardian_45_6472]

*Ha! I won that one. You couldn't hold a candle up. And seriously, go back to school. **Your grammar, spelling and general command of English are appalling.** You're in good company though, **most of the Tory trolls on here are exactly the same.** See ya.*

(5.59) [labourlist_371_1075]

Three exclamation marks and two question marks in a row. Sign of an excitable baby troll.

Examples (5.58) and (5.59) demonstrate that although when criticising the trolls' language, users inevitably make a subjective distinction between what language is appropriate and what is not in their view, this distinction may remain implicit in their comments as users do not necessarily specify the exact linguistic features that they find inappropriate and even if they do, they do not always explain why they disapprove those features.

In Example (5.58), the user condemns another participant's grammar, spelling, and general command of English as 'appalling', suggesting that the user finds the addressee's language unacceptable. The user then also points out that most Tory trolls active in the comment thread are also guilty of using inappropriate language, thus associating "substandard" language with trolling (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 362). However, as the user does not specify what particular linguistic features he finds inappropriate, his assessment of the addressee's and the trolls' language remains not only subjective but vague as well.

Contrary to Example (5.58), Example (5.59) focuses on a particular area of language use as the user associates the repetition of exclamation and question marks with trolling. The noun phrase *excitable baby troll* portrays the troll as immature and emotionally unstable (Herring et al., 2002: 379), implying that the commenter considers the overuse of punctuation marks to be inappropriate in the troll's comments. Although the commenter does not explain why he disapproves of the excessive use of punctuation marks, a possible explanation is that repeated punctuation marks might be perceived as overly emotional, scornful, or even aggressive (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 258) and thus, their frequent use can create tension among participants.

(5.60) [wingoverscotland_108_2129]

There it is. For all to see. It was worth it [username], (using the word 'fucking') just to see the bile, for what it truly is. A fully naked Troll, exposing himself. Result?

(5.61) [b1_8_337]

Ez a "hithű liberós" valami sértés akar lenni a fidesztrolloktól? Vagy az 1 csordába való tartozás bizonygatása? Pár éve még komcsiztatok balfaszok.

‘Is this **“faithful libtard”** supposed to be some sort of insult **from the Fidesz trolls**? Or is it to demonstrate that you are in the same bunch? You used to call us ‘Commies’ just a couple of years ago, assholes.’

Examples (5.60) and (5.61) relate to the trolls’ vocabulary. In Example (5.60), the commenter criticises the troll for using the word *fucking*, a common English expletive. The infinitive phrase *just to see the bile* also suggests that in the commenter’s view, the troll resorts to profanity in order to elicit anger and potentially offensive responses from others, thus depicting swearing as a provocative discursive strategy directly aimed at other participants (Cheng et al., 2015: 3).

However, while Herring et al. (2002), Shachaf & Hara (2010), and Cheng et al. (2015, 2017) mostly focus on swearing when discussing the trolls’ language, Example (5.61) demonstrates that users associate not only common expletives but also context-specific, politics-related lexical items with trolling. In Example (5.61), the user suggests that the Hungarian expression *hithű liberós* (approx. ‘faithful libtard’) might be a derogatory term for liberals, favoured by the Fidesz supporting trolls. Although the noun *liberós* is not a common Hungarian swear word, it might be perceived as offensive in online political discussions since *liberós* (lit. ‘someone who wears a Libero nappy’) evokes the nappy brand *Libero*, thus portraying liberals as ‘adult babies’ who are immature, intellectually inferior, and cannot be taken seriously (Herring et al., 2002: 379).

Table 5.2. The linguistic features that users associate with trolling

	British corpus	Hungarian corpus
Spelling	unspecified misspellings excessive use of capital letters <i>majuority</i> [instead of <i>majority</i>] <i>your joking</i> [instead of <i>you're joking</i>] <i>facist</i> [instead of <i>fascist</i>]	unspecified misspellings
Punctuation	unspecified punctuation errors overuse or repetition of exclamation and question marks omission of the white space after punctuation marks	N/A
Grammar	Unspecified grammatical errors Questions that follow the structure <i>So you [...]?</i>	N/A

Vocabulary	<p>‘swearing’, ‘vulgarity’, and ‘foul language’ in general</p> <p>Common expletives: <i>fuck(ing), cunt, moron(ic), fool, lunatic, nutty, fruitcake, surly oik</i></p> <p>Derogatory terms for political groups and opinions: <i>normal/moderate/hard(-line) left(ist), loony (left(y)), lemming, Liebour, Corbynista, Trot(skyist), Marxist (madness)/Marxism, Stalinist extremism/Stalinism, (Islamof)fascist/Islamofascism</i></p> <p><i>terrorist loving/supporting Commie, Champagne Socialist</i> <i>Putin loving, unelectable</i> [with reference to Jeremy Corbyn]</p> <p><i>true believer</i> [with reference to unionists] <i>kool-aid swigging moonie</i> [with reference to unionists] <i>English Parliament</i> [with reference to the British Parliament] <i>cybernat</i> [with reference to Scottish Independence/SNP supporters] <i>national socialism</i> [with reference to the SNP]</p>	<p>‘swearing’, ‘vulgarity’, and ‘foul language’ in general</p> <p>Common expletives: <i>geci</i> (‘cunt’), <i>fasz</i> (‘dick’), <i>kurva anyád</i> (‘you son of a bitch’), <i>(román)buzi</i> (‘(Romanian) faggot’)</p> <p>Derogatory terms for political groups and opinions: <i>(bal)libsi</i> (‘(left-)liberal’), <i>balliba</i> (‘left goose’) [derogatory term for left-liberal] <i>hithű liberós</i> (‘faithful libtard’) <i>ballibó buzeránsok</i> (‘left-lib faggots’) <i>libsibolsi</i> (‘liberal Bolshie’) <i>komcsi</i> (‘Commie’) <i>maszop</i> (‘derogatory term for the Hungarian Socialist Party’) <i>szadesz</i> (‘derogatory term for the Alliance of Free Democrats, a former liberal Hungarian political party’)</p>
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As mentioned earlier, Table 5.2 summarises the linguistic features that users associate with trolling in the British and Hungarian corpora. A key difference between the British and Hungarian troll action comments is that, with the exception of unspecified misspellings (Morrissey, 2010: 78), the Hungarian commenters focus on the trolls' vocabulary whereas the British commenters also criticise the trolls for various spelling-, punctuation-, and grammar-related features (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 363), such as the excessive use of capital letters, the omission of white space after punctuation marks, and asking questions that follow the structure *So you [...]?*. However, Table 5.2 overall suggests that one can only draw a limited picture of the trolls' language from the features that users attribute to trolls as the users' remarks are far from comprehensive.

The lexical items associated with trolling can be grouped into two main categories: common expletives and context-specific derogatory terms for various political groups and opinions. Some of the expletives attributed to trolls relate to sexuality in both corpora, such as *fuck(ing)* or *cunt* in the British corpus and *geci* ('cunt') or *fasz* ('dick') in the Hungarian corpus. However, a notable difference between the British and Hungarian troll action comments is that most of the remaining British troll expletives, such as *moron(ic)*, *fool*, *lunatic*, and *nutty*, portray others as mentally ill whereas the remaining Hungarian troll swear words, such as *(román)buzi* ('(Romanian) faggot') and *buzeránsok* ('faggots'), tend to be overtly homophobic and/or racist.

Looking at the politics-related derogatory terms associated with trolling, the main similarity between the British and Hungarian troll action comments is that commenters tend to call those users trolls who mock or attack left-wing or liberal opinions and political parties with demeaning words and expressions, such as *loony left*, *ballibsi* ('left-liberal'), *Liebour* (a blend of *Labour* and *lie*), and *maszop* (approx. 'sucking today', a mocking abbreviation for the Hungarian Socialist Party). Commenters also suggest that trolls refer to left-wingers as *Trot(skyist)*, *Marxist*, *Stalinist*, *libsibolsi* ('liberal Bolshie'), and *komcsi* ('Commie'), thus falsely portraying all left-wingers as Communist extremists. The lack of derogatory terms directed at right-wingers might be explained by the fact that 75% of the British and 65% of the Hungarian troll comments were posted on left-wing blogs, such as *LabourList* or *Varánusz*, where verbally mocking right-wing opinions and groups might be seen as acceptable.

However, there are two notable differences between the two corpora. Firstly, some of the British pejorative terms, such as *Champagne Socialist* and *unelectable*, specifically refer to a prominent left-wing politician, Jeremy Corbyn, whereas none of

the Hungarian terms are directed at specific politicians. Secondly, some British troll terms relate to the discourse on Scottish independence, which is a key topic on Scottish political blogs, such as *Bella Caledonia* and *Wings over Scotland*. For instance, commenters perceive the use of *true believer* and *cybernat* as trolling since these terms depict unionists and Scottish Independence/SNP supporters, the two sides of the debate, as aggressive political fanatics, escalating conflict on the above blogs.

5.6. Trolling activity (IV): dishonesty

The fourth, and final, trolling activity is dishonesty, which relates to the perceived discrepancy between the trolls' assumed beliefs and their remarks (Dynel, 2016: 356). Users argue that the information the trolls post in their comments does not correspond to what they actually believe (Hopkinson, 2013: 17). Therefore, when associating dishonesty with trolling, users attribute particular beliefs to the trolls, compare these beliefs to the trolls' comments, and based on the assumption that the trolls' remarks are inconsistent with their beliefs, users portray the trolls as untrustworthy liars (Herring et al., 2002: 372).

As Examples (5.62)–(5.65) will illustrate, although dishonesty and deception are of course closely related concepts in the troll comments, they are not identical. This is because users may accuse the trolls of dishonesty without suggesting that the trolls intend to mislead others into false beliefs (Hardaker, 2010: 237), which means that users depict the trolls' dishonest behaviour as not necessarily involving any deceptive intent. In line with this distinction, I will only focus on dishonesty in this section whereas deception will be discussed in Chapter 7 as an aim attributed to trolls.

The trolls' dishonest behaviour includes three discursive actions: (1) making insincere statements, (2) making contradictory statements, and (3) posting comments from multiple accounts or from an account also used by others. These three troll actions are discussed in Subsections 5.6.1–5.6.3.

5.6.1. Trolling action (14): making insincere statements

The fourteenth trolling action relates to the disingenuous nature of the trolls' statements (Hardaker, 2013: 75). Commenters argue that trolls make insincere statements that do not reflect their actual beliefs (Hopkinson, 2013: 14), thus denouncing these statements as blatant lies and portray the trolls as tricksters who lack integrity (Coles & West, 2016a: 48).

(5.62) [leftfutures_21_59]

What I am saying is that you are arguing in bad faith. You have repeated the lie that [Andy] Burnham was Health Sec[retary] during the Mid-Staffs scandal despite knowing that this was not the case. I would debate with you but not when you exhibit this troll-like behaviour.

[The Mid Staffs hospital scandal refers to the public outrage an official report triggered in 2013. According to the report, 400 to 1,200 patients died as a result of poor care between January 2005 and March 2009 at Stafford Hospital, a district general hospital in Staffordshire, operated by Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust.]

Example (5.62) focuses on the statement that Andy Burnham, a Labour politician, served as the Secretary of State for Health when the so-called Mid Staffs hospital scandal broke out in 2013. The user points out that this is factually untrue and accuses the addressee of trolling for repeating the above statement despite knowing that it is false. The clause *you are arguing in bad faith* also portrays the troll and his behaviour as dishonest (Dyrel, 2016: 369).

A key difference between Example (5.62) and those analysed in Section 5.5.1 is that in Example (5.62), the user calls the addressee's behaviour *troll-like* not only because the troll's statement is untrue (Morrissey, 2010: 75) but also because it seems to be insincere (Cook et al., 2018: 3324). Consequently, when associating action (10) with trolling, users only focus on other commenters' statements and identify others as trolls only because they find their statements untrue, misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian. However, action (14) refers to those cases where users also consider other commenters' beliefs and call them trolls not only because they perceive the trolls'

statements to be untrue or unreasonable but also because they believe these claims to be inconsistent with the trolls' actual beliefs (Hopkinson, 2013: 17).

(5.63) [tenytar_15_205]

Remélem te el is hiszed amit írsz, így csak hülye vagy, mert amúgy meg képzett fidesztroll lennél. Nem cáfolom meg pontonként amit írtál, hisz ha hülye vagy akkor minnek, ha meg troll, akkor te is tudod miért baromság amit írtál. A lényeg, hogy Orbán [Viktor] és rendszere egy métely, ami hosszútávon tönkre teszi az országot. Rövid távon is, de ott sikeresen fedi el a média a Goebbels-i módszerrel.

'I hope you actually believe what you are writing and you are only a fool because otherwise you would be a trained Fidesz troll. I won't disprove everything you wrote because if you're stupid, it's pointless, and if you are a troll, then you know exactly why it's rubbish what you wrote. The point is that [Viktor] Orbán and his system are cancer that will destroy the country [i.e., Hungary] in the long run. In the short run as well but the media successfully conceals this with Goebbels's techniques [of propaganda].'

In Example (5.63), the user does not specify the statements he criticises the addressee for but the noun *baromság* ('rubbish') makes it clear that the user finds these statements unreasonable. However, unlike in Examples (5.42)–(5.44), the user does not call the addressee troll because the statements he posted are unreasonable but specifically because he perceives them as potentially dishonest. In fact, the user makes a clear distinction between trolling and making unreasonable statements in good faith when he argues that the addressee only counts as a troll if he does not actually believe what he is saying (Ortega et al., 2012: 2885). Consequently, Example (5.63) depicts dishonesty as a criterion for trolling (Hardaker, 2013: 82). Therefore, although Examples (5.42)–(5.44) have shown that some commenters associate unreasonable statements with trolling, Example (5.63) demonstrates that others disagree with this idea and identify only those as trolls who put forward statements in bad faith (Buckels et al., 2018: 10).

(5.64) [guardian_41_5973]

*Greens do not go online looking for fights with Scottish independence supporters, even English Greens. In fact the leader of the English Greens Ms Bennett is highly in favour of transferring more powers to Scotland and the party you hate because even English Greens see the SNP as fellow progressives. **You are no green party supporter, just another anti Scottish troll embarrassing real Greens with a poor pretence at being one.***

Example (5.64) demonstrates that some of the insincere statements that users associate with trolling relate to the alleged trolls' self-representation in their comments (Hardaker, 2010: 226). These dishonest self-reflexive statements typically revolve around the trolls' political sympathies. For instance, the commenter argues in Example (5.64) that although the addressee claims to be an English Green Party supporter, he is in fact an anti-Scottish troll as real Green supporters would not attack Scottish Independence supporters since the two groups share a common ground with regards to the devolution of political powers to Scotland. The noun *pretence* also indicates that the accused troll is of course very well aware of his real political alignments, suggesting that the troll is deliberately claiming false political identity when self-representing himself as a Green supporter (Hopkinson, 2013: 17).

5.6.2. Trolling action (15): making contradictory statements

The fifteenth trolling action relates to the perceived inconsistency between the trolls' subsequent statements in the same thread. When associating action (15) with trolling, users argue that trolls make at least two statements that contradict one another and consequently, at least one of their statements must be inconsistent with their actual beliefs (Hopkinson, 2013: 17). Thus, users depict these conflicting statements as a dishonest argumentative technique that may confuse others (Herring et al., 2002: 380) and accuse the trolls of engaging in the discussion in bad faith (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 33).

(5.65) [szeged_39_110]

“Aki közgazdász, az tudja, hogy azért mérik dollárban [a GDP-t], hogy össze lehessen hasonlítani az országok [gazdasági] adatait. Mondjuk ezért van a GDP számítása is” es a kovetkezo allitasod: “Nem devizában nézik [a magyar GDP-t]. Csak segítenék, mert közgazdász vagy! “a troll aki össze-visszabeszél

“Economists know that GDP is measured in dollar because this is how the [economic] data for different countries can be compared. This is why GDP is calculated in the first place.” and then your next statement is: “[The Hungarian GDP] isn’t measured in foreign currency. I just want to help because you’re an economist after all!” the troll who speaks out of both sides of their mouth’

(5.66) [leftfutures_11_13]

*So you are in favour of making trade unionists opt in but also in favour of forcing tax payers to fund political parties. **Bit of a contradiction there but then you are just a troll.***

Examples (5.65) and (5.66) illustrate the contradictory claims that users attribute to the trolls. In Example (5.65), the commenter refers back to the troll’s previous comments and points out that the troll first suggested that GDP is always measured in US dollar but then argued that the Hungarian GDP is expressed in Hungarian forint and not in foreign currency. The clause *a troll aki össze-visszabeszél* (‘the troll who speaks out of both sides of their mouth’) indicates that the commenter finds these two statements mutually exclusive and calls the addressee a troll specifically because only one of his assertions can reflect his actual beliefs about how GDP is measured (Hopkinson, 2013: 17).

Similarly, in Example (5.66), the user condemns the troll for first proposing that political parties should be sponsored by trade unionists but then advocating the idea that all parties should be publicly funded from taxes. As in Example (5.65), the clause *[b]it of a contradiction there but then you are just a troll* implies that the user sees the addressee’s suggestions as incompatible with one another and calls the addressee a troll because in the user’s experience, trolls tend to make contradictory statements.

5.6.3. Trolling action (16): posting comments from multiple accounts or from an account also used by others

The final discursive action that users attribute to trolls is posting comments from multiple accounts in the same thread or using an account together with others (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 360). This action is considered dishonest since those commenters who use multiple accounts or share their account with others make it nearly impossible for others to keep track of their contributions (Dynel, 2016: 356). This is because users are semi-anonymous on most analysed political blogs and consequently, they can only identify others by their usernames (Coles & West, 2016a: 46) but this is only possible if each commenter is posting under a single username and each username is used by a single person.

(5.67) [b1_12_36]

Jellemzően a trollok szoktak 1000 nicken hozzászólni, ezért aztán 1-1 álnéven kevés hozzászólásuk gyűlik össze. A legviccesebb, hogy ezek trolloznak.

‘It’s usually the trolls who post comments under a thousand nicknames and consequently, they will only have a couple of comments per username. The funny thing is that these are calling others trolls.’

In Example (5.67), the user suggests that trolls tend to use a large number of usernames and consequently, they only post a handful of comments from the same account before moving on to a new one (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 362). This also implies that trolls participate in the discussion in bad faith (Buckels et al., 2018: 10) as other users are unable to keep record of everything the trolls are posting since it remains hidden which usernames are used by the same person. Thus, Example (5.67) portrays the use of various usernames as a potentially confusing practice that spreads distrust among the commenters (Herring et al., 2002: 380) as they can no longer assume that each account is managed by a different person.

(5.68) [labourlist_61_31]

*I don't agree with much that [username A] posts, and she(?) is a bit of a tease as she admits herself, but she has a point here. For all we know "[username B]" is posting around the clock because in fact **the name is used by a group**. If she can be arsed to check every poster and let me know that **they're a potential trollbot** then I'm thankful.*

In Example (5.68), the user suggests that a particular profile remains constantly active for extremely long periods of time (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6944) because it is in fact operated by a collective of trolls (*the name is used by a group* and *they're a potential trollbot*). Example (5.68) therefore portrays trolling as a joint activity (Sun & Fichman, 2018: 484) and demonstrates that users not only criticise the trolls for continuously switching between profiles when posting (Tsantarliotis et al., 2017: 1) but also for teaming up with other trolls and operating shared accounts (Saka, 2018: 160). This practice is considered dishonest since the trolls do not inform others that they are posting under the same username and consequently, those who reply to their subsequent comments are unable to decide whether they are engaging with the same person or with different users.

5.7. The constructions of trolling in the troll action comments

The analysis of the activities that users associate with trolling has pointed out that trolling is perceived as a multifaceted non-normative behaviour (Sanfilippo et al. 2018). There is also a clear mapping between the perceived trolling activities and the ways in which trolling and the trolls are constructed in the troll action comments. This correspondence, summarised in Table 5.3, suggests that associating various activities with trolling is a discursive identity-building device as commenters attribute different personal traits to the trolls, depending on the activities that they associate with trolling (Coles & West, 2016b: 240).

Table 5.3. The correspondence between the perceived trolling activities and the discursive constructions of trolling and the trolls in the troll action comments

Trolling activity	Discursive construction of trolling	Discursive construction of the trolls
Spamming	The excessive use of extremely long, unusually short, (near-)identical, unoriginal, off-topic, or incomprehensible comments with a destructive effect on the flow and structural integrity of the ongoing discussion	Extremely garrulous, unimaginative, and repetitive commenters, who are unable to express themselves clearly or to stay on topic but whose comments nevertheless overwhelm the threads that they are active in
Ignoring or withholding information	The practice of deliberately ignoring others' contributions, avoiding direct interaction, and minimising the information shared with others	Narrow-minded, unconcerned, and somewhat self-obsessed commenters, who only focus on their own input, are completely unable/unwilling to engage with others, and are committed to maximise their privacy
Flaming	The practice of spoiling the commenters' interpersonal relations and creating bitter disagreement, outrage, and personal conflict by making untrue, misleading, unreasonable, and contrarian statements, directly attacking others, asking personal or loaded questions, and using inappropriate language	Inconsiderate, disrespectful, and often overtly aggressive contrarians, who are willing to engage in debates but lack the cognitive skills and factual knowledge to do so and thus, their toxic antagonism only produces fruitless fights
Dishonesty	The potentially but not necessarily deceptive practice of deliberately posting information that is inconsistent with the commenter's actual beliefs and knowledge	Untrustworthy liars and impostors, who lack integrity and may claim false identity

As discussed in Chapter 2, Donath (1999) and Hardaker (2010) describe trolling as an inherently deceptive and dishonest behaviour. However, Table 5.3 shows that users also associate spamming, flaming, and the practice of ignoring or withholding information with trolling. Depending on these activities, trolling and the trolls themselves are constructed in various ways in the analysed troll action comments. Notably, the second

trolling activity, ignoring or withholding information, and the corresponding construction of trolling and the trolls have not been discussed in great detail in the academic literature on trolling. Table 5.3 also points out that although Herring et al. (2002) and Dynel (2016) describe trolling and flaming as two distinct yet equally complex behaviours, users conceptualise flaming as one of the four main ways in which trolling may manifest itself, suggesting that, at least in the users' view, flaming is a less complex behaviour than trolling (Cheng et al., 2017: 1218).

A common characteristic of the different discursive constructions of trolling and the trolls is that trolling is consistently depicted as a set of non-normative actions (Cruz et al., 2018: 24) whereas the trolls are portrayed as uncooperative commenters and poor debaters (Herring et al., 2002: 380), suggesting that they and what they say should be ignored. This is because the different constructions highlight what the trolls lack, which can be modesty, creativity, self-discipline, thoughtfulness, common sense, respect towards others, intellectual power, factual knowledge, or integrity, depending on the activities associated with trolling. Thus, the various discursive constructions of the trolls in the troll action comments suggest that users attribute activities to the trolls not only to describe what they are doing but also to belittle and discredit them. Consequently, action attribution and the discursive construction of trolling can be seen as a communicative resource that commenters may use to insult and isolate other users.

Finally, Table 5.3 also illustrates that British and Hungarian users associate the same activities with trolling and consequently, trolling and the trolls are constructed in a similar way in the British and Hungarian troll action comments. As discussed in Section 5.5.4, the only very minor qualitative difference between the British and Hungarian troll action comments is that when accusing the trolls of using "incorrect" or "inappropriate" language, the Hungarian users only focus on the trolls' vocabulary whereas the British commenters also criticise the trolls' spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

5.8. The annotation of the troll action comments

The above-discussed four activities and sixteen actions were used as descriptive categories to manually annotate the 2,144 British and 428 Hungarian troll action comments. Table 5.4 summarizes the tagset. It presents the tags themselves and the activities/actions they mark. In line with the taxonomy presented in Section 5.2,

activities are defined as sets of specific actions and thus, the sixteen trolling actions are grouped into four activities.

Table 5.4. The troll activity/action tags used for annotating the troll action comments

Troll activity/action tag	Marked activity/action
activity_1	Spamming
action_1	Posting too many, very long, or unusually short comments
action_2	Posting (near-)identical comments
action_3	Extensively citing external sources
action_4	Posting irrelevant comments
action_5	Posting incoherent or incomprehensible comments
activity_2	Ignoring or withholding information
action_6	Ignoring the original blog post or other comments when posting
action_7	Giving vague or evasive answers to the questions directed at them
action_8	Refusing to support their statements with evidence or arguments or to argue against the statements they disagree with
action_9	Refusing to share any personal information about themselves and hiding their previous comments
activity_3	Flaming
action_10	Making statements and arguments perceived as untrue, potentially misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian
action_11	Directly belittling, insulting, threatening, harassing, or otherwise attacking other participants
action_12	Asking personal or loaded questions
action_13	Using language perceived as “incorrect” or “inappropriate”
activity_4	Dishonesty
action_14	Making insincere statements
action_15	Making contradictory statements

action_16

Posting comments from multiple accounts or from an account
also used by others

The four activity tags, *activity_1*, *activity_2*, *activity_3*, and *activity_4*, represent the four trolling activities discussed in Sections 5.3–5.6. Each activity tag includes a number of action tags as follows: *activity_1*→*action_1–5*, *activity_2*→*action_6–9*, *activity_3*→*action_10–13*, and *activity_4*→*action_14–16*. In line with this hierarchy between the action and the activity tags, each troll action comment was annotated at two levels. I first tagged the specific trolling actions mentioned in the comments and then provided the comments with the corresponding activity tags. For instance, if a comment was provided with the tag *action_1*, it was always given the tag *activity_1* as well since *action_1* was defined as a subordinate tag within *activity_1*.

Neither the activity nor the action tags were treated as mutually exclusive labels as I found comments, such as Example (5.69), in which users associated more than one action or activity with trolling. In fact, 50% of the British and 60.5% of the Hungarian troll action comments were given more than one *action* tag. Similarly, 41.2% of the British and 50.5% of the Hungarian comments were provided with at least two *activity* tags.

(5.69) [labourlist_96_649]

*What a vile creature you are. **You claim to be a Labour supporter, but spend every posting minute of your time trashing the new Leader [i.e., Jeremy Corbyn] who got almost 60% of the leadership electorate vote. Many of us, on the left still kept our membership up whilst Blair was the leader. Although, like many others, we condemned the lies Blair used to justify the illegal war in Iraq. But you, and the other Tory trolls on here, are unfaithful liars, and anti-Socialists. I think we can say that many Labour supporters on here are heartily sick of reading you [sic] lying posts.***

In Example (5.69), the user calls the addressee a troll for unfairly criticising Jeremy Corbyn, the Leader of the Labour Party, while masquerading as a Labour supporter. Other commenters repeatedly label this inflammatory and insincere practice as *concern trolling* on *LabourList* where Example (5.69) was posted. As the user associates not only unreasonable/unfounded criticism (*action_10* within *activity_3*) but also the

practice of claiming false political identity (*action_14* within *activity_4*) with trolling. Example (5.69) was given two action tags (*action_10* and *action_14*) and two activity tags (*activity_3* and *activity_4*), respectively.

Table 5.5 presents the British troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords that mark an action associated with trolling. These items were used during the annotation of the British troll action comments. In total, 13 action-related n-grams, 52 action-related collocates, and 110 action-related keywords have been identified in the British corpus. While Table 5.5 displays all action-related collocates and keywords, it only includes 8 of the 13 action-related n-grams. This is because the other 5 n-grams are 3-grams (e.g. *trolls pretending to*) and 4-grams (e.g. *trolls pretending to be*) that consist of a relevant bigram (e.g. *trolls pretending*) and one or two function words (e.g. *a, be, of, to*). As the function words do not add any lexical content to these 3-grams and 4-grams, they were deemed redundant and have been excluded.

Table 5.5. The action-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords in the British corpus

Marked action	Troll token n-grams	Troll token collocates	Troll comment keywords
SPAMMING			
1	–	constant, persistent, two-sentence	constant, lengthy, liners, persistent
1 and 2	–	–	nauseam
1 and 4	trollers and spammers	spam(s/mers/ming)	spam(s/mers/ming)
1 and 5	–	–	rambling
2	–	–	repeating, repetiti(on/ve)

2 or 3	–	paste	copying, past(e/ing)
3	–	–	regurgitating, script, slogans
4	–	off(-)topic	off-topic
5 or 10		drivel, spouting, nonsense	drivel, gibberish, guff, nonsense, spout(ing), tripe
IGNORING OR WITHHOLDING INFORMATION			
8	–	substance	baseless
9	anonymous troll	anonymous, comment- hiding, hide, mystic	anonym(ity/ous), comment- hiding, hide, mystic, skulking
FLAMING			
10	troll crap	bizarre, crap, ludicrous, ranting, rubbish	bleat, crap, fallacy, frothing, garbage, inflammatory, lame, ludicrous, misinformation, misrepresent, pish, ranting, rubbish, spurious, trash, whine
10	contrarian troll	contrarian, disagrees, hypocritical	contrarian, denigrat(e/ing), disagree(s), hypocritical, naysayers, projection
10 or 11	–	bile, smear(ing)	bashing, bile, derogatory, hominem, smear(ing), snide
11	–	abus(ing/ive), aggressive, bully, insult(s), offensive stalking	abus(e/ing/ive), aggressive, insult(s/ing), jibe, name- calling, offensive, pejorative, stalking, vitriolic
13	–	foul, spell(ing)	colourful, exclamation, expletives, foul, spelling, swearing, vocabulary, vulgar

DISHONESTY			
10 and 14	trolls pretending	fake, liar, outrage, pretend(s/ing)	bogus, disguise, fake, faux, masquerading, outrage, persona, posing, pretending, sly
10 and 14	concern troll(s/ing)	concern, sock()puppet	astroturfers, concern, shill, sock()puppet(s), undercover
16			alias(es), identities, multiple

Table 5.5 shows that the action-related troll token n-grams are noun phrases in which, with the exception of *troll crap*, the head words are various word forms of *TROLL* (*troll*, *trolls*, *trollers*, and *trolling*) while the adjectival and nominal modifiers (e.g. *anonymous*, *contrarian*, and *concern*) indicate the perceived trolling action. Similarly, the action-related troll token collocates and troll comment keywords are adjectives, nouns, and verbs.

Table 5.5 also points out that around one-third of the action-related n-grams, collocates, and keywords can mark two different actions, depending on their context in the troll action comments. Moreover, while the listed n-grams consistently mark actions in the troll action comments, not every collocate and keyword indicates an action attributed to the trolls in all troll action comments. For instance, whilst the noun phrase *anonymous troll* is consistently used to suggest that the trolls minimise the personal information they share about themselves, the sheer occurrence of the word *spelling* in a troll action comment does not necessarily mean that the commenter criticises the addressed troll's spelling. This suggests that although the use of n-grams, collocates, and keywords can make the annotation process of the troll action comments more transparent and consistent, this method has its limitations as the occurrence of a particular collocate or keyword in a troll action comment does not always determine the actions ascribed to the troll. Thus, the interpretative analysis of the comments, as demonstrated in Sections 5.3–5.6, remains crucial, especially because I was unable to

find items that consistently mark actions (6), (7), (12) and (15) in the troll action comments.

Figure 5.1 displays the absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the action-related British troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords. It only names the most frequent items and those with the highest Log Ratio scores. However, among other measures, the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of all action-related items are listed in Appendix G.

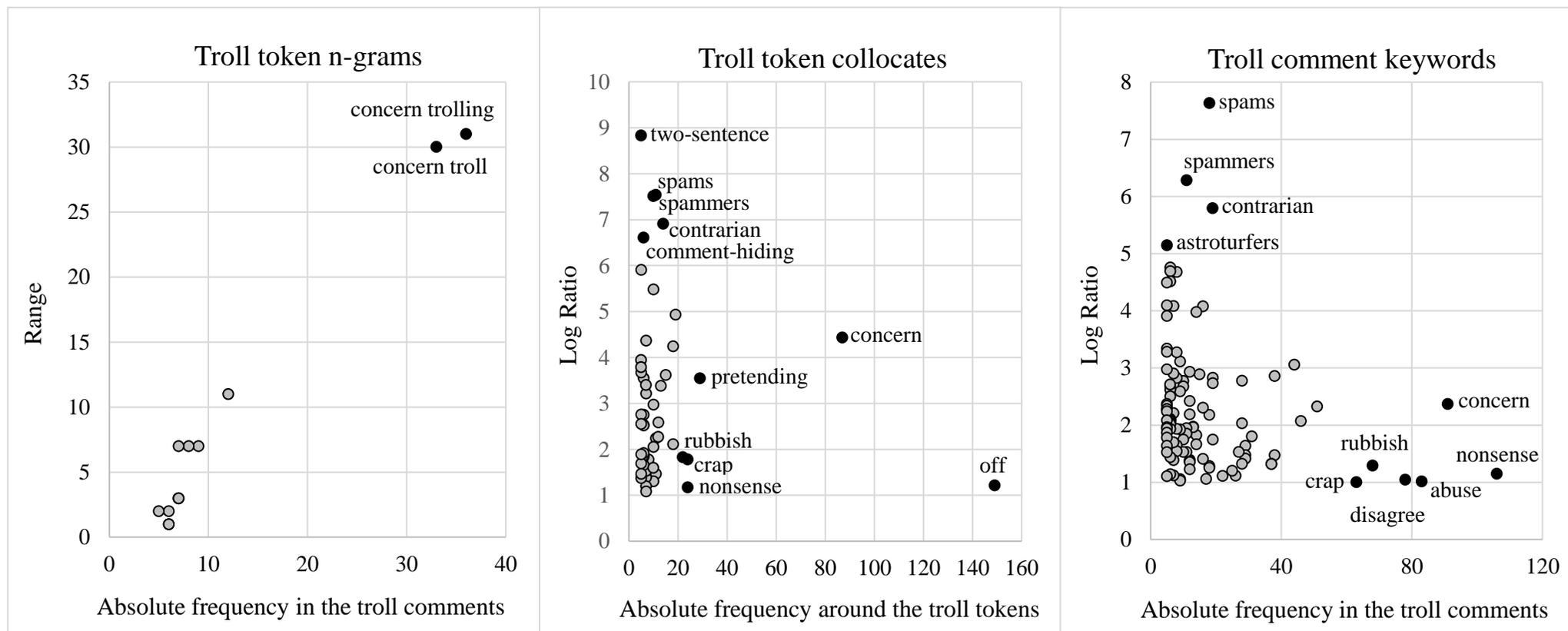


Figure 5.1. The absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the action-related British troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords

Figure 5.1 shows that overall, *off* is the most frequent action-related word in the British troll comments as it occurs 386 times in the troll comments and within that, 149 times around the troll tokens. *Off* is deemed an action-related word because it can be found in the expression *off topic* that points out the irrelevance of the trolls' comments. However, *off* is a problematic word for two reasons. Firstly, it is one of the most unreliable action-related items as it is used for various purposes beyond attributing actions to the trolls. Secondly, being a preposition, it is also frequent in the non-troll comments and consequently, it did not have a Log Ratio score high enough to be considered a troll comment keyword.

The other two relatively frequent action-related items are *nonsense* (106 occurrences in the troll comments and 24 around the troll tokens) and *concern* (91 occurrences in the troll comments and 87 around the troll tokens). Similarly to *crap* and *rubbish*, *nonsense* suggests that users relatively frequently criticise the trolls for making unreasonable statements whereas *concern* implies that the trolls unfairly criticise politicians and political groups while falsely posing as (former) supporters of these. *Concern* also appears in the two most frequent action-related n-grams, *concern trolling* and *concern troll*. The other action-related items are considerably less frequent as most of these occur less than 50 times in the troll comments.

While they are not particularly frequent, *two-sentence*, *spams*, *spammers*, and *contrarian* have the highest Log Ratio scores as troll token collocates or as troll comment keywords. This indicates that these items are the most strongly associated with trolling in the British corpus. In fact, this is because these items are among those with the lowest normalised frequency in the non-troll comments. *Two-sentence* refers to the practice of posting very short comments that consist of only two sentences. *Spams* and *spamming* highlight the destructive effect of trolling on the flow and structural integrity of the ongoing discussion and portray the trolls as extremely garrulous and repetitive commenters who are unable to stay on topic but whose comments nevertheless overwhelm the threads they are active in. Finally, *contrarian* implies that the trolls tend to take an antagonistic stance towards other commenters by making various unpopular and potentially inflammatory statements.

Table 5.6 lists the action-related Hungarian n-grams, collocates, and keywords. These items were used during the annotation of the Hungarian troll action comments. In total, 5 action-related n-grams, 8 action-related collocates, and 56 action-related keywords have been identified in the Hungarian corpus. Similarly to Table 5.5, while

Table 5.6 displays all action-related collocates and keywords, it does not include two of the five action-related n-grams as these are redundant 4-grams, consisting of the 3-gram *beszólogató szektás trollok* ('offensive sectarian trolls') and a function word (*a* ('the') or *nem* ('no')).

Table 5.6. The action-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords in the Hungarian corpus

Marked action	Troll token n-grams	Troll token collocates	Troll comment keywords
SPAMMING			
1	–	–	<i>bombáz</i> ('s/he is bombarding sb [with sth]')
1 and 2	–	–	<i>sulykolja</i> ('s/he is hammering sth home')
3	–	–	<i>másol</i> ('s/he is copying sth') <i>terjesztése</i> ('spreading sth')
3 and 10	–	<i>agitprop</i> ('agitprop')	<i>agitprop</i> ('agitprop') <i>propaganda</i> ('propaganda') <i>propagandát</i> ('propaganda (accusative)')
4	–	<i>hozzászólni</i> ('commenting on sth') <i>off</i> ('off') <i>témához</i> ('to the topic') <i>témát</i> ('topic (accusative)')	<i>foglalkozz</i> ('focus (imperative) on sth') <i>hozzászólni</i> ('commenting on sth') <i>irreleváns</i> ('irrelevant') <i>poszthoz</i> ('to the post') <i>tárgyhoz</i> ('to the subject') <i>terel(sz/ni)</i> ('(you are) digressing') <i>téma</i> ('topic') <i>témába</i> ('[relevant] to the topic') <i>témá(hoz/ról)</i> ('to/about the topic') <i>témá(já)t</i> ('(its) topic (accusative)') <i>témájától</i> ('from its topic')

IGNORING OR WITHHOLDING INFORMATION

8

–

–

elfogytak ('sb has run out of sth')
érvelni ('arguing [for/against sth]')
konkrétumokat ('specifics (accusative)')

FLAMING

10

–

–

bullshit(-et) ('bullshit (accusative)')
feltételezed ('you assume')
hülyeségeidet ('your foolish remarks')
hülyeség(ek)et ('foolish remark(s)')
marhaság ('rubbish')
mutogatás ('pointing fingers')
tévedtél ('you were wrong')
vergődsz ('you are messing around')

10 or 11

–

–

vádolsz ('you are accusing me/us of sth')

11

beszólogató (elbutult) szektás trollok
('offensive (witless) sectarian trolls')

beszólogató ('offensive')

beszólogató ('offensive')
gúnyolódsz ('you are mocking sb')
kötekedni ('picking a fight with sb')
lebaxni ('dressing sb down') [vulgar]
sértegettél ('you were insulting me/us')
személyesked(és/ő/ni) ('abus(e/ive/ing)')

DISHONESTY

			<i>hazudik</i> ('s/he is lying') <i>hazudj</i> ('lie (imperative)') <i>hazudni</i> ('to lie') <i>hazudozás(sal)</i> ('(by) telling lies') <i>hazudozó</i> ('lying/liar') <i>hazudsz</i> ('you are lying') <i>hazug</i> ('lying') <i>hazugságai</i> ('her/his lies') <i>játszod</i> ('you pretend to be sb/sth') <i>mezt</i> ('persona (accusative)')
10 and 14	<i>hazug fidesztroll</i> ('lying Fidesz troll')	<i>hazug</i> ('lying')	
14	–	<i>szórakozol</i> ('you are kidding around')	<i>játszol</i> ('you are playing games')

Table 5.6 shows that, similarly to the British list, the action-related Hungarian n-grams are noun phrases in which the head words are various word forms of *TROLL* (*troll*, *trollok* ('trolls')) while the adjectival modifiers (*beszólógató* ('offensive') and *hazug* ('lying')) indicate the actions associated with trolling. Similarly, the action-related Hungarian troll token collocates and troll comment keywords are adjectives, nouns, or verbs.

Table 5.6 also points out that, similarly to the British list, around one-third of the Hungarian action-related n-grams, collocates, and keywords can mark two different actions, depending on their context in the troll action comments. Moreover, while the listed n-grams consistently mark actions in the troll action comments, this does not apply to all collocates and keywords. Finally, I was unable to find items that would mark actions (5), (6), (7), (9), (12), (13), (15), and (16).

Figure 5.2 displays the absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the action-related Hungarian troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords. Similarly to Figure 5.1, Figure 5.2 only names the most frequent items and those with the highest Log Ratio scores. However, among other measures, the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of all action-related Hungarian items are listed in Appendix H.

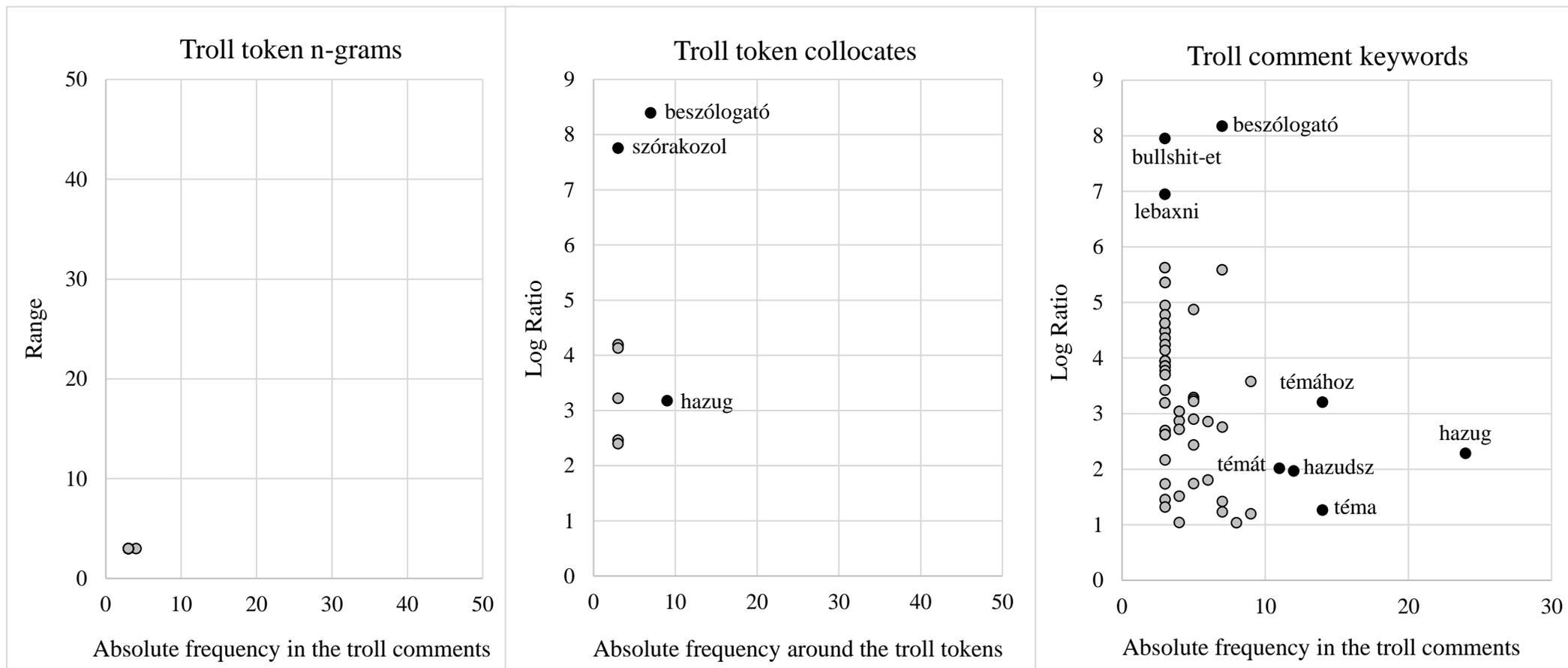


Figure 5.2. The absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the action-related Hungarian troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords

Figure 5.2 shows that the action-related Hungarian n-grams and collocates are not particularly frequent as none of them occurs more than ten times in the troll comments. However, there are some relatively frequent action-related keywords. These reveal that trolling is often associated with dishonesty (*hazug* ('lying') and *hazudsz* ('you are lying')) and with the practice of posting irrelevant comments (*témához* ('to the topic') and *téma* ('topic')) in the Hungarian troll comments. The collocates and keywords with the highest Log Ratio scores also point out that trolling is the most strongly associated with overt aggression (*beszólogató* ('offensive') and *lebaxni* ('dressing someone down')), dishonesty (*szórakozol* ('you are kidding around')), and the practice of making unreasonable statements (*bullshit-et* ('bullshit (accusative)')) in the Hungarian corpus.

5.9. The quantitative analysis of the troll action comments

Table 5.7 displays the results of the annotation of the troll action comments. It presents the proportion of those British and Hungarian troll action comments that were provided with a particular action- or activity-related tag. Note that the sum of percentages in the same column is higher than 100% as one comment could receive multiple tags.

Table 5.7. The proportion of those British and Hungarian troll action comments that were provided with a particular activity/action-related tag

Activity/action tag	Marked activity/action	British troll action comments (100% = 2,144)	Hungarian troll action comments (100% = 428)
activity_1	Spamming	18.2%	31.8%
action_1	Posting too many, extremely long, or unusually short comments	4.2%	5.6%
action_2	Posting (near-)identical comments	5.7%	6.5%
action_3	Extensively citing external sources	4.3%	8.9%
action_4	Posting irrelevant comments	5.9%	16.8%
action_5	Posting incoherent or incomprehensible comments	1%	3%
activity_2	Ignoring or withholding information	13.2%	19.6%
action_6	Ignoring the original blog post or other comments when posting	4.9%	10.3%
action_7	Giving vague or evasive answers to questions directed at them	0.3%	0.7%
action_8	Refusing to support their statements with evidence or arguments or to argue against the statements they disagree with	4.3%	9.6%
action_9	Refusing to share any personal information about themselves and hiding their previous comments	4.3%	0.9%

activity_3	Flaming	87.6%	81.5%
action_10	Making statements and arguments perceived as untrue, potentially misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian	76.4%	69.4%
action_11	Directly belittling, insulting, threatening, harassing, or otherwise attacking other participants	16.2%	21.3%
action_12	Asking personal or loaded questions	1.5%	1.6%
action_13	Using language perceived as “incorrect” or “inappropriate”	6.7%	6.1%
activity_4	Dishonesty	29.1%	29.2%
action_14	Making insincere statements	23.8%	26.2%
action_15	Making contradictory statements	0.6%	0.5%
action_16	Posting comments from multiple accounts or from an account also used by others	6.1%	3.3%

Table 5.7 demonstrates that although users associate sixteen actions with trolling, there are only three dominant trolling actions that are mentioned in at least 10% of both the British and the Hungarian troll action comments. These are actions (10), (14), and (11) in that order. Action (10) is by far the most frequently mentioned trolling action as commenters accuse the trolls of making untrue, misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian statements in 76.4% of the British and 69.4% of the Hungarian comments, thus portraying the trolls as bad debaters. Although for instance, Donath (1999) and Hardaker (2010) describe trolling as a chiefly deceptive behaviour, users only suggest in 23.8% of the British and 26.2% of the Hungarian comments that trolls are making insincere statements. Nevertheless, action (14) is still the second most frequently mentioned trolling action. Finally, users also accuse the trolls of direct aggression in 16.2% of the British and 21.3% of the Hungarian comments. As actions (10) and (11) are depicted as triggering outrage, personal conflict, and bitter disagreement, their prominence also means that flaming is the most dominant perceived trolling activity in both corpora, followed by dishonesty in the British and spamming in the Hungarian corpus.

The only notable quantitative difference between the two corpora is that action (4) is considerably more prominent in the Hungarian comments than in the British ones as the Hungarian users criticise the trolls for posting irrelevant comments in 16.8% of their comments whereas the British users associate the above action with trolling only in 5.9% of their comments. Consequently, spamming as a perceived trolling activity is also more dominant in the Hungarian corpus than in the British one. However, this difference can be explained by the fact that a user on the Hungarian blog *Varánusz* frequently calls others trolls for digressing from the original topic and consequently, 35% of the Hungarian comments in which action (4) is associated with trolling were posted on *Varánusz*. This also shows that since only a small minority of the users call others trolls, the individual habits of those who do so has a major impact on the general distribution of the trolling actions in the examined corpora.

Finally, some remarks on the further use of the above quantitative results. The quantitative analysis of the troll action comments has been beneficial in identifying the three dominant perceived discursive actions that users most often associate with trolling. However, counting these actions in the troll action comments does not make them more suitable for being included in a transparent theoretical definition of trolling that could be used for detecting trolling in other datasets. This is because the perceived

trolling actions described in this chapter are subjective and often impressionistic folk concepts that commenters use to describe what the alleged trolls are doing. For instance, users have the liberty to decide which comments are unreasonable, offensive, or insincere in their view without justifying their judgements. However, their subjective and often contradictory assessments do not give us the transparent and reliable criteria that we would need for detecting trolling in other online interactions. Therefore, although Hardaker (2010, 2013) defined trolling based on the actions and intentions that Usenet users associated with trolling, I argue that any theoretical definition of trolling that builds on everyday users' assessments will inevitably remain as subjective and unreliable as the user assessments it stems from. Consequently, I do not attempt to give trolling an academic definition based on the perceived trolling actions that I described in this chapter. After having discussed the actions associated with trolling in Chapter 5, Chapters 6 and 7 will focus on the motives and aims that users attribute to the alleged trolls. However, I will summarize the main conclusions on the perceived trolling actions in Chapter 8.

6. The motives attributed to the trolls

Chapter 6 discusses the motives that users attribute to the alleged trolls. It also focuses on how trolling and trolls are constructed in the troll motive comments, depending on the motives associated with trolling. Table 6.1 presents the total number of comments, troll comments, and troll motive comments in the British and Hungarian corpora.

Table 6.1. The number of comments, troll comments, and troll motive comments in the British and Hungarian corpora

	British corpus	Hungarian corpus
Comments	740,841 (100%)	107,719 (100%)
Troll comments	6,129 (0.8%)	1,118 (1%)
Troll motive comments	2,459 (0.3%)	428 (0.4%)

Table 6.1 shows that 2,459 British and 428 Hungarian comments (a total of 2,887) have been identified as troll motive comments, indicating that only 0.3% of the British and 0.4% of the Hungarian comments are troll motive comments. Compared to the troll comments, 40.1% of the British and 38.3% of the Hungarian troll comments are troll motive comments, suggesting that when users call others trolls, they discuss the trolls' motives around a third of the time. These percentages also show that the proportion of troll motive comments is similar in the two corpora. Although the British corpus includes 5.7 times more troll motive comments than the Hungarian corpus, this difference in raw frequencies largely stems from the fact that the British corpus is 6.9 times larger than the Hungarian.

Five recurring motives for trolling emerged during the qualitative analysis of the troll motive comments:

- (1) emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons (Buckels et al., 2018: 9);
- (2) financial gain (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399);
- (3) political beliefs (Saka, 2018: 164);
- (4) being employed by a political body (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 354);
- (5) unspecified political affiliation (Hopkinson, 2013: 10).

These motives are discussed in Sections 6.1–6.5. Note that although the above references indicate that all five motives have been associated with trolling in previous research, only the emotional reasons have been discussed in detail. It is also worth noting that the troll motives are not mutually exclusive as users may associate more than one motive with trolling in the same comment.

6.1. Troll motive (1): emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons (EMS)

The first discussed motive that users attribute to the alleged trolls in the analysed troll comments comprises various emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons (Buckels et al., 2014: 98). These include enjoyment (Hardaker, 2013: 79), boredom (Baker, 2001), unhappiness (Cheng et al., 2017: 1218), loneliness (Hong & Cheng, 2018: 404), envy (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 365), an unfulfilled need for attention and social interactions (Herring et al., 2002: 380), various mental health issues (March et al., 2017: 142), having been emotionally, physically, or sexually abused, sexual frustration, a sense of failure (Zezulka & Seigfried-Spellar, 2016: 19), and social deprivation. The references in the above sentence indicate that many of the emotional motives that users attribute to the perceived trolls in the analysed dataset have already been associated with perceived or self-confessed trolling in previous research. Section 6.1 discusses the in-depth analysis of thirteen troll motive comments in which these reasons appear. As Examples (6.1)–(6.4) illustrate, there are troll motive comments which only include a single emotional or mental health-related reason for trolling or mention several of them as alternatives. However, Examples (6.5)–(6.13) show that the emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons for trolling are not independent from one another. Thus, these have been treated as the components of a single motive, to which I refer as the *EMS motive for trolling*. Examples (6.1)–(6.13) also demonstrate that the EMS motive is present in both corpora.

(6.1) [leftfootforward_52_133]

Even though you're just a troll disrupting this forum for laughs, you're not a million miles away from a genuine Owen Jones type lefty. They are quite like your persona you have created here. The Tower Hamlets

First party of the mayor, were just practising Bangladeshi style politics in England.

(6.2) [varanusz_66_444]

ciccmicc, vagy nagyon megsütötte buksidat a napocska, vagy endorfin termelése okán trollkods... ezért sem erőltetem a kettőnk közti kommunikációt oly nagyon...

‘pussycat, **the sun has really burnt your little head, or you are trolling to produce endorphin...** that’s why I’m not really forcing the communication between us...’

In Examples (6.1) and (6.2), the users suggest that others are trolling because they enjoy it (Buckels et al., 2018: 9). In example (7.1), the prepositional phrase *for laughs* within the clause *you’re just a troll disrupting this forum for laughs* indicates that the commenter attributes this emotional motive to the alleged troll (Coleman, 2012: 111). *Laughs* metonymically refers to enjoyment, fun, or happiness while the preposition *for* frames enjoyment as the reason of the troll’s actions.

Example (6.2) shows a similar pattern but the user proposes two alternatives to explain why the addressee is trolling. According to the first one, he is trolling because he is simply silly (Maltby et al., 2016: 461). The commenter uses the euphemistic and slightly sarcastic expression *nagyon megsütötte buksidat a napocska* (‘the sun has really burnt your little head’, suggestive of heat stroke) to indicate that he considers the other user to be cognitively impaired. The alternative is that the addressee is trolling because it makes him happy (Hardaker, 2010: 237), as implied by the clause *endorphin termelődése okán trollkods* (‘you are trolling to produce endorphin’). Similarly to Example (6.1), *endorphin termelődése* (‘producing endorphin’) metonymically refers to enjoyment and *okán* (‘for the reason of’ or ‘by reason of’) displays enjoyment as a motive for trolling.

(6.3) [leftfootforward_61_74]

*I hope other people will see this nonsense by [username]. **It’s text book trolling. Probably just because he’s bored.** Until he’s told to fuck off by some moderators here, there is no point to these below the line comments on this site.*

(6.4) [theslog_2_191]

Trolls, [username], a peer reviewed paper. They're Narcissists, psychopaths & sadists.

Example (6.3) illustrates another emotional reason for trolling, boredom (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 357), which is marked by the adjective *bored*. The user first calls the other participant's discursive behaviour *nonsense* and *text book trolling*. Then, the conjunction *because* before the clause *he's bored* implies that the proposed motive for trolling is boredom in this comment.

In Example (6.4), the user claims that trolls are narcissists, psychopaths, and sadists, implying that some people are trolling because they suffer from these mental health issues. The comment also refers to a peer-reviewed paper to support this reasoning. This paper is certainly Buckels et al. (2014), entitled '*Trolls just want to have fun*', which has attracted some media attention. Thus, Example (7.4) demonstrates that, contrary to Sanfilippo et al.'s (2018: 31) argument, academic papers can influence internet users' beliefs about trolling.

(6.5) [guardian_100_128]

A reply to your reply to [username]'s original reply to you. [Username] is pointing out that you are wasting your time. You are not 'educating' anyone here, you are just seeking attention by posting deliberately antagonistic comments. This is what is commonly called 'trolling'. It is usually a sign of deep psychological unhappiness with one's own existence due to a lack of true communal connections.

So far, the analysed comments included a single emotional or mental health-related motive for trolling or described several as alternatives. However, in Example (6.5), unhappiness, an emotional state, and social deprivation, a social situation, are represented as interrelated reasons for trolling. The sentence *[trolling] is usually a sign of deep psychological unhappiness with one's own existence due to a lack of true communal connections* introduces *deep psychological unhappiness with one's existence* as a reason for trolling (Hong & Cheng, 2018: 404). Then, the preposition *due to* frames the noun phrase *a lack of true communal connections* as the direct cause of the troll's unhappiness and consequently, as the indirect cause of his trolling. In plain terms, the highlighted part of the comment implies that the addressee is trolling because he is

unhappy and he is unhappy because he is socially deprived. Thus, Example (6.5) argues for a causal relationship between trolling, unhappiness, and social deprivation.

(6.6) [varanusz_44_854]

*[Username] is valami **péniszirigység miatt** jár ide alázni magát, ha már írói vénája ennyire halovány. **Nem megy a kicsi blogja, hát trollkodik a lölköm...***

‘[Username] comes here to humiliate herself **because of some penis envy** if her literary talent is so weak anyway. **Her little blog isn’t going well so she is trolling...**’

(6.7) [wingsoverscotland_30_657]

*I don’t really, usually, address **commenters whom I could perceive as ‘trolls’** but, for this once, I will offer a comment. I wondered **WHY you were here**, on ‘Wings Over Scotland’, a web site whose *raison d’etre* is ‘a (mainly) Scottish political media digest and monitor, which also offers its own commentary.’. Then **I had a look at your blogs** – on blogspot and wordpress. **I see you’re lucky if you get more than half a dozen comments to your web input. Is that why you’re here? A London based retiree, with a lack of support for your web input, looking for recognition, and a bit of company? Have you tried ‘Digital Spy’?***

A similar causal relationship between the social and emotional reasons for trolling appears in Examples (6.6) and (6.7). In both comments, the suggested indirect social reason for trolling is having unsuccessful blogs. This is expressed by the clause *Nem megy a kicsi blogja* (‘her little blog isn’t going well’) in Example (6.6) and by *I had a look at your blogs [...] I see you’re lucky if you get more than half a dozen comments to your web input* and *A London based retiree, with a lack of support for your web input* in Example (6.7). The conjunction *hát* (‘so’) in Example (6.6) and the pronoun *why* in the interrogative *Is that* [i.e. being lucky if getting more than half a dozen comments to his web input] *why you’re here?* in Example (6.7) indicate that having unsuccessful blogs is described as a social reason for trolling.

Although the indirect social cause of trolling is the same in both comments, the users propose different direct emotional reasons. In Example (6.6), the commenter

evokes Freudian psychoanalysis with the clause *[username] is valami péniszirigység miatt jár ide alázni magát* ('[username] comes here to humiliate herself because of some penis envy'), suggesting that the troll is trolling because she is jealous and anxious. As 'penis envy' refers to a supposed stage of female psychosexual development in which, according to the Freudian theory, young girls experience anxiety when realising that they do not have a penis, the comment depicts the troll as a weak, insecure, and frustrated girl, mocking the female identity she has constructed with her female username (Coles & West, 2016b: 240). Finally, the postposition *miatt* ('because of') frames envy and anxiety as closely related emotional reasons for trolling. In Example (6.7), however, the commenter specifies the troll's emotional motive as an unfulfilled need for attention and social interactions with the verb phrase *looking for recognition, and a bit of company*. The clause *I wondered WHY you were here*, earlier in the comment, introduces this need as an emotional reason for trolling.

In sum, Example (6.6) suggests that the troll is trolling because she is jealous of the highly popular political blog *Varánusz* and she is jealous because her own blog is not successful. In contrast, Example (6.7) implies that the troll is trolling because he needs attention (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 357) since his own blogs attract little interest.

(6.8) [orulunk_48_775]

Tényleg troll vagy. Magányos vagy? vagy munkában sikeres, de bántottak kiskorodban? Hallgatunk, és nem nevetünk ki.

'**You are really a troll. Are you lonely?** or successful in your job but **were bullied as a child?** We are listening and won't laugh at you.'

(6.9) [mandiner_14_576]

*igazából sajnálom, hogy hozzád szóltam. Ráfaragtam Megnéztem a munkásságod, gyakorlatilag abból áll, hogy a pár nemzetibb érzületű blogra jársz napi szinten trollkodni, egysorosokat írsz be, amiknek semmi értelme, se relevanciája a témához. Kinézel magadnak valakit és egy egysoros idióta bőföggéssel megbombázod. Nincsenek önálló gondolataid, nem tudsz érvelni semmi mellett vagy ellen, nincsenek történelmi ismereteid. Buta vagy, mint a raklap. **Ha a motivációdra kellene szavazni, szerintem azért csinálod, mert sokszor megalázhattak az életben. Azon se csodálkoznék, ha az apád***

molesztált volna kiskorodban. Derék élet ez, érdemes leélni. Ne fáradj a válasszal, kukáztalak.

‘actually, I regret talking to you. Unlucky me. **I had a look at your work and what you practically do is that you go to troll some patriotic blogs on a daily basis** and post some one-liners, which are meaningless and irrelevant to the topic. You pick someone and you keep bombarding them with some moronic one-liner burping. You don’t have any independent thoughts, you are unable to argue for or against anything, you don’t have any historical knowledge. You are silly like a wooden pallet. **If I had to guess your motive, I think you’re doing this because you might have been humiliated many times in your life. I wouldn’t be surprised either if your father had sexually abused you when you were a child.** This is a decent life, it’s worth living it. Don’t bother replying, I’ve thrown you into the bin.’

Examples (6.5)–(6.7) demonstrated that the emotional and social reasons for trolling can form causal strings in the troll motive comments. In contrast, Examples (6.8) and (6.9) show that users also attribute inherently complex socio-emotional motives to the trolls.

Both Example (6.8) and Example (6.9) offer two alternative reasons for trolling. These are loneliness or having been bullied as a child in Example (6.8) and having been humiliated or having been sexually abused as a child in Example (6.9). Whilst loneliness is a simple emotional reason (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 176), similar to boredom in Example (6.3), having been bullied, humiliated, or sexually abused is a more complex socio-emotional reason for trolling. In both comments, the troll is depicted as the traumatised victim of severely destructive social behaviours, such as bullying, humiliation, and sexual abuse that have had long-term negative impacts on the troll’s personality and emotional wellbeing. Thus, this socio-emotional reason for trolling consists of several components, such as the act of bullying, humiliating, or sexually abusing the later troll, the permanent socio-emotional state of being a victim of bullying, humiliation, or sexual abuse, and the long-term emotional trauma caused by these behaviours. However, these components are not displayed as separate entities in these comments. Thus, Examples (6.8)–(6.9) also demonstrate that it would be impossible to

treat the emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons as separate motives for trolling.

(6.10) [archbishop_34_1648]

That's because [username] is psychotic. yes, he hears voices and takes medication though it doesn't seem to be effective. He is on disability so he lives - as all trolls do - on the internet. He spouts nonsense and is best ignored.

(6.11) [1000amihazank_4_221]

[Username] az autizmus egy enyhébb formájában szenved. Sajnos nincs minden kerék a helyén a fejében, viszont meggyőződéssel hiszi, amit hisz. A logika és a tények nem zavarják. Rosszul lett huzalozva. A legviccesebb, hogy bár az egyik legdurvább fidesz-troll, még pénzt sem kap a trollkodásáért, otthon ül, elvan a rokitól, mint a befőtt és végigkommentelgeti unalmas napjait, ebből áll az élete. Korábban nálam is gyakran kiborította a bilit a sok hülyesége, de mióta tudom, hogy beteg szegény, ráhagyom. Javaslom, tegyetek ti is így.

'[Username] suffers from a milder form of autism. Unfortunately, he's got a screw loose in his head but he firmly believes what he believes. Logic and facts don't bother him. He's badly wired. The funniest thing is that although he is one of the harshest Fidesz trolls, he doesn't even get money for his trolling, he sits at home, he's doing fine from his disability benefits and he spends his boring days commenting, this is his life. His stupidity used to drive me mad but since I know that the poor thing is ill, I just ignore him. I suggest you do the same.'

[Fidesz is a right-wing national conservative party. It has been the main governing party in Hungary since 2010.]

Examples (6.10) and (6.11) illustrate that users attribute complex emotional, mental health-related, and social motives to the trolls. Both comments suggest that the troll suffers from a condition that affects his cognition and behaviour. This condition is psychosis, a mental disorder, in Example (6.10) and autism, a neurodevelopmental disorder, in Example (6.11). These conditions are described as the direct reasons for

trolling with the sentences *that's because [username] is psychotic. yes, he hears voices and takes medication though it doesn't seem to be effective* in Example (6.10) and with *[username] az autizmus egy enyhébb formájában szenved. Sajnos nincs minden kerék a helyén a fejében* ('[username] suffers from a milder form of autism. Unfortunately, he's got a screw loose in his head'), *Rosszul lett huzalozva* ('He is badly wired'), and *beteg szegény* ('the poor thing is ill') in Example (6.11).

However, these conditions are also depicted as the indirect causes of trolling. This is because both users consider them to influence the troll's social relations and emotional state, which are also treated as reasons for trolling in their own right. In Example (6.10), the user explicitly assumes that the troll spends most of his time on the internet because he receives disability benefits. Although this is not explicitly mentioned, the sentence *[h]e is on disability so he lives - as all trolls do - on the internet* implies that as a consequence of his mental condition, the troll is socially isolated, which triggers negative feelings and he is trolling because of these negative feelings (Hong & Cheng, 2018: 403). Thus, in this reasoning, negative feelings are a direct reason for trolling, social isolation is an intermediate cause whereas psychosis as a mental disorder is a direct and an indirect reason for trolling at the same time.

A similar reasoning can be observed in Example (6.11). In the sentence *bár az egyik legdurvább fidesz-troll, még pénzt sem kap a trollkodásáért, otthon ül, elvan a rokiól, mint a befőtt és végigkommentelgeti unalmas napjait, ebből áll az élete.* ('although he is one of the harshest Fidesz trolls, he doesn't even get money for his trolling, he sits at home, he's doing fine from his disability benefits and he spends his boring days commenting, this is his life.'), the user explicitly rejects the idea of the troll getting paid for his trolling (Tsantarliotis et al., 2017: 1). Instead, he suggests that, since the troll is autistic, he is socially isolated, which makes him bored and consequently, he spends his days commenting. Thus, the troll is not only trolling because he is mildly autistic but also because he is bored and he is bored because he is socially isolated and he is socially isolated because he is mildly autistic.

(6.12) [labourlist_58_490]

*No wonder **99.9% of people who spend a considerable amount of time trolling political websites are sex-starved, frustrated losers.** [Username] may be one of the 0.1% who isn't, but I doubt it. **I suspect***

he's sat behind a computer surrounded by empty pot noodles and gets a cold sweat when he gets to close to ladies.

(6.13) [guido_229_3083]

A bit of advice to those who keep replying to [username]. You should be aware that the person you keep engaging with is, by his own admission, unemployed and unwilling to find work, which is why he's up posting till 3am every night. He is the archetypal friendless and jobless troll who spends upwards of 20 hours a day posting online. In other words, his opinions count for less than naught, because he is a sad lonely and socially inept troll, the kind whose entire connection to the outside world is through the internet, though it does inadvertently prove there's no cost of living crisis if someone can live off benefits and have broadband internet connection 24 hours a day. The reason he keeps posting is because he elicits a response. You're doing what he and every other troll wants. He's no different to the trolls who go on online memorial pages set up by grieving families and post vile jokes about the deceased. Stop feeding the troll and he'll get frustrated at failing to get a reaction. These reactions are the only pleasure he gets in his sad solitary existence, so stop providing it and let him rot away in his bedsit until he dies or a new government forces the lazy cunt to get off his arse and earn a living.

Examples (6.12) and (6.13) give a detailed overview of the trolls' assumed social background. In the first two sentences of Example (7.12), the user claims that, similarly to most trolls, the addressee is trolling because he is sexually frustrated. However, after attributing this emotional motive to the troll, the commenter focuses on his presumed social background in the second half of the comment. Notably, the clause *[the troll] gets a cold sweat when he gets to close to ladies* indicates that the troll is believed to be socially awkward and generally unsuccessful with women, which is why he is sexually frustrated. The other clause *he's sat behind a computer surrounded by empty pot noodles* implies that, similarly to Examples (6.10)–(6.11), the troll is socially isolated and spends most of his time on the internet (Hong & Cheng, 2018: 403). The verb phrase *surrounded by empty pot noodles* in the previous clause not only indicates the large amount of time the troll spends in front of his computer (Samory & Peserico, 2017:

6944) but it also suggests that he is careless about his health and surroundings as he only eats unhealthy Pot Noodles and instead of throwing the empty pots in the bin, he just leaves them around.

In Example (6.13), the troll is described as an unemployed and socially isolated individual who spends an excessive amount of time online. This social background is expressed by the sentences *[y]ou should be aware that the person you keep engaging with is, by his own admission, unemployed and unwilling to find work, which is why he's up posting till 3am every night. He is the archetypal friendless and jobless troll who spends upwards of 20 hours a day posting online.* In terms of direct emotional reasons for trolling, the comment suggests that the troll is lonely (*he is a sad lonely and socially inept troll*) and he is trolling because it fulfils his otherwise unsatisfied need for social interactions (*The reason he keeps posting is because he elicits a response. You're doing what he and every other troll wants*), and also because he enjoys it (*These reactions are the only pleasure he gets in his sad solitary existence*).

In sum, Examples (6.1)–(6.13) demonstrate that users tend to depict trolling as an emotionally, psychologically, and socially motivated individual behaviour (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 176) while trolls are portrayed as socially and even financially deprived, unsuccessful, or traumatised individuals who spend an excessive amount of time online and suffer from various mental health issues or emotional problems, such as unhappiness, loneliness, boredom, or envy, which they attempt to compensate for by trolling.

6.2. Troll motive (2): financial gain

The second troll motive is financial gain (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399). In Section 6.2, I analyse seven comments in which the commenters suggest that others are trolling because they are getting paid for it (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 261). As the selected examples illustrate, although Shachaf and Hara (2010: 366) and Tsantarliotis et al. (2017: 1) argue that trolls are not motivated by economic reasons, financial gain as a suspected motive for trolling appears in both corpora.

(6.14) [guardian_48_3718]

*He/she might be an individual expressing their own opinion, legitimate in a democracy whether you or I agree with it. Whereas **you could be described as a paid troll.***

(6.15) [varanusz_60_83]

*Azért mert **pénzért trollkods.***

*‘Because **you are trolling for money.**’*

In Example (6.14), the commenter uses the adjective *paid* within the clause *you could be described as a paid troll* to suggest that the addressee’s assumed motive for trolling is financial gain (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 261). In Example (7.15), the suffix *-ért* (‘for’) in *pénzért* (‘for money’) within the verb phrase *pénzért trollkods* (‘you are trolling money’) serves the same purpose.

(6.16) [conservativehome_24_225]

*What rubbish. [Username] is an engineer with considerable experience in the electricity industry. Moreover, he knows about our nuclear power stations intimately, having been directly involved with them. Our nuclear capacity is quite unsuited to performing a balancing role on the grid. If it were, you would see their output oscillating to match demand changes and supply shortfalls caused by lack of wind output. Evidently you have ever even bothered to check what actually happens. Try looking at the charts here. You picked the wrong argument with the wrong person. You are the one arguing for the sake of it. **Who pays your trolling wages?***

(6.17) [b1_4_26]

*Ej de szánalmasan **trollkods bértroll.** Most hogy elmenekültél a másik blogból a kérdések elől, még szánalmasabban tolod te kollaboráns bűnöző.*

*‘Wow **you’re trolling** really pathetically, **wage troll.** Now that you’ve fled from the other blog to avoid the questions, you are doing it even more pathetically, you collaborating criminal.’*

(7.18) [orulunk_25_599]

*kár volt beleakaszkodni a halott zsidó terroristába, ez a -legalább- 27. nick-je, most majd belép egy másikkal vagy eloldalgott...kavart egyet szokása szerint és most **megy a napidijáért, troll a drágám***

‘there was no sense in picking a fight with the dead Jewish terrorist, this is his, at least, 27th nickname, now he will log in with another one or he has sneaked away...he made some trouble as usual and now **he is going to get his daily wage, this cutie is a troll**’

Whilst Examples (6.14) and (6.15) only imply that the trolls are getting paid, Examples (6.16)–(6.18) also suggest that they receive payment for trolling as part of their employment (Mihaylov et al., 2015: 312), however, without specifying who employs and pays them. In Example (6.16), the noun phrase *your trolling wages* within the interrogative [*w*]ho pays your trolling wages? is used to indicate this.

In Example (6.17), the addressee is called a *bértroll* (‘wage troll’). The compound noun *bértroll* and especially *bér-* (‘wage’) as the first element of this compound evokes *bérmunkás* (‘wage worker’), which usually refers to daily or weekly paid, unskilled physical workers of low prestige. Thus, *bértroll* not only indicates that the alleged troll receives money for his activity (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 354) but it also implies that he is unskilled, of low prestige, and employed by someone. *Bértroll* can also evoke *bértapsoló* (‘wage applauder’), an informal pejorative word, which refers to those who are allegedly paid to cheer and clap at various political events.

In Example (6.18), the user mockingly assumes that the indirectly addressed troll will receive his daily wage for his activity in the ongoing interaction. The compound word *napidíj* (‘daily wage’) evokes a similar conceptual frame to that of *bértroll*. With this word, the commenter may imply that the alleged troll is an unskilled and consequently low-paid employee of low prestige.

(6.19) [guardian_54_6169]

That’s very poor trolling, you won’t get your £0.10 per word for that.

(6.20) [alternativa_2_119]

*Te szegény **bértrollka**, a hosszú hétvégén is szolgálatban vagy? Tudom kell az a **kommentenkénti 20 Ft** a megélhetésre meg a piára.*

‘You poor little **wage troll**, are you on duty over the long weekend as well? I know you need those **20 Hungarian forints per comment** for making a living and for booze.’

Examples (6.19) and (6.20) specify the rate of pay that the trolls are believed to receive. This is 10 pence per word in Example (6.19) and 20 Hungarian forints (approximately 5 pence) per comment in Example (6.20). These rates suggest that the trolls are poorly paid. In fact, depending on the length and number of comments the alleged troll posts a day, a pay rate of 10 pence per word could even be deemed high. However, Example (6.19) does not indicate that the alleged troll would be extremely active and 10 pence on its own holds very little value. Similarly, 20 forints per comment is an extremely low pay rate, even by Hungarian standards.

The analysis of Examples (6.14)–(6.20) shows that trolling is constructed as a financially motivated individual activity, a form of low-paid employment with low prestige whereas the trolls are depicted as unskilled, low-paid, and financially deprived employees at the absolute bottom of the labour market. The trolls are also portrayed as immoral since they have chosen to earn money with a widely disapproved activity. Finally, the trolls are also constructed as desperate since although they earn very little money with a despised job, they will not quit as they would be unable to find a better paid and more prestigious job.

6.3. Troll motive (3): political beliefs

The third troll motive includes various political beliefs (Saka, 2018: 164), suggesting that, contrary to Shachaf and Hara’s (2010: 368) argument, trolls are thought to be driven by ideology. In Section 6.3, I analyse eleven comments in which users argue that others are trolling because of their general political alignment (Dahlberg, 2001), their party preference (Hopkinson, 2013: 10), or their opinion on a particular political topic (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 27).

(6.21) [conservativehome_45_36]

You have obviously failed to read or understand Robin Aitken’s article. I believe that your “extreme” liberal/left views have altered your perceptions of the truth. This is based upon reading your many views

over some months. I'm fast coming to the conclusion that you're a wind up artist; in modern parlance a "troll".

(6.22) [orulunk_33_313]

[Username] egy szélsőjobbos troll

'[Username] is a **far-right troll**'

In Examples (6.21) and (6.22), the users imply that others are trolling because of their general political alignment (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2323). This is indicated by the noun phrase *your "extreme" liberal/left views* in Example (6.21) and by the adjective *szélsőjobbos* ('far-right') in Example (6.22). Notably, the commenters attribute extremist political views to the trolls in both comments (Hopkinson, 2013: 14), as suggested by the adjective *extreme* in Example (6.21) and by the compound element *szél-* ('far') in *szélsőjobbos* ('far-right') in Example (6.22). Thus, the users position the trolls' assumed political beliefs close to one of the end points of the left–right and the libertarian–authoritarian political spectra.

In both examples, the trolls' assumed political alignment is in conflict with the political position of the blog where the comment was posted (Hopkinson, 2013: 17). Example (6.21) comes from the centre-right *ConservativeHome*, which supports the Conservative Party, while the troll is believed to hold "extreme" liberal/left views. Similarly, while *Örülünk, Vincent?*, the blog where Example (6.22) was posted, is a left-wing blog, the troll is assumed to have far-right views. Thus, in these comments, the trolls are not only constructed as political extremists but also as outsiders (Hopkinson, 2013: 9) who do not share an ideological common ground with the blog and the majority of its visitors.

(6.23) [labourlist_178_522]

*[Username] supports the Conservative Party. **He's a Tory troll.***

(6.24) [mandiner_16_316]

*Nem süllyedek olyan mélyre, hogy **szemellenzős gyurcsány-imádó trollal** álljak szóba.*

'I won't sink so low that I would talk to a **blinker Gyurcsány-loving troll.**'

[Ferenc Gyurcsány is a Hungarian politician who is currently the leader of the *Demokratikus Koalíció (DK)* ('Democratic Coalition'), a left-wing parliamentary party in Hungary. He was the Prime Minister of Hungary between 2004 and 2009, supported by the left-wing *Magyar Szocialista Párt (MSZP)* ('Hungarian Socialist Party').]

In Examples (6.23) and (6.24), the users suggest that others are trolling because of their political party preference (Saka, 2018: 166). In Example (6.23), the commenter claims that the other participant supports the Conservative Party. Thus, the adjective *Tory* in the phrase *Tory troll* refers back to the troll's assumed party preference. In Example (6.24), the adjective *gyurcsány-imádó* ('Gyurcsány-loving') in the noun phrase *szemellenzős gyurcsány-imádó trollal* ('with a blinkered Gyurcsány-loving troll') metonymically indicates that the troll is believed to support the *Demokratikus Koalíció (DK)* ('Democratic Coalition'), a left-wing Hungarian party, as Ferenc Gyurcsány is the leader of the DK. The adjective *szemellenzős* ('blinkered') also indicates that the commenter considers the troll to be unable to question or reconsider his own political ideas.

Similarly to Examples (6.21)–(6.22), the trolls' suggested party preference differs from that of the blogs where Examples (6.23) and (6.24) were posted. Example (6.23) has been collected from *LabourList*, which explicitly supports the Labour Party, while the troll is thought to support the Conservative Party, the Labour Party's main political rival. Example (6.24) was posted on *Mandiner*, which clearly has a right-wing political alignment, while DK is a left-wing party. Perhaps even more importantly, Ferenc Gyurcsány as the former left-wing Prime Minister of Hungary between 2004 and 2009 is one of the most unpopular active politicians in Hungary, especially among those on the right side of the political spectrum.

(6.25) [bellacaledonia_41_45]

*To the **unionist trolls** who are infecting Bella. Why don't YOU give up your notional ideas that Scotland is better as a member of the UK. In light of current rabid attacks from the English media and WM [i.e. Westminster] politicians it doesn't seem like it to me. I believe Scotland would be better as an Independent country when we could leave all that behind us. And please stop using BIG Words to try to make your points.*

They don't convince anyone. There is still no substance to your arguments.

In Example (6.25), the commenter uses the adjective *unionist* and the clause *your notional ideas that Scotland is better as a member of the UK* to express the idea that the addressed trolls are trolling because of their opinion on a particular political question (Flores-Saviaga, et al. 2018: 82), namely on the independence of Scotland from the UK. While *Bella Caledonia* is a pro-independence Scottish blog and with the sentence *I believe Scotland would be better as an Independent country*, the commenter also confirms that he supports Scottish independence, the trolls are suggested to believe that Scotland should remain in the UK. Thus, the trolls are also constructed as political outsiders in this comment (Hopkinson, 2013: 9), however not because their general political alignment or party preference would differ from those of the blog and the commenter but because they disagree on a key political question.

(6.26) [guardian_12_6252]

Of course these far-left trolls cannot imagine anyone sincerely holding views that differ from their own. That is how they operate, they are narrow-minded, ideologically driven bigots of authoritarian disposition. They are manic and utterly obsessed by dogma, a world view shaped by a failed and outdated Marxist outlook. Many of them have the sort of ideological one-track minds that led a previous generation of the far left to be unreflective apologists for Soviet barbarism, what Lenin called the USSR's 'useful idiots' in the west. Too many sociology 2/2s with no useful employment to occupy them and with too much time on their hands.

(6.27) [b1_55_312]

Ja, Vitya választást nyert. Az eredménye az, amit felsoroltam fönt. És erre az eredményre nyáladzik az egybites szektás narancstroll. Bár ha sok is itt a hülye, azért csak józanodnak, a rendszerváltás óta nem esett ekkorát párt népszerűsége, mint a narancsbolsiké. Még pár ilyen hónap, aztán ottmaradtok Vitya valagában egyedül. Vagy ha már nagyon ég a ház, akkor azért kerestek majd gyorsan egy másik nyálható segget?

‘Yeah, Vitya has won the elections. Its outcome is what I listed above. And **the one-bit sectarian orange troll** is drooling over this outcome. However, although there are plenty of morons here, they are sobering up, no party’s popularity has fallen so much since the [political] system change as that of the orange Bolshies. Some similar months and you will stay alone in Vitya’s ass. Or if the house is already completely on fire, will you quickly look for another ass to lick?’

[*Vitya* is an informal and mocking nickname for Viktor Orbán, the leader of Fidesz, who has been the Hungarian Prime Minister since 2010. *Egybites* (‘one-bit’) means silly and orange is the official colour and (former) symbol of Fidesz. *Bolsi* (‘Bolshie’) is a colloquial and derogatory form of *bolsevik* (‘Bolshevik’). *Rendszerváltás* (‘system change’) refers to Hungary’s transition to democracy in 1989–90.]

(6.28) [varanusz_58_493]

“a közhelyes propaganda szöveget egzakt tényekkel lehet megtorpedózni” Na ne, ez te sem gondolhatod komolyan. Egy hithű fanatikusnak tényeket? Meg sem hallja, nemhogy rést ütne a páncélján. A másik indokod inkább elfogadható, de ehhez meg nem kell a troll.

“‘the banal propaganda text can be torpedoed by exact facts’ No way, you can’t be serious about this. Facts for **a faithful fanatic**? He won’t even hear them, let alone would let them breach his armour. Your other argument is more acceptable, but **we don’t need the troll for that.**’

Examples (6.26)–(6.28) illustrate that, when commenters suggest that others are trolling because of their political beliefs, they tend to emphasise the extremism and bigotry of these political beliefs and describe the trolls as ideologically purist, ignorant, and intolerant political fanatics (Coles & West, 2016b: 240). The words *bigots* and *dogma* in Example (6.26), *szektás* (‘sectarian’) in Example (6.27), and *hithű* (‘faithful’) in Example (6.28) evoke the conceptual frame of religious fanaticism. The commenters use these words to point out that, similarly to religious fanatics, the trolls are unable to critically assess their own views and accept that other views exist and at least have some merit. This ultimately implies that the trolls are deemed unable to engage in meaningful argumentative political discourse.

In Example (6.26), the user describes the trolls as ignorant far-left bigots who are utterly obsessed with the Marxist ideology. Their ignorance is pointed out by the expressions *these far-left trolls cannot imagine anyone sincerely holding views that differ from their own* and *they are narrow-minded, ideologically driven bigots* whereas the clauses *[t]hey are manic and utterly obsessed by dogma* and *[m]any of them have the sort of ideological one-track minds* emphasise their complete obsession with Marxism.

In Example (6.27), the pejorative *egybités* ('one-bit', i.e. silly) and *szektás* ('sectarian') are used to construct the addressee as a closed-minded religious bigot with limited intellectual capacity (Maltby et al., 2016: 461). As orange is the official colour and (former) symbol of Fidesz, the compound *narancstroll* ('orange troll') clearly implies that the sect the troll is believed to belong to consists of the keenest Fidesz supporters.

In Example (6.28), the user refers to the troll as a *hithű fanatikus* ('faithful fanatic'), using the conceptual frame of religious fanaticism to highlight the extremism and bigotry of the alleged troll's assumed political beliefs. The expression *hithű fanatikus* suggests that the troll, similarly to religious fanatics, is so deeply attached to his beliefs that he is unable to take other opinions into account (Coles & West, 2016b: 240). The expression *rést ütne a páncélján* ('would breach his armour') also implies that the alleged troll completely ignores the facts.

(6.29) [guardian_65_9994]

Tory trollbots, the great brainwashed of Britain.

(6.30) [b1_32_5]

Ilyen gazdag szókincsel és ennyi szeretet, empátiát sugárzó hozzászólással csak valami KDNP-hittérítő lehetsz, vagy valami agymosott fidióta troll.

'With this rich vocabulary and with so many comments radiating love and empathy, **you must be one of those KDNP missionaries or brainwashed 'fidiot' trolls.**'

[*Fidióta* is a blend word that combines *fidesz(es)* ('Fidesz (supporter)') and *idióta* ('idiot').]

In Examples (6.29) and (6.30), the commenters use the word *brainwashed* and its Hungarian equivalent, *agymosott*, to represent the trolls as individuals who unquestioningly believe the political messages of the governing parties, the Conservative Party in the UK and Fidesz in Hungary. *Brainwashed* and *agymosott* also imply that, rather than convincing the voters with legitimate arguments, the governing parties systematically manipulate the public to keep their power (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399). Thus, Examples (6.29) and (6.30) criticise not only the suspected trolls but also the governing parties since, to some extent, the trolls are portrayed as victims of the manipulative political propaganda spread by the governing parties. However, the comments also suggest that the trolls are intellectually inferior to other users as the trolls believe the propaganda whereas others are able to resist it. In Example (6.29), the word form *trollbot* also indicates that the troll is considered to be unable to think independently (Broniatowski et al., 2018: 1382) and only repeats the Conservative Party's political messages.

In Example (6.30), the user offers two equally pejorative identities to the addressee. According to the first one, he is a KDNP missionary. KDNP (Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt ('Christian Democratic People's Party')) is a Christian conservative party, the coalition partner of Fidesz. KDNP is highly rejected and often considered only an insignificant satellite party of Fidesz on the Hungarian left-wing political blogs, such as *BI*, as commenters believe that KDNP lacks public support and it would not be a parliamentary party without the support of Fidesz. This label therefore also evokes the above-mentioned pejorative conceptual frame of religious fanaticism. The other alternative is that the addressee is a brainwashed 'fidiot' troll. The adjectives *agymosott* ('brainwashed') and *fidióta*, a blend that combines *fidesz(es)* ('Fidesz (supporter)') and *idióta* ('idiot'), emphasise that the addressee is thought to be closed-minded, unable to think independently, and willing to believe everything the main governing party says (Coles & West, 2016b: 240).

(6.31) [guardian_137_8647]

I'm not calling "nearly 50% of the population" cybernats. Just that minority, like yourself, who have nothing better to do every day but troll, insult, and bemoan everyone who doesn't meet your standard of ideological purity. Here I am saying that the demonisation of the SNP is crazy, and instead you attack me for not agreeing with you on

*everything. It is precisely **people like you** - not independence supporters, not even SNP supporters, but **trolling fanatics** who give the causes your trying to argue for a bad name.*

[*Cybernat* is a pejorative term that refers to the abusive online supporters of Scottish independence and the Scottish National Party (SNP).]

Example (6.31) illustrates those comments in which users suggest that others are trolling not because of what they believe but specifically because they are extremely obsessed with their own political beliefs and completely intolerant of those who do not share these. In the last sentence of Example (6.31), the commenter makes a clear distinction between regular Scottish independence/SNP supporters and intolerant political fanatics who also happen to support Scottish independence and the SNP and calls only the latter trolls. He also argues in the first two sentences that the addressee is trolling because he is unable to accept that others might disagree with him. Therefore, unlike in Examples (6.21)–(6.25), the troll is depicted as a political outsider (Hopkinson, 2013: 9) not because he holds completely different political views to the commenter who calls him a troll or to the blog where they are posting but because of his suspected intolerance towards other political views.

In sum, when participants suggest that others are trolling because of their political beliefs, trolling is represented as an ideologically driven individual behaviour (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2323) while trolls are portrayed as intellectually inferior (Maltby et al., 2016: 461), delusional, ignorant, intolerant, and extremist political fanatics (Coles & West, 2016b: 240) who are unable to question and reconsider their own political ideas or to engage in argumentative political discourse.

6.4. Troll motive (4): being employed by a political body

Commenters also suggest that some users are trolling because they are employed by a political body (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 354), such as various British political parties, the British Government, the European Union, Russia, or Israel in the British corpus and various Hungarian political parties, the Hungarian Government, the European Union, or Russia in the Hungarian corpus. Thus, this motive is associated

with trolling in both corpora and the political bodies that are believed to employ the trolls are similar as well.

The key difference between this motive and the second one is that under this motive, I analyse comments in which the participants not only suggest that others are trolling because they are employed but they also specify the political body that is believed to employ the trolls. However, when I discussed financial gain as a motive for trolling in Section 6.2, I focused on those comments in which participants assume that others are trolling because they are getting paid for it. Some of those comments may imply that the trolls receive payment as part of their employment but they never specify who employs the trolls.

(6.32) [guardian_129_6462]

*Nice **trolling from a Tory Party Central Office intern. Hopefully, come the 11th, you'll be signing on as unemployed.***

(6.33) [guido_306_152]

Ten to five and Labours trolls are still in the office?

(6.34) [guardian_139_9043]

*Don't worry, in a few weeks all **the UKIP trolls' contracts will expire, Farage will have them shipped back to Latvia before running off to be a full-time Fox pundit and ending up going all Midnight Cowboy, and you won't be able to find anyone who'll admit to remembering what a Ewkips is.***

Examples (6.32)–(6.35) list the British political parties that are believed to employ trolls in the British troll motive comments. These are the Conservative Party in Example (6.32), the Labour Party in Example (6.33), and UKIP in Example (6.34). With the items *intern* and *unemployed* in Example (6.32), *ten to five* and *in the office* in Example (6.33), and *contracts* in Example (6.34), the commenters depict trolling as a job (Mihaylov et al., 2015: 312). In Example (6.32), the *Tory Party Central Office* refers to the troll's workplace and *intern* to his position within the Conservative Party. In Example (6.33), the phrases *ten to five* and *in the office* depict trolling as an average nine-to-five office job whereas the clause *Farage will have them shipped back to Latvia* in Example (6.34) suggests that then-UKIP leader, Nigel Farage directly supervises the UKIP trolls. The clause also implies that the UKIP trolls come from Latvia. Given that UKIP is a

Eurosceptic party that opposed the 2004 enlargement of the European Union into Eastern Europe and has proposed a radical reduction of immigration from the rest of Europe and especially from Eastern Europe, the suggestion that UKIP employs Latvian trolls depicts UKIP and its former leader as highly hypocritical. Hence, the comment demonstrates that participants use the troll motive comments to mock or criticise politicians and political bodies, as further shown by the non-highlighted second part of the comment as well.

(6.35) [B1 22072015]

*Mi van **ostoba fizetett fidesztroll**? Június 1.-ével **álltál munkába a tolvaj fidesznél**?*

‘What’s up **silly paid Fidesz troll**? Did you **start working at the thief Fidesz** on 1 June?’

(6.36) [w_13_212]

*Ez csak **jobbikos bértroll**, náci könyvtári idézetekkel piacol.*

‘This is only a **Jobbik wage troll**, he is selling Nazi library quotes.’

Examples (6.35) and (6.36) specify the Hungarian political parties that are thought to employ trolls in the Hungarian corpus. These are Fidesz, the main governing party and Jobbik (Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (‘Movement for a Better Hungary’)), a radical nationalist party, which has had the third largest faction in the Hungarian National Assembly since 2010. The noun phrases *fizetett fidesztroll* (‘paid fidesztroll’) in Example (6.35) and *jobbikos bértroll* (‘Jobbik wage troll’) in Example (6.36) indicate that as part of their employment, the trolls are believed to receive payment for their trolling from the above-mentioned political parties (Mihaylov et al., 2015: 313).

(6.37) [leftfootforward_43_43]

*Y’know I realise **you are a troll, and probably a government employed one too**. You forget about those who worked very hard all their lives (see that ATM you were just using? Who wrote the software?), but have been hit with ill health later on. I’ve had a stroke with complications. It affects me quite severely and my attempt to “work through it” nearly killed me. No you don’t get treated any better than someone willfully not working – in fact in some ways worse. I’d work if I could – I love*

my job, but the stark fact is that it would kill me in around 3 months. I'm trying to balance doing something with "not dying". Thats a hard one. Remember we wrote the software that structures your life for good or ill – not this amateur rubbish Drunken-Schitt is spending millions on. We know its strengths and weaknesses. Especially the weaknesses. Ever seen a crashed ATM? Think on.

(6.38) [orulunk_34_39]

*Látom **most neveztek ki a Miniszterelnökségen ügyeletes trollkodónak.***
(március 5)

'I see that you have now been appointed as a troller on duty at the Prime Minister's Office. (5 March)'

In Examples (6.37) and (6.38), the users suggest that the British and Hungarian governments employ trolls. This is indicated by the adjectival phrase *government employed* in Example (6.37) whereas in Example (6.38), the addressee is called not simply a troll but an *ügyeletes trollkodó* ('troller on duty'), who has been appointed to this position at the Prime Minister's Office, which is a key ministry in the Hungarian Government. Thus, this comment constructs being a troll as an actual position in a governmental institution of significant executive power (Saka, 2018: 167), with direct contact to the Prime Minister of Hungary.

(6.39) [guardian_2_24]

*Many thanks for your comment, glad to see that **your Brussels troll desk job** is up and running early today.*

(6.40) [w_14_185]

*[Username]! Mint **bértroll (brüsszeli fizetéssel)** sem érdemelsz sok figyelmet. Ez a gázmizéria egy hatalmas lódítás. Kérdezd a met-et, mennyiért lehet beszerezni gázt a szabadpiacon. A felhasználók mennyiért kapják (be) azt tudják.*

'[Username]! As a wage troll (with wages from Brussels), you don't deserve much attention. This gas issue is a huge exaggeration. Ask MET for the gas prices on the free market. They know how much the consumers pay.

[MET is a group of companies that focuses on energy trading in general and natural gas, power, and oil transportation and storage in particular.]

(6.41) [guido_86_148]

*Well said [username] you can tell this one is not a native speaker. English a bit too correct and somewhat stilted and then giveaway at the end viz “frying pan calling the kettle black” instead of ‘pot’. Dead giveaway. **Kremlin troll***

(6.42) [varanusz_42_1481]

*Neki magyarázod? **Ő** (is) egy **beépített, orosz troll**.*

‘Are you explaining it to him? **He is** (also) **an undercover Russian troll.**’

(6.43) [labourlist_364_665]

*Another **Hasbara TROLL**.*

Examples (6.39)–(6.43) enumerate the other political entities that are believed to employ trolls. These are the European Union in Examples (6.39)–(6.40), Russia in Examples (6.41)–(6.42) (Aro, 2016), and Israel in Example (6.43). In Examples (6.39)–(6.40), *Brussels* metonymically refers to the European Union and the noun phrases *your Brussels desk job* in Example (6.39) and *bértroll (brüsszeli fizetéssel)* (‘wage troll (with wages from Brussels)’) identify the trolls as employees of the European Union.

In Example (6.41), *Kremlin* stands for the Russian government and thus, the noun phrase *Kremlin troll* metonymically implies that the troll is employed by the Russian government (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 352). *Beépített* (‘undercover’) serves the same purpose in Example (6.42) as evoking the expression *beépített ügynök* (‘undercover agent’), it implies that the addressee is trolling on behalf of Russia (Baraniuk, 2017: 240). Finally, the Hebrew word *Hasbara* (‘explanation’) in Example (6.43) refers to the Israeli government’s public relations efforts to explain and justify Israeli policies, to disseminate positive information about Israel, and to promote positive attitudes towards the country. Therefore, *Hasbara* indicates that the troll is believed to work for the Israeli government and thus, trolling is constructed as part of Israel’s public diplomacy.

(6.44) [guardian_62_7959]

*There's a room somewhere. A **dungeon**, filled with **Tory trolls** whose **only job is to make negative comment on websites such as this one. These sad unloved creatures work long hours, only allowed one cup of water a day, brought to them by a poor person so they can slap him and feel like they're contributing to Tory hegemony. If they reach their daily quota of anti-labour/anti-corbyn posts they're allowed a sniff of David Cameron's dirty underpants. True fact.***

(6.45) [guardian_93_1523]

*The trolls seem to work 24/7 when required. And I believe **their friend Gideon** knows how to stay alert for long periods.*

[Gideon mockingly refers to George Gideon Oliver Osborne, a Conservative Party politician, who served as Chancellor of Exchequer under Prime Minister David Cameron between May 2010 and July 2016.]

(6.46) [guardian_125_7716]

*From the number of one line posts from **CCHQ Tory trolls**, it seems **they don't even get Bank Holidays off. They probably got a phone call this morning telling them they had some work today [sic]. That's zero hours for you I suppose.***

[CCHQ stands for the Conservative Campaign Headquarters in Westminster, which houses the Conservative Party's central staff and committee members.]

(6.47) [guardian_124_23296]

*I actually think **the late night CCHQ trolls** are sort of sweet. They think that they're going somewhere in the party, but, my friends, **if the SPAds and Comms have got you up at this hour, doing this, then you're going nowhere. I'm only up at this hour because my daughter is teething.***

[SPAd, a shortening of *special adviser*, refers to government advisers in a political or media role whereas *Comms* stands for *communications adviser*.]

While Examples (6.32)–(6.43) demonstrated that several political entities are believed to employ trolls, the Conservative Party trolls' employment is discussed in the greatest detail in the comments, mainly, as the comment headings show, on the *Guardian Politics Blog*. This is illustrated by Examples (6.44)–(6.47), which imply that the trolls employed by the Conservative Party work under poor conditions (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 354). All four comments suggest that the Conservative Party trolls need to work long and unsocial hours (Aro, 2016: 125). This is indicated by the constructions *[t]hese sad unloved creatures work long hours* in Example (6.44), *[t]he trolls seem to work 24/7* in Example (6.45), *they don't even get Bank Holidays off* in Example (6.46), and *the late night CCHQ trolls* in Example (6.47).

Beyond suggesting that the Conservative Party trolls are required to work long hours, Example (6.44) also mockingly implies that they are severely maltreated and exploited slaves who work in an underground prison cell, only get one cup of water a day, and are paid by being allowed to smell Prime Minister David Cameron's used underwear. Thus, the comment grossly degrades the so-called *Tory trolls* (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 39) as it describes them as those at the absolute bottom of the Conservative Party hierarchy.

Furthermore, the words *dungeon*, referring to the trolls' workplace, and *creatures*, denoting the trolls, are also used to dehumanise the trolls as by evoking the concept of troll as an aggressive but slow-witted, cave-dwelling monster (Dynel, 2016: 355), they portray the trolls as subhuman beings. The trolls' suggested aggressive nature is exemplified by the clause *they can slap him*. However, the clause *they can [...] feel like they're contributing to Tory hegemony* also indicates that the trolls are delusional as it implies that, contrary to their beliefs, the trolls are in fact not contributing to the Conservative Party's political hegemony. Thus, it depicts the Conservative Party trolls' job, namely posting anti-Labour/anti-Corbyn comments, as highly demanding but ultimately insignificant and ineffective.

In Example (6.45), the noun phrase *their friend Gideon* associates the trolls with the Conservative Party as *Gideon* refers to George Gideon Oliver Osborne, a prominent Conservative politician at that time. The sentence *I believe their friend Gideon knows how to stay alert for long periods* not only indicates that the trolls are required to work for long periods but also mocks George Osborne as it alludes to the rumours that Osborne might have taken cocaine as a university student.

In Example (6.46), *CCHQ* in the noun phrase *CCHQ Tory trolls* stands for the Conservative Campaign Headquarters. Thus, the phrase indicates that the trolls are employed by the Conservative Party. The sentence *[t]hey probably got a phone call this morning telling them they had some work tod[a]y* implies that the trolls are working on an on-call basis whereas the clause *[t]hat's zero hours for you* suggests that the Conservative Party employs trolls on a zero-hours contract. Thus, the comment frames trolling as a highly insecure, ad hoc, low-paid type of employment with low prestige.

In Example (6.47), the sentence *if the SPAds [i.e. special advisers] and Comms [i.e. communications advisers] have got you up at this hour, doing this, then you're going nowhere* suggests that, similarly to Example (6.44), the CCHQ trolls are at the bottom of the Conservative Party hierarchy without any hope of securing a higher position. The clause *the SPAds and Comms have got you up at this hour* also implies that the Conservative Party's special advisers and communications advisers instruct the CCHQ trolls. Hence, trolling is described as an integral part of the Conservative Party's public relations and media strategy.

(6.48) [guardian_146_6649]

Dear oh dear. It seems that Lynton Crosby is hiring 12 year old boys to do his trolling for him these days. Desperate.

(6.49) [guardian_161_3816]

The troll army really are scrabbling around in the dust now. Lynton's probably threatened to ban cigarette breaks if they don't come up with something good soon. I won't hold my breath.

Examples (6.48)–(6.49) suggest that Lynton Crosby hires and directly supervises the Conservative Party trolls. Crosby is an Australian political strategist who has managed several election campaigns for the Conservative Party since 2005. Hence, trolling is depicted not only as a part of the Conservative Party's general public relations and media strategy but also as an instrument consistently used in their 2015 general election campaign (Berghel & Berleant, 2018: 46). The metaphorical expression *troll army* in Example (6.49) also implies that trolling is a centrally organised hostile activity, a means of online political warfare (Spruds et al., 2016).

The assumed motive that trolls are employed by a political body has four explicitly discussed recurring components, which apply not only to the Conservative Party trolls

but also to trolls suspected to be employed by other political bodies. These are as follows: the political body that employs the trolls (1) sends them to specific blogs, (2) tells them how to troll, (3) financially supports their activity, and (4) also provides them with organised training sessions. These components will be discussed in Subsections 6.4.1–6.4.4.

6.4.1. A political body sends the trolls to specific blogs

The first recurring component that users mention when discussing the troll's employment in the troll motive comments is that the political body that employs the trolls sends them to specific blogs (Aro, 2016: 122).

(6.50) [guardian_140_7304]

*CCHQ seems to **have concentrated all its effort into sending Tory trolls** swarming to these comments **here**. Never has a party been this desperate.*

(6.51) [labourlist_17_456]

*What has happened on this site is a **Tory Party operation**. The same happened on YouGov. **Tory Central office is simply filling up Labour List with their rubbish trolls**. Why Labour List don't take action is beyond me. These people have nothing decent to say about the Labour Party, come on Labour List, clear away the **Tory trash** from this site.*

[YouGov is an internet-based market research and data analytics firm, which publishes the results of its opinion polls on its website, yougov.co.uk. Visitors can also take part in various online polls on the YouGov website.]

(6.52) [guido_45_755]

*Anyone noticed that we seem to have a different **Corbynista troll** on every day. [Username] being the latest. I guess **Corbyn sends them here** for our entertainment. Come on [username], where are you?*

In Examples (6.50)–(6.52), the users suggest that the trolls are trolling on the blogs where the troll motive comments were posted because a political party has instructed them to do so. This party is the Conservative Party in Examples

(6.50)–(6.51) and the Labour Party, metonymically marked by its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, in Example (6.52). This is indicated by the clauses *CCHQ* [the Conservative Campaign Headquarters] *seems to have concentrated all its effort into sending Tory trolls [...]* here in Example (6.50), *Tory Central office is simply filling up Labour List with their rubbish trolls* in Example (6.51), and *Corbyn sends them here* in Example (6.52).

A common characteristic of these clauses is that the political parties are represented as agents whereas the trolls are depicted as patients in Examples (6.50) and (6.52) or instruments in Example (6.51). This suggests that the trolls are not active but passive participants who do not act independently but simply follow orders and visit those blogs that they have been told to (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 354). The verb *swarming* in Example (6.50) and the noun phrase *Tory party operation* in Example (6.51) further emphasise the trolls' suspected inability to act independently, metaphorically depicting trolling as a centrally organised, collective activity, during which the trolls – akin to eusocial insects, such as ants or bees – work in large groups on the blogs that they have been sent to (Golf-Papez & Veer, 2017: 1341).

(6.53) [varanusz_47_791]

*Mi sem bizonyítja jobban az **orbáni rendszer** erózióját, hogy **egyre primitívebb gondolkodású egyedeket küldenek trollkodni.***

‘Nothing proves the erosion of the **Orbán system** better than the fact that **they are sending individuals with more and more primitive thinking to troll.**’

(6.54) [koznaplo_2_200]

*Ez egy **fizetett fidesztroll**, **30 ezüstöt kap** a tartótisztjától **hogy ide járjon.***

‘This is a paid Fidesz troll, he gets thirty pieces of silver from his handler to come here.’

Example (6.53) suggests that as part of the so-called Orbán system, trolls are being sent to the *Varánusz* blog and possibly to other blogs whilst in Example (6.54), the commenter identifies a participant as a Fidesz troll who receives payment for visiting the blog *Köznapló*. Thus, similarly to Examples (6.50)–(6.52), these comments imply

that it is not the trolls who decide where they will be trolling but the political body that employs them, namely the Hungarian government, metonymically marked by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, in Example (6.53) and the Fidesz party in Example (6.54).

The noun phrase *orbáni rendszer* ('Orbán system') in Example (6.53) evokes *Kádár-rendszer* ('Kádár system'), which refers to the Kádár era between 1956 and 1989 when Hungary was a Communist one-party state, de facto led by János Kádár, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt or MSZMP), the only political party in Hungary between 1956 and 1989. Thus, *orbáni rendszer* depicts the current Hungarian government as similar to the rejected Kádár system and consequently, the trolls are constructed as collaborators who serve an autocratic political system.

In Example (6.54), the noun phrase *30 ezüstöt* ('thirty pieces of silver') evokes the price for which Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus, according to an account in the Gospel of Matthew 26:15 in the New Testament. Therefore, it is used as a Christian symbol for treachery and portrays the troll as an immoral traitor. The commenter also refers to the Fidesz employee who pays the troll and has sent him to the *Köznapló* blog as a *tartótiszt* ('handler'). The word *tartótiszt* evokes the entire Communist era of Hungary between 1948 and 1989, as it usually refers to those state security officers who recruited informers to gather information about individuals and organizations deemed dangerous to the political security of Hungary. Hence, the noun *tartótisztjétől* ('from his handler') frames Fidesz as an authoritarian state party, similar to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, which puts its political opponents under surveillance and portrays the troll as an informer of an authoritarian state party.

6.4.2. A political body tells the trolls how to troll

In Examples (6.55)–(6.58), the users suggest that the political bodies that employ the trolls not only send them to specific blogs but also give them detailed instructions on how they should troll (Llewellyn et al., 2018: 361).

(6.55) [guardian_52_6599]

Tory headquarters, internet troll section, plan B: pretend to be a disheartened Labour voter, spread defetism.

(6.56) [b1_11_118]

A gazdád ezt mondta az eligazításon balfasz fidesztroll, hogy ezt kell hazudni a blogokon? Mellesleg kommunistaszombat van a fidesz pártszékházban?

‘Did your master tell you at the briefing to spread this lie on blogs, dumbfuck Fidesz troll? By the way, is it Communist Saturday in the Fidesz party headquarters?’

Example (6.55) suggests that there is a Conservative Party trolling plan, according to which their trolls need to pretend that they are Labour voters who do not believe that the Labour Party would be able to win the 2015 General Election. Similarly, the user sarcastically implies in Example (6.56) that the addressee attended a briefing in the Fidesz party headquarters where he was instructed to spread lies on different blogs.

In Example (6.56), the word *gazdád* (‘your master’) also suggests that the person who gave the instructions on how to troll has full authority over the accused troll and consequently, the alleged troll himself only follows orders (Saka, 2018: 167). Similarly to Examples (6.53)–(6.54), the expression *kommunistaszombat* (‘Communist Saturday’) evokes the Communist era of Hungary when, following the Soviet practice, workers were required to work “voluntarily” on certain Saturdays “to build the socialist society”. With this pejorative construction, Fidesz is depicted as a Communist state party, similar to the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, the only political party in Hungary between 1956 and 1989, while the troll is constructed as a regular party worker who needs to work for the party even on Saturdays.

(6.57) [labourlist_93_327]

Why would anyone respond to someone who can't even write his/her/it's own opinions down? He/she/it is merely passing copied information passed by some nobody at CCHQ for trolling purposes on this site. By all means reply. But you may as well reply to a I speak your weight machine" It doesn't do analytical replies. In short he/she/it is a Tory troll.

(6.58) [szeged_11_821]

hozzájuk képest egy kiszáradt béka is sokat gondolkodik, ezek ugyanis nem gondolkodnak hanem bemásolják amit a Habony-Finkelstein

gyűlölet-duó szétküld nekik emilben. Ők ilyen CTRL-C - CTRL-V trollok.

‘Compared to them, even a dried-out frog thinks a lot since **these don’t think at all but they just copy what the Habony-Finkelstein hate duo sends them in email. They are a kind of CTRL-C – CTRL-V trolls.**’

[Árpád Habony and Arthur J. Finkelstein are political consultants, closely associated with Fidesz.]

While Examples (6.55)–(6.56) only specify the deceptive discourse strategies that the trolls have been told to follow, Examples (6.57)–(6.58) also suggest that the trolls have been given word-for-word instructions on what exactly they should say in their comments. This is indicated by the sentence *[h]e/she/it is merely passing copied information passed by some nobody at CCHQ for trolling purposes on this site* in Example (6.57) and by the clause *bemásolják amit a Habony-Finkelstein gyűlölet-duó szétküld nekik emilben* (‘they just copy what the Habony-Finkelstein hate duo sends them in email’) and the noun phrase *CTRL-C - CTRL-V trollok* (‘CTRL-C – CTRL-V trolls’) in Example (6.58). *CCHQ* indicates that the troll is employed by the Conservative Party in Example (6.57) whereas the noun phrase *Habony-Finkelstein gyűlölet-duó* (‘Habony-Finkelstein hate duo’) implies that the trolls are employed by Fidesz in Example (6.58) as it refers to Árpád Habony and Arthur J. Finkelstein, two political consultants, closely associated with Fidesz. Consequently, the comments suggest that the Conservative Party and Fidesz have full control over what their trolls are posting and the trolls are depicted as subordinates who, rather than sharing their own political opinion, merely repeat the governing parties’ pre-defined political messages as instructed (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 349), and thus, it is not worth engaging with them.

6.4.3. A political body sponsors the trolls

In Examples (6.59)–(6.63), the users suggest that as part of their employment, the trolls receive payment from the political bodies that employ them (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399). A crucial difference between these comments and those discussed under the motive ‘financial gain’ in Section 6.2 is that these comments not only imply that the

trolls are trolling for financial gain but they also specify the political bodies that are believed to employ the trolls.

(6.59) [guido_119_46]

*'Fuck you on about? I've noticed that you've commented about 40 times in the hour that I've been busy. You comment on anything and everything. You just can't stop posting. **You're paid by the post. You're a Fucking Paid Tory Troll.** Keep posting, son, keep those **2p post bonuses** rolling in. It's sure to get you above **the minimum wage typically paid by CCHQ.** Fucking sad Bastard.*

(6.60) [1000amihazank_21_312]

*Pedig jobb, ha tudod, hogy nemcsak [username] gondolja, hogy te **"Pártunk és Kormányunk" fizetett trollja vagy**, hanem a nagy többség - engem is beleértve.*

*'But you should know that not only [username] thinks that **you're a paid troll of "Our Party and Government"** but the large majority, including me, as well.'*

In Example (6.59), the user calls the addressee a *paid Tory troll*, implying that the suspected troll is employed and paid by the Conservative Party, more precisely by the Conservative Campaign Headquarters as indicated by *CCHQ* later in the comment. Similarly to Examples (6.19)–(6.20), the noun phrases *2p post bonuses* and *minimum wage typically paid by CCHQ* depict trolling as a low-paid job.

In Example (6.60), the noun phrase *Pártunk és Kormányunk* ('Our Party and Government') refers to Fidesz as the Hungarian governing party and the right-wing Hungarian government, implying that the troll is employed by them. However, this expression has another discursive function as well. Similarly to Examples (6.53), (6.54), and (6.56), *Pártunk és Kormányunk* evokes the Communist era of Hungary and depicts Fidesz as an authoritarian and undemocratic state party and the troll as a political collaborator. This is because *Pártunk és Kormányunk* used to refer to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and Hungary's Communist government, emphasising that Hungary was a one-party state in the Communist era where the state party always gave the government and thus, the state party and the government were considered virtually inseparable.

(6.61) [labourlist_259_190]

*Hmmm, so **the Conservatives pay sneaky little trolls to trawl the internet** pretending to take genuine part in conversations but actually just **spreading endless propaganda**, stirring up trouble, then if somebody tells you to bog off, go, ‘ooh, that’s not very kind is it.’
Seriously though, ‘Bog off!’*

(6.62) [conservativehome_29_344]

*Appreciate that sentiment. One of them could well be **a Euro-Socialist, propagandist Troll - subsidised by the EU and operating out of a Brussels office.***

(6.63) [b1_4_361]

*Muhaha! Gyenge próbálkozás, előttd ezt a viccet már legalább **5 fidesztroll** ellőtte. De az ilyen hozzászólásokért is fizet a fideszes agitprop osztály, nem sajnálják a közpénzt, hiszen nem az övék. Tolvaj banda!*

‘Hahaha! Poor try, at least **5 Fidesz trolls** have already cracked this joke before you. **But the Fidesz agitprop department pays for these comments as well**, they don’t care about public money as it’s not theirs.
Thief gang!’

Examples (6.61)–(6.63) suggest that various political bodies, such as the Conservative Party in Example (6.61), the European Union in Example (6.62), and Fidesz in Example (6.63) pay trolls to disseminate their propaganda (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399). This is indicated by the clause *the Conservatives pay sneaky little trolls to trawl the internet* [...] *spreading endless propaganda* in Example (6.61), the noun phrase *a Euro-Socialist, propagandist Troll - subsidised by the EU* in Example (6.62), and the clause *az ilyen hozzászólásokért is fizet a fideszes agitprop osztály* (‘the Fidesz agitprop department pays for these comments as well’) in Example (6.63). As *propaganda* is not a neutral word in either English or Hungarian, these comments imply that the above-mentioned political bodies are immoral as instead of transparently communicating their political agenda, they attempt to systematically manipulate public opinion in order to keep their political power (Aro, 2016: 125). As trolling is associated with political propaganda in these comments, it is represented as a form of manipulative political

communication (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 261). This is especially prevalent in Example (6.63) where the user also suggests that Fidesz has an agitprop (agitation and propaganda) department that pays for trolling comments and uses public money for this purpose. As the word *agitprop* is strongly associated with the highly rejected (Soviet) Communism, it implies that, similarly to the Communist state parties, Fidesz is an immoral and corrupt state party that tries to covertly influence the public.

6.4.4. A political body trains the trolls

The last recurring component that users mention when discussing the trolls' employment in the troll motive comments is that the political bodies that employ the trolls also provide them with organised training sessions (Llewellyn et al., 2018: 361).

(6.64) [guido_384_333]

*Come on, fella. By all means **troll** but at least try and vary the content of your posts. Didn't they tell you that when **you went for training at Labour HQ?***

(6.65) [1000amihazank_1_316]

*A másik dolog amiért **a fizetett fidesztrollok posztolnak a blogokba, hogy szétoffolják, megakadályozva az értelmes párbeszéd kialakulását. Szerintem a Kubatov tanítja nekik a fejtágítóikon, és nagyon könnyű ezt a fajta viselkedést is kiszűrni. Főleg olyan blogokon jellemző ahol érzékeny, a fideszes vezetőkre kényelmetlen témákat feszegetnek.***

'The other thing why **the paid Fidesz trolls** post on blogs is to fill them up with off-topic comments, preventing meaningful discourse from arising. I think **Kubatov teaches this to them in their training sessions** and it's really easy to notice this kind of behaviour. It's mostly common on those blogs where sensitive topics are dwelt on, which can be uncomfortable for the Fidesz leaders.'

In Examples (6.64)–(6.65), the users suggest that the trolls attended training sessions on trolling, which were organised by the Labour Party in Example (6.64) and by Gábor Kubatov, the Party Director and one of the four Vice Presidents of Fidesz, in Example (6.65). While Example (6.65) clearly proposes the idea that the Fidesz trolls are trained to post off-topic comments, Example (6.64) does not specify the assumed content of the

Labour Party troll training sessions. However, as it clearly points out that the addressed troll should avoid self-repetition, the question *[d]idn't they tell you that when you went for training at Labour HQ?* may have two alternative discursive functions. It may imply that the avoidance of self-repetition was not covered in the Labour troll training sessions but it should have. Consequently, it focuses on the Labour Party, depicting it not only as an immoral political party which employs trolls and holds training sessions for them but also as an incompetent one which is unable to properly organise these sessions. Alternatively, the question may imply that the training sessions in fact covered the avoidance of self-repetition but the troll has failed to follow this otherwise very simple advice as he was unable to understand or remember it. In this case, the question focuses on the troll, portraying him as a helpless student with severely limited intellectual capacity (Maltby et al., 2016: 461).

(6.66) [guardian_162_4286]

*Actually, it is YOU who sounds like a desperate schoolboy; and somebody who would never be allowed to join the Debating Society due to limited intelligence inhibiting the ability to construct a sensible argument. You are not even a second rate CIF poster. I just cannot take you (and your ilk) seriously. your comments are utterly pathetic. **Standards really have dropped at Tory Trolling School. Your school report from there must surely be "must try harder"!***

[CIF refers to The Guardian's 'comment is free' section where political commentary and the Guardian Politics Blog are published.]

(6.67) [varanusz_31_180]

*Baszd meg, mielőtt kommentelnél tanulj meg helyesen írni. Bántja szememet a helyesírásod. Vagy **a Fidesz trollképzőjében a helyesírás nem tantárgy?***

'Fuck you, learn how to spell before you would comment. Your spelling is hurting my eyes. Or **isn't spelling a subject in the Fidesz troll school?**'

Examples (6.66)–(6.67) follow a similar line of reasoning. First, both comments directly criticise the addressee and his comments but without implying that the addressee is a troll. In Example (6.66), the first sentence describes the addressee as an incapable

student, the second sentence suggests that he is a worthless contributor while the third sentence points out that his comments have no merit. Similarly, the first two sentences in Example (6.67) criticise the addressee's spelling. These sentences hence portray the addressees as incompetent individuals who lack certain intellectual and cultural skills that the commenters themselves possess. Therefore, the implication is that the trolls are less valuable than the commenters and other participants (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 39).

Then, the last two sentences in Example (6.66) and the last sentence in Example (6.67) suggest that the British and Hungarian governing parties have troll schools. These sentences have five different discursive functions. Firstly, they imply that the addressees are trolls trained by major political parties, the Conservative Party in Example (6.66) and Fidesz in Example (6.67). Secondly, they depict these political parties as immoral organisations which train political trolls. Thirdly, the suggestion that they not only hold training sessions for the trolls but they also have actual troll schools emphasises that trolling is a centrally organised and comprehensively planned collective activity (Saka, 2018: 172). Fourthly, these sentences imply that the party troll schools are of low quality, highlighting the ineptitude of the political parties that operate them. Finally, they also reinforce the trolls' alleged incompetence (Coles & West, 2016b: 240), portraying them as failing students. Consequently, similarly to Example (6.64), Examples (6.66)–(6.67) demonstrate that commenters tend to suggest that the alleged trolls are trained by political bodies in order to belittle their intellectual abilities and to point out the immoral and inept nature of these political bodies.

Considering the above-discussed four components and the main discussion in Section 6.4, when participants suggest that the trolls are employed by a political body, trolling is constructed as a politically and financially motivated, centrally organised, and comprehensively planned but ultimately ineffective collective activity, a type of political propaganda, and an insecure, low-paid but demanding entry-level political job with low prestige and poor working conditions. In turn, the trolls are represented as incompetent, low-paid, exploited, and generally powerless employees at the bottom of the labour market who act as ordered by their employer. Finally, the political bodies themselves, especially the British and Hungarian governing parties, the Conservative Party and Fidesz, are represented as immoral, exploitative, inept, and hypocritical employers. Furthermore, Fidesz is also represented as an autocratic, undemocratic, and corrupt state party, similar to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, Hungary's

Communist state party between 1956 and 1989. This suggests that the employment-related troll motive comments are also used to discredit political bodies, especially those currently in power.

6.5. Troll motive (5): unspecified political affiliation

The fifth, and final, troll motive occurs in those troll motive comments where users indicate that others are trolling due to their political affiliation but they leave unspecified whether the trolls merely support a political body or work for it (Hopkinson, 2013: 10).

(6.68) [labourlist_432_1761]

***Tory troll** hanging around Labour sites. Why?*

(6.69) [B1 22042015]

*Hazug **fidesztroll**, felsorolnal par orszagot ami az utobbi 5 evben oldotta fel a magyarok elleni kvotakat?*

‘Lying **Fidesz troll**, could you list some countries that have abolished the quotas against Hungarians in the last five years?’

In Examples (6.68)–(6.69), the adjective *Tory* and the element *fidesz-* in the *fidesztroll* compound are clearly motive-related items. However, they have two equally plausible interpretations. Firstly, they may indicate that the trolls are keen Conservative Party/Fidesz supporters and thus, the attributed motive for trolling would be a particular political belief (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2323). Alternatively, Examples (6.68)–(6.69) may imply that the addressees are trolling because the Conservative Party/Fidesz employs them as trolls (Saka, 2018: 169). As these two options are not presented as alternatives in the comments, the nature of the trolls’ political affiliation remains unclear and the way trolling and the trolls are constructed is ambiguous as the trolls may be represented as political fanatics or as party employees (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 347).

(6.70) [guido_213_188]

*I smell a **Liebore troll***

(6.71) [kettosmerce_5_136]

*[Username] te meg a szimpla ócska szar **fideSS troll***

‘[Username] you simple rubbish shit fideSS troll’

Examples (6.70)–(6.71) illustrate that the commenters may use derogatory blend words in these ambiguous troll motive comments to criticise not only the trolls themselves but also the political bodies the trolls are associated with. In Example (6.70), the blend word *Liebore*, which combines *lie* and *Labour*, suggests that the troll is a liar but at the same time, it also represents the Labour Party as an inherently dishonest party. Likewise, the blend word *fideSS*, which combines *Fidesz* and *SS* (the abbreviation of *Schutzstaffel*, a paramilitary organisation of the German Nazi Party), not only portrays the troll as a (neo-)Nazi collaborator but also depicts Fidesz as a totalitarian far-right party, similar to the German Nazi Party.

6.6. The constructions of trolling in the troll motive comments

The analysis of the motives that users attribute to the trolls has pointed out that there is a consistent correspondence between the assumed motives for trolling and the ways in which trolling and the trolls are constructed in the troll motive comments. This correspondence, summarised in Table 6.2, suggests that motive attribution is a discursive identity-building device as users discursively construct trolling behaviour and identity by attributing motives to those they call trolls (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2323).

Table 6.2. The correspondence between the trolls' assumed motives and the discursive constructions of trolling and the trolls in the troll motive comments

Troll motive	Discursive construction of trolling	Discursive construction of the trolls
Emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons	Emotionally, psychologically, and socially motivated, individual pastime activity	Socially and financially deprived, unsuccessful, or traumatised individuals, who spend an excessive amount of time online and suffer from various mental health issues or emotional problems, such as unhappiness, loneliness, boredom, or envy, which they attempt to compensate for by trolling

Financial gain	Financially motivated individual activity, a form of low-paid employment with low prestige	Unskilled, low-paid, and financially deprived employees at the absolute bottom of the labour market, who are immoral as they earn money with a widely disapproved activity and desperate since although they earn very little money with a despised job, they will not quit because they would be unable to find a better paid and more prestigious job
Political beliefs	An ideologically driven individual behaviour	Intellectually inferior, delusional, ignorant, intolerant, and extremist political fanatics, who are unable to question and reconsider their own political ideas or engage in argumentative political discourse
Being employed by a political body	Politically and financially motivated, centrally organised, and comprehensively planned but ultimately ineffective collective activity, a type of political propaganda, and an insecure, low-paid but demanding entry-level political job with low prestige and poor working conditions	Incompetent, low-paid, exploited, and powerless employees at the bottom of the labour market, who act as ordered by a political body
Unspecified political affiliation	Ambiguous between those discussed under political beliefs and being employed by a political body	Ambiguous between those discussed under political beliefs and being employed by a political body

As discussed in Chapter 2, previous research has mainly focused on the emotional reasons for trolling and consequently described trolling as a chiefly emotionally motivated individual behaviour (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 357). However, Table 6.2 shows that depending on the motives that users ascribe to the alleged trolls, trolling and the trolls themselves are constructed in various ways in the British and Hungarian troll motive comments. Notably, four of the assumed troll motives identified in the comments, financial gain, political beliefs, being employed by a political body, and an unspecified political affiliation, have not been discussed in great detail in the academic literature on trolling.

A common characteristic of the different discursive constructions of the trolls is that the trolls are consistently portrayed as deprived, powerless, and inferior (Coles & West, 2016b: 240), suggesting that they and what they say should not be taken seriously. This is because the different constructions highlight what the trolls lack, which can be success, social relations, mental health, emotional stability, financial comfort, marketable skills, a prestigious and well-paid job, integrity, intellectual power, factual knowledge, or personal autonomy, depending on the assumed motives for trolling. Thus, the various discursive constructions of the trolls in the troll motive comments suggest that commenters attribute motives to the trolls not only to explain their behaviour but also to belittle and discredit them (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 39). Consequently, motive attribution and the discursive construction of trolling can be seen as a communicative resource that commenters may use to insult and isolate other users.

Finally, Table 6.2 also illustrates that the British and Hungarian commenters ascribe the same motives to the alleged trolls and consequently, trolling and the trolls are constructed in a similar way in the British and Hungarian troll motive comments. The only notable qualitative difference between the British and Hungarian troll motive comments is that the Hungarian commenters repeatedly depict Fidesz, the Hungarian governing party, as an authoritarian Communist state party and consequently, the trolls are portrayed as collaborators of an oppressive political system. However, the Conservative Party is never represented as an authoritarian state party in the British troll motive comments. This difference can be explained by the political history of Hungary and the UK. Hungary was a Communist one-party state between 1948 and 1989. Therefore, the Hungarian commenters can effectively discredit Fidesz by comparing it to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the former Communist state party. However, the UK has never been a Communist one-party state and thus, the Conservative Party is not associated with a totalitarian government in the British troll motive comments.

6.7. The annotation of the troll motive comments

The above-discussed five troll motives were used as descriptive categories to manually annotate the 2,459 British and 428 Hungarian troll motive comments. Table 6.3 summarizes the tagset. It presents the tags themselves and the motives that they mark.

Table 6.3. The troll motive tags used for annotating the troll motive comments

Troll motive tag	Marked motive
motive_1	Emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons (EMS)
motive_2	Financial gain
motive_3	Political beliefs
motive_4	Being employed by a political body
motive_4.1	Being sent by a political body to troll
motive_4.2	Being told by a political body how to troll
motive_4.3	Being paid by a political body to troll
motive_4.4	Being trained by a political body for trolling
motive_5	Unspecified political affiliation

The key troll motive tags are *motive_1*, *motive_2*, *motive_3*, *motive_4*, and *motive_5*, which represent the five main troll motives discussed in Sections 6.1–6.5. *Motive_4.1*, *motive_4.2*, *motive_4.3* and *motive_4.4* are subcategories within the broad motive of being employed by a political body (*motive_4*). I used these four subcategories as the qualitative analysis demonstrated that *motive_4* has four clearly identifiable components. Consequently, I used these additional four tags only together with *motive_4*. For instance, *motive_4* and *motive_4.3* together mean that a troll motive comment suggests that the addressee is trolling both because a political body employs *and* pays him. However, those comments in which the user claims that the alleged troll is employed by a political body but without mentioning that the troll receives payment were only provided with *motive_4*. This distinction has been made because the analysis focused on linguistically marked motivation attribution.

Motive_1, *motive_2*, *motive_3*, *motive_4*, and *motive_5* were not used as mutually exclusive tags as I found comments, such as Example (6.72), where users mentioned various motives as alternatives. However, only 3.9% of the British and 4.2% of the Hungarian troll motive comments were given more than one motive tag.

(6.72) [orulunk_13_851]

Hagyd a trollt. Szerencsétlen alak, tele bizonytalansággal, félelemmel és kudarccal, amit itt és így próbál meg (túl)kompenzálni. Persze, lehet, hogy tévedek, és egyszerűen megdobták néhány rugóval a kormánypropaganda-keretből.

‘Ignore the troll. He is a miserable guy filled with uncertainty, fear, and failure he is trying to (over)compensate for here this way. Of course, I might be wrong and he gets some money from the government propaganda budget.’

In Example (6.72), the user first states that the addressee is trolling because of emotional reasons, such as uncertainty, fear, a sense of failure, and the desire to somehow compensate for these feelings. However, he then suggests that the addressee might be trolling because he is paid by the Hungarian government to do so. Both motives are explicitly discussed and displayed as alternatives. Therefore, this comment was provided with the tags *motive_1*, *motive_4*, and *motive_4.3*.

Table 6.4 presents the British troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords that mark a troll motive. These items were used during the annotation of the British troll motive comments. In total, 183 motive-related n-grams, 43 motive-related collocates, and 49 motive-related keywords have been identified in the British corpus. While Table 6.4 displays all motive-related collocates and keywords, it only includes 41 of the 183 motive-related n-grams. This is because the other 142 n-grams are 3-grams (e.g. *the Tory troll*) and 4-grams (e.g. *you a Tory troll*) that consist of a relevant bigram (e.g. *Tory troll*) and one or two function words (e.g. *the, a, you*). As the function words do not add any lexical content to these 3-grams and 4-grams, they were deemed redundant and have been excluded.

Table 6.4. The motive-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords in the British corpus

Marked motive	Troll token n-grams	Troll token collocates	Troll comment keywords
1	–	bitter, bored, juvenile, lonely	bitter, bored, fun, juvenile, immature, lonely, pleasure
2/4.3	paid (EU) troll(s)	funded, paid, sponsored	paid, sponsored
3/4/5	Tory troll(s/ing), troll(ing) Tory	Tory, anti-Corbyn	Tory, anti-Corbyn
3/4/5	Labour troll(s)	Corbynista, Corbynite	Corbynista, Corbytrolls, Tory-lite
3/4/5	UKIP troll(er)(s)	Kipper(s)	Kipper, Ukipper(s)
3/4/5	SNP troll	cybernat	cybernat(s)
3/4/5	BritNat trolls	BritNat, BNP	BritNat(s), BNP
3/4/5	EU troll(s), Establishment troll, Green troll, party troll(s)	LibLabCon, LibDem	anti-UKIP
3	right(-)wing troll(s)	right(-)wing, far-right, Eurosceptic	right(-)wing, far-right, Eurosceptic
3	left(y/ie) (wing) troll(s)	left(y/ie/ist/ard), Trotsky	left(ie/ard), Trotsky
3	loyalist troll	loyalist	loyalist
3	unionist troll(s)	unionist	unionist, unitroll(s)
3	–	brainwashed	brainwashed
3	–	–	libertarian
4	Central Office troll(s), CCHQ troll(s)	central, office, CCHQ, HQ, Lynton,	central, CCHQ, HQ, Lynton('s)

4	Hasbara troll	Hasbara	Hasbara
4	Russian troll	Kremlin	Kremlin
4	duty troll, troll army	duty, employed, organised, professional, shift, unpaid	intern(s), organised, overtime, script, unpaid

Table 6.4 shows that the motive-related n-grams are noun phrases in which, with the exception of *troll(ing) Tory* and *troll army*, the head words are various word forms of *TROLL* (*troll*, *trolls*, *troller*, and *trolling*) while the adjectival and nominal modifiers (e.g. *paid*, *Tory*, *Central Office*) indicate the assumed motives for trolling. Similarly, the motive-related collocates and keywords are adjectives or nouns.

Table 6.4 also points out that those n-grams, collocates, and keywords which relate to British political parties or other political entities, such as the EU or the ‘Establishment’, can mark three different motives, depending on their context in the troll motive comments. Moreover, while the listed n-grams consistently mark motives in the troll motive comments, not every collocate and keyword indicates a troll motive in all troll motive comments. For instance, whilst *CCHQ* is consistently used in every troll motive comment to suggest that the addressed trolls are employed by the Conservative Party, the sheer occurrence of the word *paid* in a troll motive comment does not necessarily mean that the commenter claims that it is the troll who receives payment. This suggests that although the use of n-grams, collocates, and keywords can make the annotation process of the troll motive comments more transparent and consistent, this method has its limitations as the occurrence of a certain collocate or keyword in a troll motive comment does not always determine the motive ascribed to the troll. Thus, the interpretative analysis of the comments themselves, as demonstrated in Sections 6.1–6.5, remains crucial.

Figure 6.1 displays the absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the motive-related British n-grams, collocates, and keywords. It only names the most frequent items and those with the highest Log Ratio scores. However, among other measures, the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of all motive-related items are listed in Appendix G.

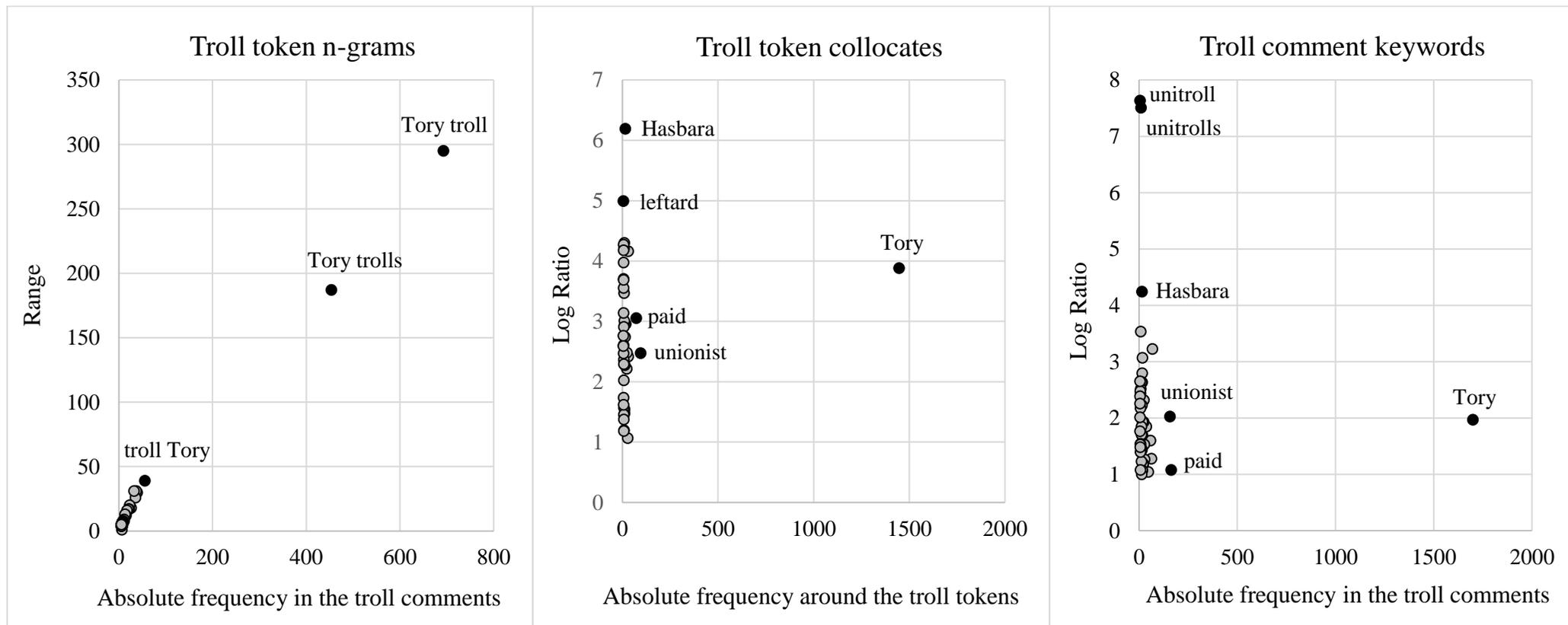


Figure 6.1. The absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the motive-related British troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords

Figure 6.1 shows that *Tory* is the most frequent motive-related word in the British troll comments. It occurs 1,700 times in the troll comments and within that, 1,447 times around the troll tokens. Furthermore, it also appears in the three most frequent motive-related n-grams, *Tory troll*, *Tory trolls*, and *troll Tory*. Thus, the trolls are most often associated with the Conservative Party in the British corpus. The other two relatively frequent motive-related items are *paid* (164 occurrences in the troll comments and 73 around the troll tokens) and *unionist* (158 occurrences in the troll comments and 96 around the troll tokens), which suggests that financial gain as an assumed motive for trolling and the political debate on the independence of Scotland are also relatively frequent topics in the troll comments. The other motive-related items are considerably less frequent as they occur less than 50 times in the troll comments.

While they are not particularly frequent, *unitroll*, *unitrolls*, *Hasbara*, and *leftard* have the highest Log Ratio scores as troll token collocates or as troll comment keywords. This indicates that these items are the most strongly associated with trolling in the British corpus. In fact, this is because these items are among those with the lowest normalised frequency in the non-troll comments. Similarly to *unionist*, *unitroll* and *unitrolls* also refer to those perceived trolls who are believed to be trolling because they reject Scottish independence. As discussed in Example (6.43), *Hasbara* indicates that the troll is believed to work for the Israeli government and depicts trolling as the dissemination of Israeli government propaganda. Finally, *leftard* implies that the trolls are trolling because of their left-wing views. However, being a blend of *left(y)* and *retard*, *leftard* is an inherently derogatory term, which is used to belittle the trolls.

Table 6.5 lists the motive-related Hungarian troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords. These items were used during the annotation of the Hungarian troll motive comments. In total, 35 motive-related n-grams, 27 troll motive-related collocates, and 50 motive-related keywords have been identified in the Hungarian corpus. Similarly to Table 6.4, while Table 6.5 displays all motive-related collocates and keywords, it only includes 12 of the 35 motive-related n-grams as the remaining 23 n-grams are redundant 3-grams and 4-grams, consisting of a relevant bigram (e.g. *szektás trollok* ('sectarian trolls')) and a function word (e.g. *nem* ('no(t)'), *a* ('the'), *vagy* ('are')), which have been excluded.

Table 6.5. The motive-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords in the Hungarian corpus

Marked motive	Troll token n-grams	Troll token collocates	Troll comment keywords
2/4.3	<i>fizetett (fidesz)troll(ok)</i> (‘paid (Fidesz) troll(s)’)	<i>fizet</i> (‘someone pays’) <i>fizetett</i> (‘paid’) <i>fizetik</i> (‘they pay him/her’) <i>fizetnek</i> (‘they pay you’) <i>fizetést</i> (‘wages (accusative)’) <i>megélhetési</i> (‘livelihood’)	<i>bértroll(nok)</i> (‘wage troll(er)’) <i>bértrollok</i> (‘wage trolls’) <i>bértrollnak</i> (‘to/for a wage troll’) <i>fizet</i> (‘someone pays’) <i>fizetett</i> (‘paid’) <i>fizetik</i> (‘they pay him/her’) <i>fizetnek</i> (‘they pay you’) <i>fizetés(t)</i> (‘wages (accusative)’) <i>kapsz</i> (‘you get something’)
3/4/5	<i>fidesz(es) troll</i> (‘Fidesz (supporter) troll’) <i>fidióta troll</i> (‘fidiot’ troll’) [<i>fidióta</i> is a derogatory blend of <i>fidesz(es)</i> (‘Fidesz (supporter)’) and <i>idióta</i> (‘idiot’)]	<i>Fidesz(es)</i> (‘Fidesz (supporter)’) <i>fidióta</i> (‘fidiot’) [derogatory] <i>fityisz</i> (‘fig sign’) [a derogatory nickname of Fidesz]	<i>fideszes</i> (‘Fidesz supporter’) <i>fideszgeci</i> (‘Fidesz cunt’) [derogatory] <i>fideszmaffia</i> (‘Fidesz mafia’) [derogatory] <i>fidesznél</i> (‘at Fidesz’) <i>fidesz-troll</i> (‘Fidesz troll’) <i>fidesztroll(ok)</i> (‘Fidesz troll(s)’) <i>fidesztroll(oka)t</i> (‘Fidesz troll(s) (accusative)’) <i>fidesztroll(ok)nak</i> (‘to/for (a) Fidesz troll(s)’) <i>fidióta</i> (‘fidiot’) [derogatory] <i>fityisz</i> (‘fig sign’) [derogatory] <i>narancstroll</i> (‘orange troll’) <i>pártunk</i> (‘our party’)
3/4/5	<i>gyurcsánycicska troll</i> (‘Gyurcsány bitch troll’) [derogatory]	<i>gyurcsánycicska</i> (‘Gyurcsány bitch’) [derogatory]	<i>gyurcsánycicska</i> (‘Gyurcsány bitch’) [derogatory]

3/4/5	–	<i>Jobbikos</i> ('Jobbik') <i>Jobbikuss</i> ('Jobbik') [<i>Jobbikuss</i> is a derogatory blend of <i>Jobbikos</i> and <i>kuss</i> ('shut up')]	<i>Jobbikos</i> ('Jobbik') <i>Jobbikuss</i> ('Jobbik') [derogatory] <i>pártmajom</i> ('party monkey') [derogatory]
3	<i>szektás trollok</i> (<i>Orbánhívők</i>) ('sectarian trolls (Orbán believers)')	<i>Orbánhívők</i> ('Orbán believers') <i>szektás</i> ('sectarian')	<i>Orbánhívők</i> ('Orbán believers') <i>szektás</i> ('sectarian')
3	<i>bolseviki troll</i> ('Bolshevik troll')	<i>bolseviki</i> ('Bolshevik') <i>komcsi</i> ('Commie') [derogatory]	<i>bolseviki(i)</i> ('Bolshevik') <i>komcsi</i> ('Commie') [derogatory]
3	–	<i>(bal)lib(si)</i> ('(left-)liberal') [derogatory]	<i>(bal)libsi</i> ('(left-)liberal') [derogatory]
3	–	<i>náci</i> ('Nazi')	<i>(neo)náci</i> ('(neo-)Nazi') <i>széljobbos</i> ('far-right')
4	–	<i>orosz</i> ('Russian') <i>Putyin</i> ('Putin') <i>ruszki</i> ('Russian') [derogatory]	<i>Putyin</i> ('Putin') <i>ruszki</i> ('Russian') [derogatory]
4	<i>troll hadsereg</i> ('troll army')	<i>agitprop</i> ('agitprop') <i>hadsereg</i> ('army') <i>ügyeletos</i> ('duty')	<i>agitprop</i> ('agitprop') <i>gazdá(i)d</i> ('your master(s)') <i>hadsereg</i> ('army') <i>hivatásos</i> ('professional') <i>melót</i> ('job-ACC') [informal] <i>munkád</i> ('your job') <i>trollhadsereg</i> ('troll army') <i>ügyeletos</i> ('duty')

Table 6.5 shows that, similarly to the British list, the motive-related Hungarian troll token n-grams are noun phrases in which, with the exception of *troll hadsereg* ('troll army'), the head words are various word forms of *TROLL* (*troll*, *trollok*) while the adjectival and nominal modifiers (e.g. *fideszes* ('Fidesz supporter'), *szektás* ('sectarian'), *gyurcsánycsicska* ('Gyurcsány bitch')) indicate the assumed motives for trolling. Similarly, the motive-related Hungarian troll token collocates and troll comment keywords are adjectives and nouns.

Table 6.5 also points out that, similarly to the British list, those n-grams, collocates, and keywords which relate to Hungarian political parties, such as Fidesz, Jobbik, and the Democratic Coalition, can mark three different motives, depending on their context in the troll motive comments. Moreover, while the listed n-grams consistently mark motives in the troll motive comments, not every collocate and keyword indicates a motive attributed to the trolls in all troll motive comments. However, unlike in the British list, there are no n-grams, collocates, or keywords that mark an EMS motive for trolling.

Figure 6.2 displays the absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the motive-related Hungarian n-grams, collocates, and keywords. Similarly to Figure 6.1, it only names the most frequent items and those with the highest Log Ratio scores. However, among other measures, the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of all motive-related items are listed in Appendix H.

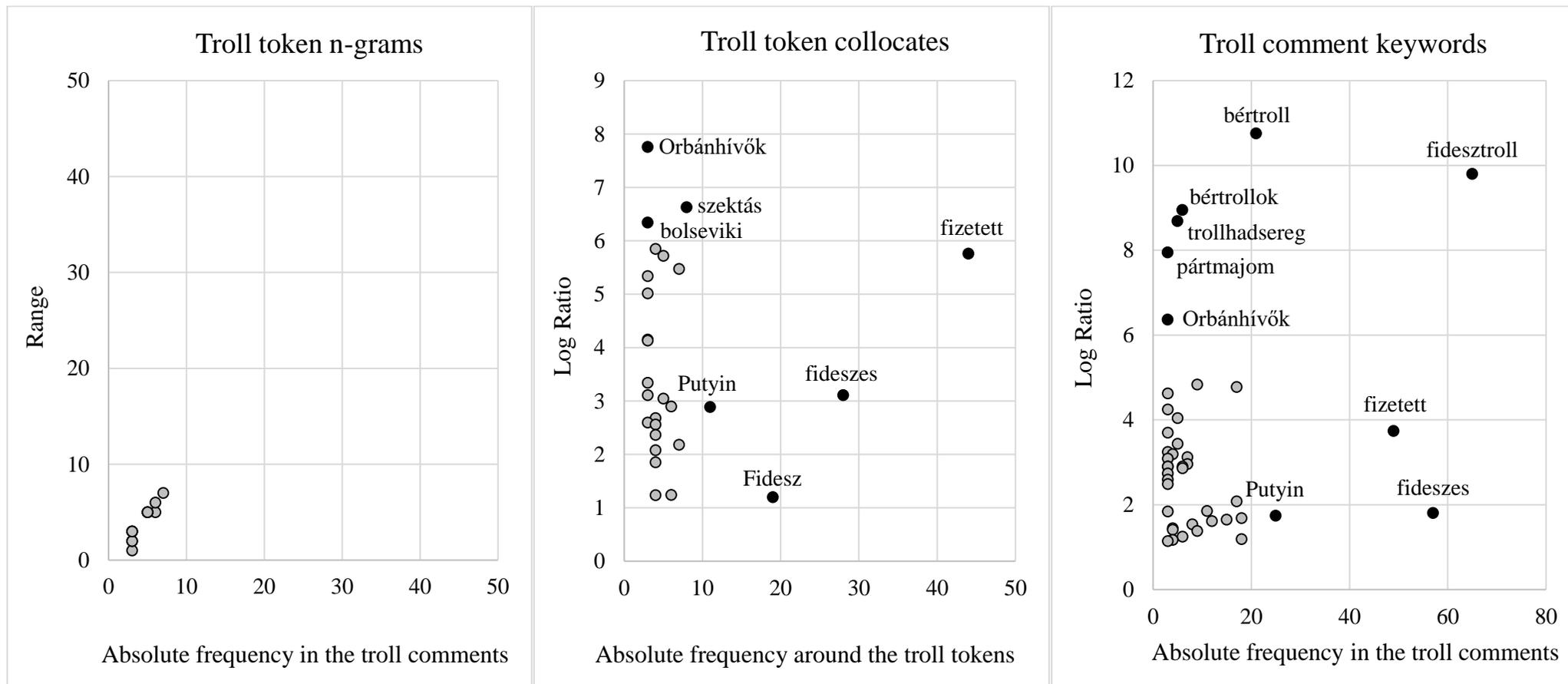


Figure 6.2. The absolute frequencies and range/Log Ratio scores of the motive-related Hungarian troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords

Figure 6.2 shows that the motive-related Hungarian n-grams are not particularly frequent as none of them occurs more than ten times in the troll comments. However, there are some relatively frequent motive-related collocates and keywords. These reveal that trolling is most often associated with Fidesz (*fidesztroll* ('Fidesz troll'), *fideszes* ('Fidesz supporter'), *Fidesz*), financial gain (*fizetett* ('paid'), *bértroll* ('wage troll')), and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Russian government (*Putyin* ('Putin')) in the Hungarian troll comments. The other motive-related items are considerably less frequent as they occur less than ten times in the troll comments. Compared to the most frequent motive-related items in the British troll comments, these results suggest that the trolls are dominantly constructed as keen supporters or employees of the governing party in both the British and the Hungarian corpus. Financial gain is also a recurring assumed motive for trolling in both corpora.

The collocates and keywords with the highest Log Ratio scores point out that trolling is the most strongly associated with Fidesz (*fidesztroll* ('Fidesz troll')), a fanaticism-like support for Fidesz (*Orbánhívők* ('Orbán believers'), *szektás* ('sectarian'), *bolseviki* ('Bolshevik')), and financial gain (*bértroll(ok)* ('wage troll(s)')) in the Hungarian troll comments. Notably, the motive-related items used for expressing the trolls' perceived support for Fidesz are inherently derogatory, as evoking the conceptual frames of religious fanaticism and Communist Bolshevism, they depict the trolls as deluded, ignorant, and intolerant bigots (Coles & West, 2016b: 240).

6.8. The quantitative analysis of the troll motive comments

Table 6.6 displays the results of the annotation of the troll motive comments. It presents the proportion of those British and Hungarian troll motive comments that were provided with a particular motive-related tag. Note that as one comment could receive multiple tags, the sum of the percentages in the same column is not necessarily 100%.

Table 6.6. The proportion of those British and Hungarian troll motive comments that were provided with a particular motive-related tag

Motive tag	Marked motive	British troll motive comments (100% = 2,459)	Hungarian troll motive comments (100% = 428)
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motive_1	EMS	7.6%	7.5%
motive_2	Financial gain	2.2%	11.7%
motive_3	Political beliefs	17.9%	14%
motive_4	Being employed by a political body	17.7%	46.5%

motive_4.1	Being sent by a political body to troll	0.8%	4%
motive_4.2	Being told by a political body how to troll	1.3%	2.8%
motive_4.3	Being paid by a political body to troll	5.5%	29.4%
motive_4.4	Being trained by a political body for trolling	0.2%	3.3%

motive_5	Unspecified political affiliation	58.4%	24.5%

Table 6.6 demonstrates that the most frequently mentioned, and consequently the most dominant, assumed motive for trolling is an unspecified political affiliation in the British corpus, which is followed by political beliefs, being employed by a political body, emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons, and finally, financial gain. The most common troll motive is being employed by a political body in the Hungarian corpus, which is followed by an unspecified political affiliation, political beliefs, financial gain, and finally, emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons.

Table 6.6 also reveals that there are two crucial quantitative differences between the British and the Hungarian troll motive comments. Firstly, the dominant troll motive is an unspecified political affiliation in the British corpus, which appears in 58.4% of the British troll motive comments while being employed by a political body as a motive attributed to the trolls occurs in only 17.7% of the British troll motive comments. In contrast, the dominant troll motive is being employed by a political body in the Hungarian corpus, mentioned in 46.5% of the Hungarian troll motive comments, while

unspecified political affiliation occurs in only 24.5% of the Hungarian troll motive comments. This difference can be explained by the fact that there was a single commenter on *LabourList*, a key British political blog with the most troll comments, who frequently used the expression *Tory troll* and consequently, his/her comments were provided with the unspecified political affiliation motive tag, which considerably increased the proportion of this troll motive in the British corpus. This also shows that since only a small minority of the commenters call others trolls, the individual habits of those who do so can have a major impact on the general distribution of the motives in the examined corpora.

Secondly, financial gain is a more prominent troll motive in the Hungarian corpus than in the British one as it is ascribed to the trolls in 11.7% of the Hungarian but only in 2.2% of the British troll motive comments. Even more importantly, while the British users suggest in only 5.5% of the British troll motive comments that the trolls are trolling because a political body pays them to do so, this motive occurs in 29.4% of the Hungarian troll comments. This difference also indicates that trolling as a political job and financial gain are more closely related in the Hungarian corpus than in the British one. This is because in 63% of those Hungarian troll motive comments where users suggest that others are trolling because they are employed by a political party, the users also claim that the trolls are paid for this activity while financial gain is only mentioned in 31% of the British troll motive comments of the same type.

There are also two key similarities between the British and Hungarian troll motive comments. Firstly, the proportion of those troll motive comments where political beliefs are mentioned as a motive for trolling is very similar in the two corpora. Secondly, the proportion of the troll motive comments with EMS as a motive for trolling is almost identical in the two datasets. Notably, although the academic literature regards trolling as a chiefly emotionally motivated behaviour (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 176), the EMS motive for trolling only occurs in 7.6% of the British and 7.5% of the Hungarian troll motive comments. After having discussed the alleged trolls' motives in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 will focus on the aims that users attribute to the alleged trolls. However, I will summarize the main conclusions on the perceived troll motives in Chapter 8.

7. The aims attributed to the trolls

Chapter 7 discusses the discursive aims that users associate with trolling. It also focuses on how trolling and trolls are constructed in the troll aim comments, depending on the intentions that users attribute to trolls. Table 7.1 presents the total number of comments, troll comments, and troll aim comments in the British and Hungarian corpora.

Table 7.1. The number of comments, troll comments, and troll aim comments in the British and Hungarian corpora

	British corpus	Hungarian corpus
Comments	740,841 (100%)	107,719 (100%)
Troll comments	6,129 (0.8%)	1,118 (1%)
Troll aim comments	423 (0.06%)	62 (0.06%)

Table 7.1 shows that only 7% of the British and 6% of the Hungarian troll comments have been identified as troll aim comments, suggesting that users very rarely attribute explicit aims to the trolls in their comments. In fact, there are around six times more troll action comments and around 6.5 times more troll motive comments than troll aim comments in both corpora. This might indicate that users rarely feel the need to explicitly discuss the trolls' intentions as they perceive trolling as an inherently goal-driven behaviour and consequently use *troll* as a derogatory term to imply that others engage in the discussion with the intent of causing harm (Cook et al., 2018: 3330).

Users attribute six conceptually related discursive goals to the trolls in the troll aim comments, suggesting that trolls seek discursive dominance over the comment threads by manipulating others (Herring et al., 2002: 380; Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399). These goals include (1) diverting others' attention (to themselves) (Hardaker, 2010: 232) (manipulative intent directed at the users' attention), (2) triggering strong unpleasant emotions in others (Thacker & Griffiths, 2012: 17) (manipulative intent directed at the users' emotions), (3) eliciting (potentially damaging) responses from others (Morrissey, 2010: 75) (manipulative intent directed at the users' discursive behaviour), (4) causing, perpetuating, or escalating conflict and disagreement (Utz,

2005: 51) (manipulative intent directed at the users' interpersonal relations), (5) misleading or confusing others (Donath, 1999: 43) (manipulative intent directed at the users' (political) beliefs), and (6) disrupting the ongoing discussion (Binns, 2012: 548) (manipulative intent directed at the political debate the users engage in).

The references in the above taxonomy indicate that each perceived trolling goal identified in the troll aim comments has already been described in the academic literature on trolling, suggesting that the aims users attribute to the trolls are more context-independent than the actions and motives they associate with trolling. However, this taxonomy not only reiterates what has already been said about the trolls' intentions but it also expands our knowledge of trolling by pointing out that users perceive trolling as an inherently manipulative behaviour. This is because users suggest that trolls try to influence others' attention, emotions, beliefs, actions, and interpersonal relations for their own benefit (Craker & March, 2016: 83), which is considered the defining characteristic of any manipulative behaviour by Buss et al. (1987), Austin et al. (2007), and Hyde & Grieve (2004).

The finding that every aim that users attribute to the trolls is necessarily manipulative may be considered a new contribution to the field because a number of papers, such as Shachaf & Hara (2010), Binns (2012), and Buckels et al. (2014), ignore the manipulative nature of trolling whereas others, such as Donath (1999), argue that trolling is only manipulative when it is also deceptive. The above taxonomy, however, clearly suggests that deception is a subcategory within manipulation as trolling is only considered deceptive when it targets others' beliefs as deception involves the intent of deliberately misleading others into false beliefs.

The six troll aims are discussed in Sections 7.1–7.6. Examples (7.1)–(7.33) demonstrate that all the listed aims appear in both the British and the Hungarian troll aim comments. Most of the analysed examples have, however, been selected from the British corpus as I found only 62 Hungarian troll aim comments altogether. It is also worth noting that the troll aims are not mutually exclusive as users may associate multiple aims with trolling in the same comment.

7.1. Troll aim (1): diverting other users' attention (to themselves)

The first aim that users associate with trolling is that trolls seek to divert other users' attention from the ongoing discussion to themselves (Ortega et al., 2012: 2884) or to the new topics that they have introduced (Dlala et al., 2014: 1). When attributing this goal to the trolls, users construct trolling as a manipulative behaviour directed at others' mental focus and portray the trolls as attention seekers who want to distract others and control the subjects the users are focusing on (Maltby et al., 2016: 452).

(7.1) [guardian_25_116]

*Do continue to lurk and, notwithstanding your need to 'earn a crust', hope to see you back here as often as you can. **The Tory 'trolls' are here in force these days, probably because they see the need to divert attention from the disastrous failures recently experienced by their party.***

(7.2) [orulunk_1_1760]

*Hagyd békén! **Bebizonyosodott, hogy troll, azért jött ide, hogy elterelje a figyelmet arról, hogy a doktori iskolában (amelynek ő majdnem biztosan hallgatója) gyakorlatilag bármilyen témáért hajlandóak doktori címet adni. Ha nem foglalkozol vele, akkor vagy kikopik, vagy elkezd érvelni.***

'Ignore him! He has proved to be a troll. He came here to divert attention from the fact that in the doctoral school (where he is most likely registered), one can get a PhD basically for any kind of topic.

If you ignore him, he will either leave or start engaging in debate.'

Examples (7.1) and (7.2) illustrate that, in the users' view, the subjects that the trolls attempt to deflect others' attention from are mainly negative facts or events that the trolls are uncomfortable with. In Example (7.1), the user argues that some are trolling on the *Guardian Politics* blog to prevent others from reflecting on the "disastrous failures recently experienced by their party". Although the commenter does not specify these failures, the noun phrases *Tory trolls* and *their party*, as discussed in Section 6.5, suggest that the trolls are somehow affiliated with the Conservative Party. This in turn implies that they take an interest in the Conservatives' political success and do not want any failures to be associated with the Conservative Party. Consequently, Example (7.1)

depicts trolling as a form of individual political activism or even as a covert campaign tool utilized by the Conservative Party as it suggests that the trolls want to divert the users' attention because they want to help the Conservative Party.

While the Conservative Party's supposed failures may have wider political relevance, Example (7.2) demonstrates that trolls are also thought to attempt to divert attention from more personal, but equally inconvenient, facts. In Example (7.2), the user points out that the troll tries to draw the commenters' attention away from the fact that the Doctoral School of Social Communication at Corvinus University of Budapest accepts PhD projects of questionable quality because he is most likely a student in the above school (*a doktori iskolában (amelynek ő majdnem biztosan hallgatója* ('in the doctoral school (where he is most likely registered)')). This implies that it is in the troll's best interest to protect the good reputation of his doctoral school and deflecting others' attention from any information that may tarnish the institute is a way to do so.

(7.3) [conservativehome_44_421]

Yep, a troll is about right. That why he keeps on denigrating Mrs Thatcher – simply a ruse to try and get attention for himself.

(7.4) [tenytar_35_388]

Ha a Trollt etetitek, akkor róla fog szólni az oldal – szándéka szerint. Éppen ezért kell levegőnek nézni.

'If you keep feeding the troll, the thread will be all about him – exactly as he intended. This is exactly why he needs to be ignored.'

Examples (7.1)–(7.2) focused on the supposedly inconvenient facts and events the trolls try to divert others' attention from whereas the noun phrase *a ruse to try and get attention for himself* in Example (7.3) and the clause *róla fog szólni az oldal – szándéka szerint* ('the thread will be all about him – exactly as he intended') in Example (7.4) demonstrate that, in the users' view, trolls seek to attract others' attention to themselves and their comments. The above clause in Example (7.4) also suggests that trolls attempt to gain the users' attention because their ultimate aim is to establish discursive dominance over the ongoing conversation by becoming the main topic of discussion (Maltby et al., 2016).

7.2. Troll aim (2): triggering strong unpleasant emotions in others

The second aim that trolls are believed to seek to achieve is to elicit strong unpleasant emotions in other participants (Buckels et al., 2014: 97). When associating this goal with trolling, users depict trolling as a manipulative behaviour targeting the commenters' emotional state whereas trolls are portrayed as malicious provocateurs who try to distress others (Craker & March, 2016: 83).

(7.5) [guardian_21_8416]

*I'm not a one-eyed fan of Corbyn. I've said as much this week, and it's there in my posting history if you're interested. It's not about criticising Corbyn. **It's about posting things which have nothing to add, and say explicitly that the purpose is to wind other people up. As I said, that's the definition of trolling.***

(7.6) [kettosmerce_12_775]

*[Username], egy arctalan, nem is magyar nevű troll, **akinek az a dolga, hogy gyűlöletet keltsen, és félelmet szítson, nem kell vele törődni.***

*'[Username] is a faceless troll who doesn't even have a Hungarian name and **whose job is to incite hatred and fear, just ignore him.**'*

Examples (7.5) and (7.6) illustrate the negative feelings trolls are thought to intend to trigger in other users. These are annoyance, anger, hatred, and fear. The clauses *the purpose is to wind other people up* and *that's the definition of trolling* in Example (7.5) suggest that the most prominent goal of trolling is to annoy others (Binns, 2012: 547) or make them angry (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 366) whereas the noun phrase [*egy*] *troll, akinek az a dolga, hogy gyűlöletet keltsen, és félelmet szítson* ('[a] troll whose job is to incite hatred and fear') in Example (7.6) explicitly associates the aim of provoking hatred and fear with trolling (Özsoy, 2015: 543). These comments therefore portray the trolls as ill-intentioned emotional manipulators whose comments are designed not to convince or intellectually challenge but to simply upset other users (Cook et al., 2018: 3328).

(7.7) [tenytar_12_466]

*Ja, amúgy lerövidítem a [magyar] kormány bértrolljainak üzenetét, úgyis csak balbláznak **RETTEGJETEK! JÖN A VILÁGVÉGE! FÉLJETEK!***

‘Okay, so I summarize the message the [Hungarian] government’s paid trolls are spreading, they are only talking gibberish anyway. BE AFRAID! THE APOCALYPSE IS COMING! BE VERY AFRAID!’

Similarly to Example (7.6), the user argues that trolls aim at creating unjustified fear in Example (7.7). However, unlike in the two comments analysed earlier in Section 7.2, the noun phrase *a [magyar] kormány bértrolljainak üzenetét* (‘the message the [Hungarian] government’s trolls are spreading’) in Example (7.7) suggests that the trolls the user refers to are employed and paid by a political body, namely the Hungarian government. Example (7.7) therefore represents trolling as a covert online propaganda tool the Hungarian government uses to elicit fear among those who visit political blogs, such as *Ténytár* (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399). Portraying the trolls as paid government employees also implies that, similarly to the examples discussed in Section 6.4.2, it is the government who decides on the objectives the trolls then seek to achieve and thus, the trolls simply follow the government’s directives when they are trying to spread fear (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 348).

(7.8) [guido_167_356]

*trolls deliberately try to wind people up by being deliberately obtuse.
this one’s a genuine real life plonker posting what he genuinely believes*

In Example (7.8), the user distinguishes the alleged trolls from those who only share their genuine, albeit supposedly unreasonable, beliefs without any further intent, arguing that perceived trolls do not believe what they say and only post comments to annoy others (Maltby et al., 2016: 448). Example (7.8) therefore demonstrates that users call others trolls not only based on the trolls’ perceived actions but also based on their supposed intentions (Cook et al. 2018: 3330), reinforcing the idea, suggested by Hardaker (2010: 220), that users reconstruct other participants’ intentions when identifying them as trolls and therefore conceptualise trolling as a goal-driven behaviour. However, no one knows what the alleged trolls’ ‘real’ intentions are.

Example (7.8) therefore also shows that it is difficult to create an academic definition of *trolling* from user discussions as any such definition would require us to *know* what the trolls want but this is never the case (Hardaker, 2013: 62).

7.3. Troll aim (3): eliciting responses from others

The third intent users associate with trolling is to elicit (potentially damaging) responses from other participants (Hopkinson, 2013: 23). When commenters attribute this aim to the trolls, they construct trolling as a manipulative behaviour directed at the users' posting behaviour and portray the trolls as malicious provocateurs who design their comments to generate as many responses as possible (Herring et al., 2002: 372).

(7.9) [guardian_51_4326]

*[“]Grown ups and politicians from Cicero to Churchill used to call “trolling” having an opinion.[”] No they didn't. **There's a difference between having an unpopular opinion and being a troll.** [Username] is usually an excellent example of the former while [username] is an example of the latter. **Trolls do not believe what they say, they are just trying to get a reaction.***

(7.10) [guardian_96_11185]

Who's trolling?** I never said their policies were infallible, but the rise in the minimum wage, the cuts to income tax, the tougher stance on welfare; they're all supported by the majority of the public. I never said it was good economics, but it's great politics. Then again, **if I was trolling, I'd have achieved my aim the minute you replied to my comment anyway. That's how it works.

In Examples (7.9) and (7.10), the users accuse the trolls of trying to provoke others into replying to their comments and depict this aim as a prominent defining characteristic of trolling (Turner et al. 2005). The prominence of the trolls' intent of triggering responses is highlighted in the sentences *[t]here's a difference between having an unpopular opinion and being a troll* and *[t]rolls do not believe what they say, they are just trying to get a reaction* in Example (7.9). These suggest that, beyond dishonesty, the main difference between the trolls' and other users' behaviour is that trolls are only commenting to provoke further comments (Donath, 1999: 45). Similarly, the singular

noun phrase *my aim* in *if I was trolling, I'd have achieved my aim* in Example (7.10) implies that stimulating responses is the main, if not the only, aim trolls seek to achieve. However, neither example suggests that the trolls want to elicit a particular reaction from others as both the clause *[trolls] are just trying to get a reaction* in Example (7.9) and the sentence *if I was trolling, I'd have achieved my aim the minute you replied to my comment* in Example (7.10) imply that the trolls would be happy with getting any kind of response to their comments (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 163).

(7.11) [varanusz_17_666]

Látom nem megy, akkor itt a leírásod “A troll az internetes szlengben olyan személy megnevezése, aki provokatív, ingerlő módon, tárgyhoz nem tartozó üzenetekkel bombáz egy online közösséget (például internetes fórum, chat, blog, levelező lista), vagy személyes hitbéli meggyőződését ellentmondást nem tűrő, pökhendi erőszakossággal sulykolja, azzal a konkrét szándékkal, hogy más felhasználókból heves reakciókat provokáljon ki, vagy egyéb módon zavarja, lehetetlenítse el a témába vágó eszmecserét.”

‘I see it’s not working so here is your description “**Troll** is an internet slang term for those who carpet-bomb online communities (such as online forums, chat rooms, blogs or mailing lists) with off-topic messages in a provocative and irritant manner or hammer home their personal beliefs in an uncompromising and arrogantly aggressive fashion **with the specific intent of provoking heated reactions from other users** or disrupt or shut down the on-topic discussion in other ways.”’

(7.12) [labourlist_134_63]

*You’re completely right [username] but **try not to be baited by him. This is the kind of response he wants.** He will run off to the moderators at every opportunity and they have neither the time nor the inclination to investigate the exchanges in any depth. **He will act the offended party, he’ll point to your bad language and you’ll get kicked off the site. He is seeking to sow discord and conflict.** You might want to report him to the moderators directly – you’ll be doing us all a favour. He’s a Green Party troll – nice people those Greens.*

In contrast to Examples (7.9)–(7.10), Examples (7.11) and (7.12) specify the reactions that trolls are believed to seek to provoke. The clause *azzal a konkrét szándékkal, hogy más felhasználókból heves reakciókat provokáljon ki* (‘with the specific intent of provoking heated reactions from other users’) in Example (7.11) points out that trolls try to elicit emotionally charged responses (Hardaker, 2013: 73). Similarly, the clauses *[h]e will act the offended party* and *he’ll point to your bad language* in Example (7.12) suggest that the aim of trolling is to trigger overtly aggressive and therefore potentially offensive comments that themselves may lead to conflict (Cheng et al., 2015: 3). The clause *you’ll get kicked off the site* also implies that, in the commenter’s view, the troll also tries to provoke others into violating *LabourList*’s comments policy, which pledges to block those users who resort to abuse.¹

(7.13) [guido_340_1359]

Trolls thrive on attention. Without it they suffer in frustration at not eliciting any responses. You know who I mean. Do the right thing and don’t give him the attention he craves.

(7.14) [labourlist_374_20]

DO NOT ENGAGE. His entire purpose is to get you to respond. Your rage is his goal. If you get angry about what he says and you try to start arguing with him you will get nothing but more comments designed to enrage you. This is not an intellectual debate, you are being trolled. If you’re angry enough that you absolutely have to respond, this is your weapon. Go back to /pol/. Post that and nothing else. Don’t ask me to link it, there is nothing on /pol/ that you actually want to see. [/pol/ – Politically Incorrect is an extremist political discussion board on the website 4chan.]

Examples (7.13) and (7.14) illustrate that the six perceived troll aims identified in the corpora, especially the first three, are in fact conceptually related and thus, should not be treated as completely distinct categories. In Example (7.13), the user points out that, when trying to elicit responses, trolls necessarily want to catch others’ attention as well, suggesting that aim (3) at least implicitly involves aim (1) as in order to provoke

¹ *LabourList*’s comments policy is available at <https://labourlist.org/comments/>. (Date of access: 8 October 2018.)

reactions, trolls need to attract others' attention in the first place (Herring et al., 2002: 376).

Similarly, the subsequent clauses *[h]is entire purpose is to get you to respond* and *[y]our rage is his goal* in Example (7.14) construct trolling as being directed at others' emotions and posting behaviour at the same time, suggesting that aims (2) and (3) are strongly related as trolls need to emotionally manipulate others to trigger emotive reactions (Hardaker, 2010: 232).

(7.15) [capitalists_1_17]

*Going fishing for comments [username]? **Don't feed the Troll. He lives under a bridge** because he can't afford a house in his beloved Landan.*

(7.16) [guido_226_72]

*Like i give a shit. I got a vote up and it wasnt one of my own. What do you expect? **Youre** a bored kid or a known lefty activist **trolling a known right wing site fishing for bites** because your life is empty and you have nothing else better to do with it. **I think the definition is "trolling"**. You get what you give mate. Kitchen door is that way if the heats getting a bit much*

(7.17) [labourlist_16_1523]

*I know it's tempting, but we really should make an effort **not to rise to the bait and not respond to the trolls.***

Examples (7.15)–(7.17) demonstrate that British commenters use various fishing-related metaphorical expressions (Deignan, 2005: 34–36), such as *fishing for comments* in Example (7.15), *fishing for bites* in Example (7.16), and *to rise to the bait* in Example (7.17), when attributing the aim of provoking responses to the trolls. These expressions suggest that British users employ the concept of fishing as a source domain (Kövecses, 2002: 4) in an ONLINE TROLLING IS FISHING metaphor to conceptualise trolling as fishing, the trolls as fishermen, the trolls' aim to provoke responses as the fishermen's aim to catch fish, the trolls' comments as baits, the targeted users as fish, and the users' responses to the trolls' comments as bites (Hopkinson, 2013: 9; Hardaker, 2015: 211).

The prevalence of the above fishing metaphor in the British troll aim comments can easily be explained by the fact that *trolling* as an internet slang term most likely

derives from the English name of a fishing method where one or more fishing lines, baited with lures or bait fish, are slowly dragged behind a moving boat (Donath, 1999: 31; Herring et al., 2002: 372). However, as the English noun *troll* may also refer to the aggressive and slow-witted creatures in Norse mythology and Scandinavian folklore who were believed to inhabit isolated caves and subterranean dwellings, internet users also portray online trolls as monsters (Herring et al., 2002). This is illustrated by Example (7.15) where the commenter combines the ONLINE TROLLING IS FISHING and the ONLINE TROLLS ARE MONSTERS conceptual metaphors to portray the troll as a hungry monster who is fishing under a bridge. In this comment, the clause *[h]e lives under a bridge* evokes the Norwegian fairy tale *Three Billy Goats Gruff* in which the main antagonist is a hideous troll who lives under a bridge and eats everyone who tries to cross the bridge.

While both the British and the Hungarian users conceptualise internet trolls as obnoxious monsters, only the British commenters use fishing-related metaphorical expressions when talking about online trolls. This is probably because due to the massive success of some fantasy series, such as *The Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*, trolls as supernatural beings have become well-known across the Western world, including Hungary, and *troll* is consequently a well-established Hungarian noun. At the same time, *trollingozás*, the Hungarian counterpart of *trolling* as a fishing term, is arguably a niche word as probably only a handful of Hungarian anglers are familiar with the fishing technique it refers to.

7.4. Troll aim (4): causing, perpetuating, or escalating conflict and disagreement

The fourth trolling aim is to create, perpetuate, or exacerbate personal conflict and intellectual disagreement among other users (Baker 2001) or between and within political groups (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 348). When users associate this intent with trolling, they construct trolling as a manipulative behaviour directed at the users' interpersonal relations and portray the trolls as destructive troublemakers who seek to sow discord (Tsantarliotis et al. 2017: 1).

(7.18) [wingsoverscotland_101_1014]

There is more than one type of troll, there are those that upfront about their views and you would happily debate with. This is good, it gives those that disagree with their views an opportunity to debunk their arguments and highlight the opposing view. The other type is to be avoided at all costs, they have no arguments of their own but rather chose to wind everybody else up using controversial subjects. The aim is simple, cause as much disharmony as possible. Personally I find type one quite entertaining, the type two's well they are a wee bit smelly and a bit off. To spot them just sniff the screen when you have a suspicion

(7.19) [tenytar_14_43]

*És te honnan a bánatos példából tudhatnád, hogy elég-e vagy sem? Ugyanolyan átlagpolgár vagy, mint mi, ugyanakkora rálátással az egészre. Fogalmad sincs, csak a szokásodhoz híven **benyögöd azt, amiből vitát remélsz.** Persze, **mit várunk egy trolltól?***

‘And how on bloody earth would you know whether it’s enough or not? You are an ordinary citizen, just like us, with the same insight into the whole thing. You have no idea, **you are just spouting something you hope to get an argument from** as you always do. Of course, **what can we expect from a troll?**’

In Example (7.18), the user argues that some trolls introduce controversial topics to create division among the commenters (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 31). Similarly, the clause *benyögöd azt, amiből vitát remélsz* (‘you are just spouting something you hope to get an argument from’) in Example (7.19) suggests that the alleged troll’s sole aim is to provoke conflict with his comments. Examples (7.18) and (7.19) therefore construct trolling as involving the intent of damaging other commenters’ interpersonal relations and demonstrate that although, as discussed in Section 5.1, disagreement is not only accepted but also encouraged in the comment threads of political blogs, the practice of posting comments with the intent of causing dissent just for the sake of it is considered trolling (Binns, 2012: 548).

(7.20) [wingsoverscotland_14_1380]

You have a lot to say, don't you. A wee dig at this group here, a wee dig at that group there. Stir it up, cause division in the indy movement. The indy movement won't be divided by your pathetic efforts, you can bank on that. Away you go you unionist, trolling fraud. SNPx2 SE2016.

(7.21) [labourlist_246_150]

There seem to be two Tory troll tribes about. One tribe, including [username], are saying that [Liz] Kendall is Labour's best chance of winning in 2020. The other lot claim that they're going to register as supporters and vote for [Jeremy] Corbyn "to make Labour unelectable". As they're all sitting in the same warehouse it's obviously a strategic decision to do this. The point, I suppose, is to exacerbate tensions in the Labour Party, and to pre-emptively invalidate the result and the new leader. They actually did a rather good job of this last time around if you remember. I was particularly impressed by the speed with which "looks weird" became a meme within seconds of Ed [Miliband] being elected. I daresay they had "torturer" in mind for David [Miliband] – we probably got off light with "weird".

Examples (7.20) and (7.21) illustrate that, in the users' view, trolls seek to create or escalate conflict not only among fellow commenters but also within political groups (Broniatowski et al., 2018: 1382), such as the Scottish independence movement in Example (7.20) and the Labour Party in Example (7.21). In Example (7.20), the troll is portrayed as an infiltrator who wants to undermine the perceived unity of the Scottish independence movement. Similarly, in Example (7.21), the user argues that some trolls are campaigning for Liz Kendall as the next Labour leader while others keep portraying Jeremy Corbyn as someone whose leadership would diminish Labour's prospects of winning the 2015 General Election because they try to deepen the already existing divisions within the Labour Party. The noun phrase *Tory troll tribes*, the clause *they're all sitting in the same warehouse*, and the noun phrase *strategic decision* also depict trolling as a propaganda tool the Conservative Party employs to destabilize its main political opponent, suggesting that the trolls eventually try to influence not only the comment thread but also the wider political landscape (Baraniuk, 2017: 240).

(7.22) [guardian_41_677]

*Why are you so eager to feed **the troll**? **The post is obviously trying to stir the pot, successfully getting partisan supporters of SNP and Labour at each others' throats** (as if they need any encouragement to go at it like Itchy & Scratchy).*

[*Itchy & Scratchy* refers to *The Itchy and Scratchy Show*, an extremely violent parody of *Tom and Jerry* in the animated TV series *The Simpsons*.]

Finally, Example (7.22) demonstrates that users also accuse the trolls of trying to simply perpetuate already existing political tensions between rival political groups, such as the SNP and Labour supporters in this case. The verb phrase *getting partisan supporters of SNP and Labour at each others' throats* seems to suggest that the troll's aim is to instigate conflict between two groups who otherwise are at peace. However, the clause *as if they need any encouragement to go at it like Itchy & Scratchy* points out that, similarly to Itchy and Scratchy, the main characters of *The Itchy and Scratchy Show*, an extremely violent parody of *Tom and Jerry* in the animated TV series *The Simpsons*, the SNP and Labour supporters are already in serious conflict and have frequent fights with one another, implying that the troll's aim is not to provoke new conflicts but to ensure that the hostile relationship between the SNP and Labour supporters remains permanent.

7.5. Troll aim (5): misleading or confusing others

The trolls' fifth intention is to mislead or confuse other users (Herring et al., 2002: 380). When commenters attribute this aim to the trolls, they construct trolling as a deceptive behaviour directed at the users' (political) beliefs and portray the trolls as manipulative tricksters who seek to deliberately mislead others into false beliefs or to leave them puzzled (Griffiths, 2014: 86).

(7.23) [w_12_127]

*LOL, ezek a kommentek a kedvenceim Nagy becsben tartom ám őket **Mi annyira jelentéktelenek vagyunk, hogy a trollok folyamatosan belénk akarják ezt beszélni** De hát minek is fárasztod magad és pazarlod az időd egy ilyen jelentéktelen pártra?*

‘LOL, these are my favourite comments. I hold them in high regard. **We are so unimportant that the trolls keep trying to talk us into believing that we indeed are.** But why all the fuss in the first place? Why do you waste your time on such an insignificant party?’

(7.24) [guardian_66_4516]

*[“]The dawn of Labour’s extinction draws ever closer.[”] **The Tories are really getting their trolls out today. They don’t want you to understand that Labour will be extinguished, if one of the gang of three gets elected. That’s the way extinction lies, not if Corbyn is elected. A win for Corbyn really worries them. That’s why you get this guff like from [username].***

Examples (7.23) and (7.24) demonstrate that users repeatedly accuse the trolls of deliberately trying to manipulate other users’ perception of various political actors and groups (Llewellyn et al., 2018: 361). In Example (7.23), a self-confessed supporter of the Civic Conservative Party (PKP), a centre-right non-parliamentary party in Hungary, criticises the trolls for trying to convince him that PKP is of no political significance. Example (7.24) follows a similar reasoning when suggesting that those who depict Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership as a threat to the existence of the Labour Party are in fact trolls the Conservative Party employs to covertly undermine the public’s trust in Jeremy Corbyn by misrepresenting the other three candidates, Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, and Liz Kendall as more fit for leadership than him. Example (7.24) therefore constructs trolling as a covert propaganda tool the Conservative Party utilizes to ensure that Corbyn does not get elected as the next Labour leader, which, in the user’s view, would lead to Labour’s annihilation in the 2015 General Election.

(7.25) [wingsoverscotland_64_532]

*‘Is a referendun not evidence enough’ Eh hello, try and keep up, we have moved on since the o so ‘fair’ referendum. **Anyone who tries to convince you to split your vote is clearly a unionist troll.** The result of the Westminster election was a symbolic show of strength from the SNP. We need to repeat this again, now is not the time to take the foot off the gas or be complacent. If you want Scotland to become Independent you have to vote SNP/SNP and **don’t let any trolls push you off course.***

Example (7.25) illustrates that, in the users' view, trolls also seek to directly influence voting intentions, which reinforces the idea that commenters depict trolling as a covert political campaign technique (Berghel & Berleant, 2018: 46). In Example (7.25), the user urges everyone who wants Scotland to become independent to vote for the Scottish National Party (SNP) on both ballot papers in the 2016 Scottish Parliament election² and condemns those who encourage others to split their votes as unionist trolls. The adjective *unionist* in *unionist troll* and the imperative *don't let any trolls push you off course* also suggest that the trolls want Scottish voters to split their votes because their ultimate aim is to prevent Scotland from becoming independent by weakening the largest pro-independence party in Holyrood. Example (7.25) consequently portrays trolls as anti-SNP and anti-independence campaigners.

(7.26) [labourlist_75_347]

Tory troll trying to convince everyone he is not a Tory troll by calling someone else a Tory troll. Priceless.

(7.27) [guardian_142_313]

[“]I dislike the Tories, I am a traditional Labour voter.[”] Tactic no 3 in the Tory “How to fool a dim-witted lefty” trolling handbook.

Example (7.26) describes the practice of calling others trolls (see Section 5.5.2) as a deceptive strategy the trolls employ to mislead others into believing that they are ordinary participants who abide by the discursive norms outlined in Section 5.1 (). At the same time, Example (7.27) suggests that Conservative trolls are masquerading as Labour voters because they want to hide their true political affiliation from the left-wing commenters whom they despise. Examples (7.26) and (7.27) therefore show that, as Donath (1999) pointed out, trolls are thought to engage in identity deception, i.e., in the practice of claiming false identity with the intent of misleading others. However, while Donath's definition of trolling is solely based on identity deception, claiming that “trolls attempt to pass as legitimate participants, sharing the group's common interests and

² Voters have two votes in the Scottish Parliament elections, one for an individual constituency candidate and one for a regional party list. More information on the Scottish electoral system is available at <http://www.parliament.scot/gd/visitandlearn/Education/16285.aspx>. (Date of access: 22 October 2018.)

concerns” (Donath, 1999: 42), the other examples in this chapter reinforce Hardaker’s (2013: 62) point that users do not necessarily perceive trolling as inherently deceptive.

(7.28) [archbishop_1_665]

*Its the same game [username] played when as [username] or whatever it was he called himself and caused him to incur the wrath of [the moderator]. **These trolls will use any number of names, even leaving messages against themselves because creating confusion is what entertains them. DON'T FEED THE TROLL.***

Finally, Example (7.28) demonstrates that users also accuse the trolls of trying to confuse them by posting conflicting comments under different usernames (Herring et al., 2002: 380). Although it is not discussed in the comment, this practice may be perceived as potentially confusing because, as discussed in Section 5.6.3, commenters are semi-anonymous on most political blogs and consequently, they can only identify one another if everyone posts all their comments from a single account. In addition, those who post self-contradictory comments make it impossible for others to decide which of their comments reflect their true political opinion, undermining the general trust among participants that everyone contributes to the thread in good faith.

7.6. Troll aim (6): disrupting the ongoing discussion

The sixth trolling aim is to disrupt the ongoing discussion and to ultimately destroy the blog where the discussion takes place (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364). When users attribute this goal to the trolls, they construct trolling as a hostile and destructive behaviour targeting not individual users but the political debate that they engage in (Tsantarliotis et al. 2017: 1) and portray the trolls as saboteurs who seek to prevent others from discussing political matters online by ruining the websites that give them an opportunity to do so (Broniatowski et al., 2018: 1380).

(7.29) [labourlist_159_92]

Please don't let him drive you away. Then he and trolls like him make it seem like their approach achieves the end it desires: to stop us talking about the real issues.

(7.30) [1000amihazank_1_316]

A másik dolog amiért a fizetett fidesztrollok posztolnak a blogokba, hogy szétoffolják, megakadályozva az értelmes párbeszéd kialakulását. Szerintem a Kubatov [gábor] tanítja nekik a fejtágítóikon, és nagyon könnyű ezt a fajta viselkedést is kiszűrni. Főleg olyan blogokon jellemző ahol érzékeny, a fideszes vezetőkre kényelmetlen témákat feszegetnek.

'The other thing why the paid Fidesz trolls post on blogs is to fill them up with off-topic comments, preventing meaningful discourse from arising. I think Kubatov teaches this to them in their training sessions and it's really easy to notice this kind of behaviour. It's mostly common on those blogs where sensitive topics are dwelt on, which can be uncomfortable for the Fidesz leaders.'

[Gábor Kubatov is the Party Director and a Vice President of Fidesz.]

The verb phrases *to stop us talking about the real issues* in Example (7.29) and *megakadályozva az értelmes párbeszéd kialakulását* ('preventing meaningful discourse from arising') in Example (7.30) demonstrate that, in the users' view, trolls attempt to disrupt the comment threads because their aim is to put an end to the meaningful political debate the users engage in (Saka, 2018: 172). Examples (7.29) and (7.30) therefore portray the ordinary visitors of political blogs as well-informed citizens who have the ability and willingness to discuss socially relevant topics whereas the trolls are depicted as destructive outsiders who are against reasoned political debate, suggesting that normal users are morally and intellectually superior to the trolls. Whilst Example (7.29) only focuses on the trolls' assumed intent of interfering with the ongoing discussion, Example (7.30) also suggests that the trolls are paid and trained by Fidesz, portraying trolling as an instrument Fidesz uses to silence those who criticise its leaders online (Saka, 2018: 165).

(7.31) [wingsoverscotland_12_1362]

*Folks, try to ignore **the obvious trolls**. They want, especially today, to **divert the discussion here from [Alistair] Carmichael on to absurd technicalities**. That is what the trolls want, and by arguing repeatedly with them, **YOU help achieve THEIR goal, making the thread of comments unreadable**. Please ignore the provocation. Without answers, they run out of steam.*

In Example (7.31), the user accuses the trolls of trying to disrupt the ongoing debate on Alistair Carmichael, a Liberal Democrat MP, suggesting that the trolls' aim is not to contribute to the discussion on Carmichael but to derail the thread from him to insignificant details (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 258). The commenter therefore depicts the trolls' comments as deliberate attempts to establish discursive dominance over the thread by shifting the focus of the conversation. Example (7.31) also shows that trolling aims (1) and (6) are conceptually related as the commenter's claim that trolls seek to change the topic under discussion also implies that they want to divert the users' attention from Carmichael.

(7.32) [labourlist_281_33]

*You have to be joking. **The last thing these Tory trolls want is an intellectual debate**. It is **an attempted sabotage of a Labour site** it is just that LL [i.e., LabourList] haven't recognised it. We in the Labour movement are quite capable of having robust discussion and arguments without the neo fascist Right intervening.*

(7.33) [szeged_11_93]

*látom **már ide is vezényleték az aktuális bértrollt szétverni a blogot**. gyűlölik [a kormányban] amikor leleplezik a hazugságaikat.*

*'I see **the current wage troll has already been sent here to destroy the blog**. They [i.e., the Hungarian government] hate when their lies are exposed.'*

The noun phrase *an attempted sabotage of a Labour site* in Example (7.32) and the clause *már ide is vezényleték az aktuális bértrollt szétverni a blogot* ('the current wage troll has already been sent here to destroy the blog') in Example (7.33) illustrate that

users also portray the trolls as extremely harmful political saboteurs who not only seek to disrupt specific comment threads but also work towards destroying entire political blogs (Flores-Saviaga et al., 2018: 82). Although the noun phrase *Tory trolls* clearly suggests that the alleged trolls in Example (7.32) are affiliated with the Conservative Party, it remains unclear whether they are Conservative Party employees who follow instructions or ordinary Conservative supporters who operate on their own initiative. It is, however, evident from the context that Example (7.33) accuses the Hungarian government of sending a paid troll to ruin the *Szegedi Kattintós* blog, thus depicting trolling as part of the Hungarian government's effort to eliminate online dissent and criticism of the government. Example (7.33) therefore also implies that, similarly to the Russian (Aro 2016), Turkish (Saka 2018), and Bulgarian (Mihaylov & Nakov 2016) government, the Hungarian government is an autocratic regime that does not respect freedom of speech and heavily relies on political repression to stay in power.

7.7. The constructions of trolling in the troll aim comments

The above qualitative analysis of the troll aim comments has pointed out that there is a clear correspondence between the discursive goals that users attribute to the trolls and the ways in which trolling and the trolls are constructed in these comments. This correspondence, outlined in Table 7.2, suggests that, similarly to motive attribution, intention attribution is a discursive identity-building device as users discursively construct trolling behaviour and identity by ascribing various aims to those they accuse of trolling (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 28).

Table 7.2. The correspondence between the trolls' assumed aims and the discursive constructions of trolling and the trolls in the troll aim comments

Assumed troll aim	Discursive construction of trolling	Discursive construction of the trolls
Diverting other users' attention	Manipulative behaviour directed at other users' attention	Attention seekers who want to distract others and control the subjects the users are focusing on
Triggering strong unpleasant emotions in other users	Manipulative behaviour directed at other users' emotions	Toxic emotional manipulators who try to distress others
Eliciting (potentially damaging) responses from others	Manipulative behaviour directed at other users' posting behaviour	Malicious provocateurs who design their comments to generate as many responses as possible
Causing, perpetuating or escalating conflict and disagreement	Manipulative behaviour directed at the users' interpersonal relations	Hostile troublemakers who seek to sow discord
Misleading or confusing others	Manipulative behaviour directed at other users' (political) beliefs	Deceptive tricksters and impostors who lack integrity and may claim false identity
Disrupting the ongoing discussion	Manipulative behaviour directed at the political debate users engage in	Destructive saboteurs who seek to prevent others from discussing political matters online by ruining the websites that give them an opportunity to do so

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, every troll aim identified in the two corpora has already been described in the academic literature on trolling. However, Table 7.2 also points out that both the British and the Hungarian users consistently construct trolling as a manipulative behaviour and portray the trolls as malicious and uncooperative participants who post comments only to cause harm and never to contribute to the ongoing political debate. Thus, the various discursive constructions of the trolls in the troll aim comments suggest that the participants attribute intentions to the trolls not only to explain their behaviour but also to belittle and discredit them. Consequently, aim attribution and the discursive construction of trolling can be seen as a communicative resource that commenters may use to insult and isolate other users.

Users also argue that the trolls are employed by a political body in 12% of the British and 21% of the Hungarian troll aim comments, including Examples (7.7), (7.21),

(7.30), and (7.33). This suggests that both the British and the Hungarian commenters repeatedly depict trolling as an online campaign or propaganda technique that some political bodies, mostly the Conservative Party in the British corpus and Fidesz or the Hungarian government in the Hungarian corpus, use to covertly influence internet users or to disrupt those online discussions that go against their political interests. As users mainly accuse those in power of employing trolls, trolling is dominantly perceived not as a tool that the opposition would utilize to gain power but as a form of online repression and manipulation the governing parties or the government resorts to in order to stay in power (Saka 2018).

7.8. The annotation of the troll aim comments

The above-discussed six troll aims were used as descriptive categories to manually code the 423 British and 62 Hungarian troll aim comments. Table 7.3 summarizes the tagset. It presents the tags themselves and the goals they mark in the comments.

Table 7.3. The troll aim tags used for annotating the troll aim comments

Troll aim tag	Marked aim
aim_1	Diverting other users' attention (to themselves)
aim_2	Triggering strong unpleasant emotions in other users
aim_3	Eliciting (potentially damaging) responses
aim_4	Causing, perpetuating or escalating conflict and disagreement
aim_5	Misleading or confusing others
aim_6	Disrupting the ongoing discussion

Similarly to the troll action and motive tags, the aim tags were not considered mutually exclusive. This is because I found comments, such as Example (7.34), in which users associated more than one discursive goal with trolling. In fact, 18% of the British and 27% of the Hungarian troll aim comments were given more than one aim tag, which

suggests that users attribute more than one intent to the trolls in around one-fifth of the British and one-quarter of the Hungarian troll aim comments.

(7.34) [guardian_67_4516]

I don't think I've ever agreed with [username] but he isn't a troll. They are the ones who write stupid offensive rubbish to wind people up and disrupt the thread.

In Example (7.34), the user defines trolling as the practice of posting unreasonable and potentially offensive comments with the intent of annoying others and ultimately disrupting the ongoing discussion. As the above definition suggests that trolls not only try to manipulate others' emotions but also the political debate they engage in, Example (7.34) was provided with two troll aim tags, *aim_2* and *aim_6*.

Table 7.4 presents the aim-related troll token collocates and troll comment keywords in the British corpus. These items were used during the annotation of the British troll aim comments. Due to the low number of the troll aim comments, only 8 aim-related collocates and 29 aim-related keywords have been identified in the British corpus while I was unable to find any aim-related troll token n-grams.

Table 7.4. The aim-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords in the British corpus

Marked aim	Troll token n-grams	Troll token collocates	Troll comment keywords
1	–	<i>attention</i>	<i>attention</i>
1/6	–	–	<i>divert</i>
2	–	–	<i>annoy, upsetting</i>
2/3	–	<i>wind(ing)</i> [as in <i>wind(ing) someone up</i>]	<i>wind(ing), wind-up</i>
2/3/4	–	–	<i>provok(e/ing), provocat(ion/ive), stir(ring)</i>
3	–	<i>bait, bite</i>	<i>bait(ing), bite, elicit, reactions</i>

4	–	–	<i>discord, divisiveness, sow</i>
5	–	<i>undermine</i>	<i>discredit</i>
6	–	<i>disrupt(ive)</i>	<i>deflect, derail, disrupt(ing/ion/ive), sabotage</i>

Table 7.4 shows that around one-third of the aim-related collocates and keywords can mark at least two different goals, depending on their context in the troll aim comments. Moreover, not every aim-related collocate and keyword indicates a specific aim attributed to the trolls in all troll aim comments. For instance, whilst the noun *wind-up* is consistently used to suggest that trolls seek to annoy other users, the sheer occurrence of the word *attention* in a troll aim comment does not necessarily mean that the commenter accuses the trolls of trying to divert others' attention from the ongoing debate as users repeatedly use *attention* to warn others that some are trolling the thread.

This suggests that, although the use of collocates and keywords can make the coding process of the troll aim comments more transparent and consistent, this method has its limitations as the occurrence of a particular collocate or keyword in a troll aim comment does not always determine the aims ascribed to the troll. Thus, the interpretative analysis of the comments, as demonstrated in Sections 7.1–7.6, remains crucial, especially because I was unable to find n-grams that consistently refer to intentions in the British troll aim comments.

Figure 7.1 displays the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of the aim-related British troll token collocates and troll comment keywords. It only names the most frequent items and those with the highest Log Ratio scores. However, among other measures, the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of all aim-related items are listed in Appendix G.

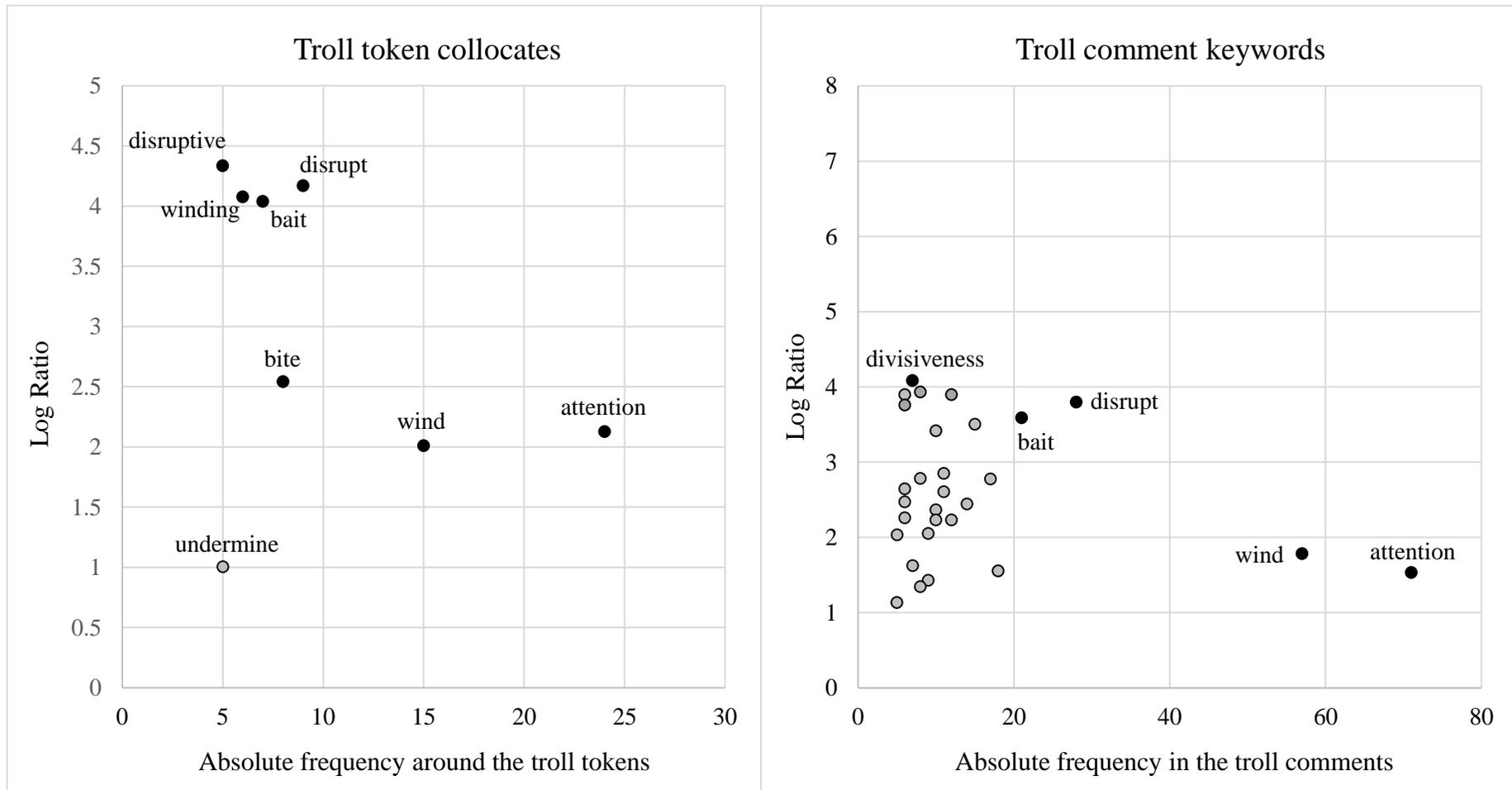


Figure 7.1. The absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of the aim-related British troll token collocates and troll comment keywords

Figure 7.1 shows that *attention* is the most frequent aim-related word in the British troll comments as it occurs 71 times in the troll comments and within that, 24 times around the troll tokens. As I have already discussed, *attention* is deemed an aim-related word because it often indicates that trolls try to control others' mental focus. However, *attention* is also one of the most unreliable aim-related items as it is also used to simply inform visitors that some commenters are trolling.

The other three relatively frequent aim-related items are *wind* (57 occurrences in the troll comments and 15 around the troll tokens), *disrupt* (28 occurrences in the troll comments and 9 around the troll tokens), and *bait* (21 occurrences in the troll comments and 7 around the troll tokens). As part of the construction *to wind someone up*, *wind* suggests that commenters relatively frequently accuse the trolls of trying to cause distress. *Disrupt* is used to point out that trolls want to frustrate the political debate users engage in whereas *bait* as a fishing-related metaphorical expression (see Section 7.3) implies that the troll's aim is to provoke responses.

Along with *disruptive*, *winding* (as in *winding someone up*), and *divisiveness*, *disrupt* and *bait* also have some of the highest Log Ratio scores as collocates or keywords, suggesting that they are among the words most strongly associated with trolling in the British corpus. The other aim-related items are considerably less frequent as they occur less than 20 times in the troll comments, which means that they played a very limited role in the coding process.

Table 7.5 lists the aim-related Hungarian collocates and keywords. These items were used during the annotation of the Hungarian troll aim comments. Due to the low number of Hungarian troll aim comments, only 2 aim-related collocates and 16 aim-related keywords have been identified in the Hungarian corpus while I was unable to find any aim-related Hungarian n-grams.

Table 7.5. The aim-related troll token n-grams, troll token collocates, and troll comment keywords in the Hungarian corpus

Marked aim	Troll token n-grams	Troll token collocates	Troll comment keywords
1	–	–	<i>figyelmet</i> ('attention (accusative)')
1/6	–	–	<i>elterelje</i> ('to distract (attention) or to derail (conversation)') <i>terel(j/ni/sz)</i> ('to distract (attention) or to derail (conversation)')
2	–	–	<i>indulatokat</i> ('strong feelings (accusative)')
2/3/4	–	<i>provokálsz</i> ('you are provoking')	<i>provokáljon</i> ('to provoke') <i>provokálsz</i> ('you are provoking') <i>provokatív</i> ('provocative')
3	–	–	<i>reakciókat</i> ('reactions (accusative)')
5	–	<i>agitprop</i> ('agitprop')	<i>agitprop</i> ('agitprop') <i>propaganda</i> ('propaganda') <i>propagandát</i> ('propaganda (accusative)')
6	–	–	<i>zavarja</i> ('to disturb') <i>ellehetetlenítse</i> ('to prevent')

Table 7.5 demonstrates that, similarly to the British list, around one-third of the Hungarian aim-related collocates and keywords can mark at least two different goals, depending on their context in the troll aim comments. Moreover, while some of the listed words, such as *provokálsz* ('you are provoking') or *reakciókat* ('reactions-ACC') consistently refer to intentions in the troll aim comments, other items, such as *propaganda* ('propaganda') or *zavarja* ('to disturb'), may have different discursive functions. Finally, I was unable to find items that would consistently and exclusively mark aim (4) (causing, perpetuating or escalating conflict and disagreement).

Figure 7.2 displays the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of the aim-related Hungarian troll token collocates and troll comment keywords. For presentation purposes, it only names the keywords with the highest Log Ratio scores. However, among other measures, the absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of all aim-related Hungarian items can be found in Appendix H.

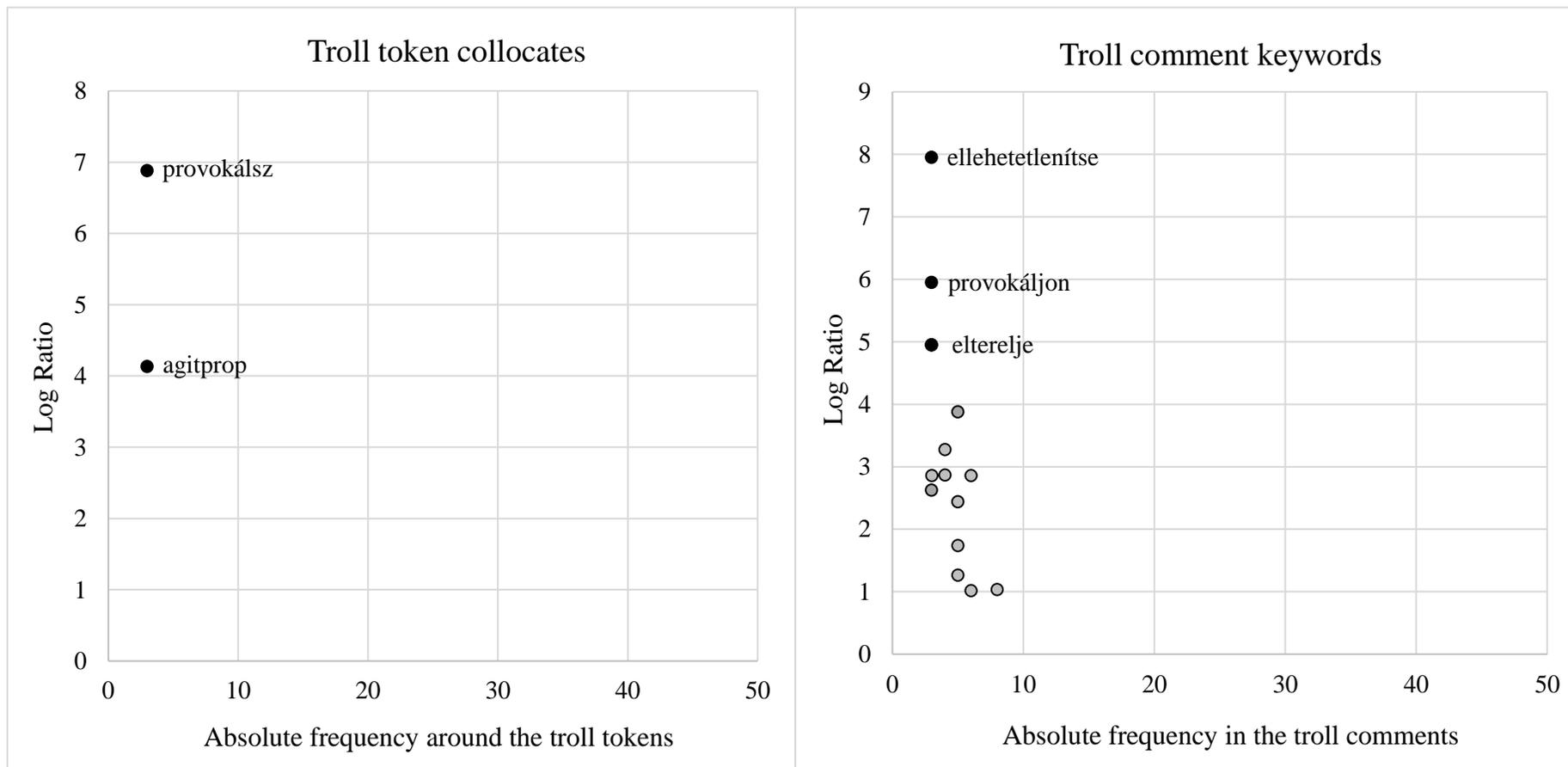


Figure 7.2. The absolute frequencies and Log Ratio scores of the aim-related Hungarian troll token collocates and troll comment keywords

Figure 7.2 shows that all aim-related Hungarian collocates and keywords are low-frequency items that occur less than ten times in the Hungarian troll comments. Given that I have found only 62 troll aim comments in the Hungarian corpus, even these low-frequency aim-related words, especially the keywords, could be used effectively to code the Hungarian troll aim comments. However, Figure 7.2 overall reveals that due to their low number and frequency, aim-related collocates and keywords played a lesser role in the annotation process than the action- and motive-related items. It is also worth mentioning that the words *ellehetetlenítse* ('to prevent'), *provokáljon* ('to provoke'), *provokálsz* ('you are provoking'), and *elterelje* ('to distract (attention) or to derail (conversation)') have relatively high Log Ratio scores simply because they are slightly less frequent in the non-troll comments than the other aim-related collocates and keywords.

7.9. The quantitative analysis of the troll aim comments

Table 7.6 displays the results of the annotation of the troll aim comments. It presents the proportion of those British and Hungarian troll aim comments that were provided with a particular aim-related tag. Note that the sum of percentages in the same column is higher than 100% as one comment could receive multiple tags.

Table 7.6. The proportion of those British and Hungarian troll aim comments that were provided with a particular aim-related tag

Aim tag	Marked aim	British troll aim comments (100% = 423)	Hungarian troll aim comments (100% = 62)
aim_1	Diverting other users' attention (to themselves)	12.3%	3.2%
aim_2	Triggering strong unpleasant emotions	20.8%	17.7%
aim_3	Eliciting (potentially damaging) responses	19.9%	38.7%
aim_4	Causing, perpetuating or escalating conflict and disagreement	14.4%	6.5%

aim_5	Misleading or confusing others	31.7%	22.6%
aim_6	Disrupting the ongoing discussion	21.7%	38.7%

Table 7.6 shows that, in contrast to some of the troll actions and motives discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, none of the troll aims is extremely prominent as even the most often mentioned aims only occur in around one third of the troll aim comments in either corpus. This suggests that, while users consistently depict trolling as a harmful manipulative behaviour, none of the specific aims that they attribute to the trolls has emerged as the single most important target of trolling.

The main quantitative difference between the two corpora is that British users mainly accuse the trolls of trying to deceive or confuse others whereas Hungarian commenters mostly argue that trolls seek to provoke responses and disrupt the ongoing debate. However, as aim (5) is only mentioned in 31.7% of the British troll aim comments whereas both aims (3) and (6) only appear in 38.7% of the Hungarian comments, one cannot conclude that British users would overwhelmingly depict trolling as a deceptive behaviour or that the provocative and destructive aspects of trolling would dominate the Hungarian comments. The above findings instead suggest that aims (3), (5), and (6) are somewhat more prominent than the other troll goals, which are only mentioned in less than 25% of the troll aim comments in both corpora. After having discussed the alleged trolls' aims in Chapter 7, Chapter 8 will summarize the main conclusions of this thesis.

8. Conclusion

Chapter 8 gives a summary of the main conclusions, limitations, and implications of this thesis. Sections 8.1–8.3 answer the research questions by giving an overview of the actions, motives, and aims that users associate with trolling in their comments. Section 8.4 focuses on the limitations of the analysis presented in Chapters 5–7, pointing out that the qualitative and quantitative results are only applicable to the examined comment threads, the analysis only accounts for the troll-callers' explicit discourses on trolling, and the troll comments were coded by only one annotator. Finally, Section 8.5 discusses the main theoretical, legal, and methodological implications of this study, arguing against the use of *trolling* as a scientific or legal term and suggesting that researchers should use corpus methods to understand how ordinary internet users conceptualise trolling.

8.1. The trolls' actions

Section 8.1 answers the first research question of this thesis, focusing on the communicative activities and actions that the British and Hungarian commenters associate with trolling in their comments. Firstly, Chapter 5 has shown that users discuss the actions that they see as trolling in 35% of the British and 38.3% of the Hungarian troll comments. This suggests that, in line with previous research (Hopkinson, 2013: 8), the trolls' actions indeed play a central role in the users' metapragmatic discourses around trolling.

Secondly, the qualitative analysis of the 2,572 troll action comments has revealed that users consistently depict trolling as a non-normative behaviour, reinforcing the idea that trolls continuously transgress social norms (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 163). This is because commenters repeatedly contrast trolling with 'engaging in reasoned political debate', which is perceived as the expected or appropriate behaviour (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364) on both the British and the Hungarian political blogs.

Thirdly, the analysis of the troll action comments has also pointed out that both the British and the Hungarian users associate the same four activities with trolling. This suggests that, although trolling is generally considered context-dependent (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2319), these activities are taken to constitute trolling in at least two different, yet not completely dissimilar, cultures. The perceived troll activities include

(1) spamming, (2) ignoring or withholding information, (3) flaming, and (4) dishonesty, which in total comprise sixteen specific actions as outlined below:

(I) Spamming (Hardaker, 2010: 233)

- (1) posting too many (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 266), very long (Spruds et al., 2016: 77), or unusually short comments (Samory & Peserico, 2017: 6944)
- (2) posting (near-)identical comments (Hardaker, 2010: 232)
- (3) extensively citing external sources (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 261)
- (4) posting irrelevant comments (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364)
- (5) posting incoherent or incomprehensible comments (Synnott et al., 2017: 74)

(II) Ignoring or withholding information (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 360)

- (6) ignoring the original post or other comments when posting (Herring et al., 2002: 376)
- (7) giving vague or evasive answers to the questions directed at them
- (8) refusing to support their statements with evidence or arguments or to argue against the statements that they disagree with (Synnott et al., 2017: 74)
- (9) refusing to share any personal information about themselves and hiding their previous comments (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 364)

(III) Flaming (Cruz, Seo, & Rex, 2018: 17)

- (10) making or supporting statements and arguments perceived as untrue (Morrissey, 2010: 75), potentially misleading (Donath, 1999: 47), unreasonable (Hardaker, 2013: 73), or contrarian (Hopkinson, 2013: 10)
- (11) directly belittling, insulting, threatening, harassing, or otherwise attacking other participants (Hardaker, 2015: 201)
- (12) asking personal or loaded questions (Utz, 2005: 50)
- (13) using “incorrect” or “inappropriate” language (Fornacciari et al., 2018: 267)

(IV) Dishonesty (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 33)

- (14) making insincere statements (Hopkinson 2013: 14)
- (15) making contradictory statements

- (16) posting comments from multiple accounts or from an account also used by others (Binns, 2012: 557)

Fourthly, as the above references show, all four troll activities and fourteen of the troll actions were at least mentioned in previous research. However, this thesis is the first corpus-based study to demonstrate that ordinary internet users indeed associate all these activities and actions with trolling in online interactions, thus constructing trolling as a diverse and complex behaviour (Sanfilippo, 2017: 2314). This is an important contribution to the field since most academic studies on trolling, except for Hardaker (2010, 2013, 2015) and Hopkinson (2013), have shied away from analysing large numbers of actual interactions. Furthermore, Chapter 5 discussed the above activities and actions within a clear framework and in more detail than any other academic work on trolling, thus widening our understanding of these actions. Chapter 5 has also identified two highly context-dependent troll actions, giving vague or evasive answers to questions and making contradictory statements, which were not mentioned in previous research.

Fifthly, although Herring et al. (2002) and Dynel (2016) describe trolling and flaming as two distinct yet equally complex behaviours, users conceptualise flaming as only one of the four main ways in which trolling may manifest itself, suggesting that, at least in the users' view, flaming is a less diverse behaviour than trolling (Cheng et al., 2017: 1218).

Sixthly, the quantitative analysis has also revealed that the most frequently mentioned troll action by far is making untrue, misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian statements in both corpora. Moreover, although Donath (1999), Hardaker (2010), and Dynel (2016) describe trolling as a chiefly deceptive behaviour, insincere statements are only mentioned in 23.8% of the British and 26.2% of the Hungarian troll action comments. Nevertheless, action (14) is still the second most frequently mentioned trolling action in both corpora.

Finally, Chapter 5 has pointed out that users employ action attribution as a behaviour- and identity-building device to construct trolling and the trolls in various ways in their comments. Depending on the actions they associate with trolling, users portray the trolls as unimaginative and repetitive spammers, as narrow-minded and self-obsessed individuals, as disrespectful and often aggressive contrarians, or as untrustworthy liars. A recurring feature of these different constructions is that the trolls

are consistently portrayed as poor debaters (Herring et al., 2002: 380) who lack modesty, creativity, thoughtfulness, common sense, factual knowledge, and integrity. This suggests that users expose the trolls' non-normative actions not only to conceptualise their behaviour but also to belittle and discredit them (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 39). Consequently, the discursive construction of trolling can be seen as a communicative resource that commenters may use to insult and isolate others. This is also consistent with the fact that the word *troll* itself is commonly used as a derogatory term (Binns, 2012: 548).

8.2. The trolls' motives

Section 8.2 answers the second research question of this thesis, focusing on the motives that the British and Hungarian commenters attribute to the alleged trolls in their comments. Firstly, Chapter 6 has shown that users discuss the trolls' reasons to engage in non-normative behaviour in 40.1% of the British and 38.3% of the Hungarian troll comments. This suggests that, whilst most of previous academic research dealt with the trolls' motives only in sporadic comments (Cook et al., 2018: 3325), motive attribution plays a central role in the users' metapragmatic discourses around trolling (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2323). This finding indicates that academics interested in ordinary internet users' perception of trolling should give equal attention to the trolls' actions, aims, and motives, rather than only focusing on the trolls' actions and aims at the expense of their motives (Hopkinson, 2013: 10).

Secondly, the qualitative analysis of the 2,887 troll motive comments has pointed out that both the British and the Hungarian users distinguish the same five motives for trolling, suggesting that these motives are associated with trolling in at least two different, yet not completely dissimilar, cultures. These motives include (1) various emotional, mental health-related, and social reasons (Buckels et al., 2018: 9), (2) financial gain (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399), (3) political beliefs (Saka, 2018: 164), (4) being employed by a political body, such as the Conservative Party, Fidesz, or the EU (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018: 354), and (5) unspecified political affiliation (Hopkinson, 2013: 10). As the above references show, all five troll motives were at least mentioned in previous research. However, this thesis is the first corpus-based study to demonstrate that ordinary internet users indeed associate all five motives with trolling in computer-mediated interactions. Furthermore, Chapter 6 discussed motives (2)–(5)

in much more detail than any other academic work on trolling, thus widening our understanding of these motives.

Thirdly, the quantitative analysis has also revealed that the most frequently mentioned motive for trolling is an unspecified political affiliation in the British and being employed by a political body in the Hungarian corpus. These results suggest that, although existing scholarship consistently depicts trolling as a chiefly emotionally motivated behaviour (Hardaker, 2010: 237; Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015: 176; Buckels et al., 2018: 9), users perceive trolling as being mainly motivated by financial, ideological, and political reasons. In fact, users associate emotional motives with trolling in only 7.6% of the British and 7.5% of the Hungarian troll motive comments. However, when assessing these quantitative results, one should bear in mind that trolling is context-dependent (Sanfilippo et al., 2017: 2319) and the analysed comments have been collected from political blogs. Consequently, it is likely that the prominence of these financial, ideological, and political troll motives in the analysed comments is a direct consequence of the fact that the comments focus on British and Hungarian politics.

Fourthly, drawing on Sanfilippo et al.'s (2017: 2323) general remark that perceived motives affect the way in which online behaviours are conceptualised, Chapter 6 has pointed out that users employ motive attribution as a behaviour- and identity-building device to construct trolling and the trolls in various ways in their comments. Depending on the motives they ascribe to the trolls, users portray the trolls as socially deprived and emotionally unstable individuals, as intolerant political extremists, or as low-paid and exploited employees who act as ordered by a political body. A recurring feature of these different constructions is that the trolls are consistently portrayed as deprived, powerless, and inferior (Coles & West, 2016b: 240). This suggests that users attribute motives to the trolls not only to explain their behaviour but also to belittle and discredit them (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 39).

Fifthly, when arguing that some engage in trolling because they work for a political body, users construct trolling as a centrally organised, collective behaviour, thus reinforcing Sun and Fichman's (2018: 484) observation that, despite the generally held view (Shachaf & Hara, 2010), trolling is not necessarily an individual behaviour. Furthermore, this thesis is the first to demonstrate that, similarly to the mainstream Western media (Aro, 2016: 122), ordinary internet users have recently started using the label *troll(ing)* to refer to organised political propaganda and disinformation campaigns

and to those involved in these campaigns. In fact, it is highly likely that this recent development has been influenced by the media.

Finally, users attribute motives to the trolls not only to belittle them and to explain their behaviour but also to criticise the political bodies the trolls are believed to work for. Political trolling is most frequently associated with the governing parties, the Conservative Party in the British corpus and Fidesz in the Hungarian corpus, suggesting that political trolling is thought to be mainly organised by those in power (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016; Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2018; Saka, 2018). Consequently, users portray the Conservative Party and Fidesz as corrupt organisations which use collectives of covert online agents to spread propaganda and manipulate public opinion, thus abusing their political power (Aro, 2016: 125). Beyond this, Fidesz is also represented as an autocratic and undemocratic state party, which is similar to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, Hungary's Communist state party between 1956 and 1989. The assumption that the Conservative Party or Fidesz sends trolls to the examined blogs and pays them for their activity (Mihaylov & Nakov, 2016: 399) also implies that these blogs and their comment threads have political relevance and influence. Thus, when calling others paid Tory or Fidesz trolls, users also imply that their own comments and the blog where they are posting those are of actual political importance.

8.3. The trolls' aims

Section 8.3 answers the final research question of this thesis, focusing on the aims that the British and Hungarian commenters ascribe to the suspected trolls in their comments. Firstly, Chapter 7 has shown that users discuss the trolls' discursive goals only in 7% of the British and 6% of the Hungarian troll comments, which is six times less than the number of troll action and 6.5 times less than the number of troll motive comments in both corpora. The above figures thus suggest that, contrary to Sanfilippo et al.'s (2018: 28) conclusion, the trolls' aims play a lesser role in the users' metapragmatic discourses around trolling than the trolls' actions or motives. However, I argue that, despite the low number of troll aim comments, users consistently conceptualise trolling as a goal-driven behaviour (Cook et al., 2018: 3330). This is because I have found a number of comments in which users make a clear distinction between non-intentional, non-normative behaviour and trolling (see for instance, Example 7.8 in Chapter 7). These comments suggest that users only call non-normative participants trolls if they assume

that these participants have deliberately transgressed the interactional norms to achieve certain goals (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 363), reinforcing the generally held view that trolling is intentional and goal oriented (Coles & West, 2016b: 241).

Secondly, the qualitative analysis of the 485 troll aim comments has pointed out that both the British and the Hungarian users associate the same six aims with trolling, suggesting that the trolls' aims are not limited to one culture. These aims include (1) diverting others' attention (to themselves) (Hardaker, 2010: 232), (2) triggering strong unpleasant emotions in others (Thacker & Griffiths, 2012: 17), (3) eliciting (potentially damaging) responses from others (Morrissey, 2010: 75), (4) causing, perpetuating, or escalating conflict and disagreement (Utz, 2005: 51), (5) misleading or confusing others (Donath, 1999: 43), and (6) disrupting the ongoing discussion (Binns, 2012: 548).

Thirdly, as the above references indicate, all six troll aims have repeatedly been described in previous research. However, this thesis is the first corpus-based study to demonstrate that ordinary internet users indeed associate all six aims with trolling in computer-mediated interactions. Furthermore, Chapter 7 discussed each aim in much more detail than any other academic work on trolling, thus widening our understanding of these aims

Fourthly, the six troll aims reveal that perceived trolls seek discursive dominance over the comment threads (Herring et al., 2002: 380) by negatively influencing others' attention, emotions, beliefs, actions, and interpersonal relations for their own benefit (Craker & March, 2016: 83). Consequently, users consistently conceptualise trolling as an inherently manipulative behaviour, which may be considered a new contribution to the academic study of trolling. This is because a number of papers, such as Shachaf & Hara (2010), Binns (2012), and Buckels et al. (2014), ignore the manipulative nature of trolling whereas others, such as Donath (1999), suggest that trolling is only manipulative if it is also deceptive. The above taxonomy, however, clearly shows that deception is a subcategory within manipulation as trolling is only considered deceptive when it targets others' beliefs.

Fifthly, the quantitative analysis has also shown that, in contrast to some of the troll actions and motives, none of the troll aims is extremely prominent as even the most often mentioned aims only occur in around one third of the troll aim comments in either corpus. This suggests that, while users consistently depict trolling as a harmful manipulative behaviour, none of the specific aims that they attribute to the trolls has emerged as the single most important target of trolling. These results suggest that,

although Donath (1999) and Dynel (2016) depict trolling as an inherently deceptive behaviour, users regard deception as only one of the components of trolling while giving equal weight to distraction, irritation, provocation, and disruption as well.

Finally, in line with Sanfilippo et al.'s (2017: 2323) general remark that not only perceived motives but also intentions affect the way in which online behaviours are conceptualised, Chapter 7 has pointed out that users employ intention attribution as a behaviour- and identity-building device to construct trolling and the trolls in various ways in their comments. Depending on the aims they ascribe to the trolls, users construct trolling as a manipulative behaviour directed at the participants' attention, emotions, beliefs, actions, or interpersonal relations. Similarly, users portray the trolls as attention seekers, malicious provocateurs, hostile troublemakers, deceptive tricksters, or destructive saboteurs. A recurring feature of these different constructions is that the trolls are consistently portrayed as uncooperative outsiders (Coles & West, 2016b: 240). This suggests that, similarly to motives, users attribute goals to the trolls not only to explain their behaviour but also to discredit them (Ditrich & Sassenberg, 2017: 39).

8.4. Limitations

Similarly to any study on trolling, the analysis presented in this thesis has its own limitations. In the followings, five of these limitations will be discussed. Firstly, although Sections 8.1–8.4 have pointed out that the British and Hungarian users associate the same actions, motives, and aims with trolling in the comment threads of political blogs, trolling without a doubt remains context-sensitive (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 28). Consequently, the qualitative results of this study cannot be generalised and one cannot conclude that users would conceptualise trolling in the exact same way in all online interactions (Hardaker, 2013: 81). Nevertheless, this thesis has demonstrated that the British and Hungarian commenters engage in very similar metapragmatic discourses when calling others trolls. This is an important contribution to the academic study of perceived trolling since the vast majority of previous research focused on trolling in English interactions and analysed the perceptions of trolling in only one context (Sun & Fichman, 2018: 478).

Secondly, as the analysed threads are not representative samples of all British and Hungarian political blog comment threads, the quantitative results reported in Chapters 5–7 cannot be extrapolated either. This means that all results of this study only apply to

the analysed datasets. In fact, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to collect statistically representative samples for any type of online interaction since we do not know how many such interactions exist (Shachaf & Hara, 2010: 361).

Thirdly, as my analysis has focused on those comments in which users call others trolls, it has only accounted for the ‘troll-callers’ point of view. Although this is a common practice in the academic literature (Hardaker, 2010, 2013, 2015; Hopkinson, 2013), it would also be useful to look at how the accused or even the self-reported trolls conceptualise their own behaviour (Buckels et al., 2014; Phillips, 2015; Saka, 2018). One reason for doing so is that some commenters might use the derogatory label *troll* to exclude otherwise norm-abiding and harmless participants from the conversation (Hopkinson, 2013). In fact, it would also be beneficial to triangulate the corpus-based findings of this thesis by interviewing the troll-callers as well (Baker & Egbert, 2016). A key issue with the questionnaire- or interview-based approach is, however, that users are semi-anonymous in most analysed comment threads and consequently, it is virtually impossible to contact them. Furthermore, trolls often personally insult the researcher or claim potentially false motives and goals to justify their behaviour when contacted (Synnott et al., 2017: 74), which is not surprising given that trolling generally involves aggression and deception (Hardaker, 2013: 79).

Fourthly, similarly to Hardaker (2010, 2013) and Hopkinson (2013), the analysis has focused on the comments containing the metapragmatic label *troll(ing)* or its Hungarian equivalent *troll(kodás)*. However, commenters may use indirect metaphorical expressions, such as *s/he lives under a bridge*, *s/he is fishing*, or *s/he’s like an ogre*, to indicate that others are trolling. Therefore, the thesis gives a full account of the *explicit* metapragmatic discourses around trolling in the analysed comment threads but it is entirely possible that there are *implicit/indirect* references to trolling in the data, which have not been captured. However, as Hardaker (2010: 225) points out, no corpus search is currently able to retrieve these indirect references to trolling unless these occur near a direct reference. Consequently, the only way to mitigate this limitation would be to read each and every comment in the corpora, which is not feasible when dealing with 848,560 comments.

Finally, as this thesis is the product of individual research, the coding scheme was developed and the troll comments were annotated by only one person, the author. However, in order to verify the reliability of the annotation process, a second annotator should also code the comments and the level of inter-coder agreement should then be

calculated as well (Bayerl & Paul, 2011). Nevertheless, as Chapters 4–7 and Appendices F–H demonstrate, every effort has been made to maximise the transparency and consistency of the annotation process in this study.

8.5. Implications

Section 8.5 summarizes the main theoretical, legal, and methodological implications of this study. Firstly, although academics have made several attempts to define what trolling is (see Table 2.1 in Chapter 2), I argue that *trolling* should not be used as an academic or scientific term (McCosker, 2014; Clarke 2018). This is because Chapter 5 has demonstrated that users construct trolling as a very diverse and context-sensitive behaviour in their metapragmatic comments. The fact that users attribute sixteen different actions to the trolls shows that they use *trolling* as a catch-all term for a wide range of antisocial (Cheng et al., 2017), negatively marked (Binns, 2012), or non-normative actions (Fichman & Sanfilippo, 2015). This means that *trolling* is simply too vague to be used as a scientific term.

Furthermore, the most frequently mentioned troll action, making untrue, potentially misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian statements, is highly subjective and context-sensitive (Sanfilippo et al., 2018: 28) as users can freely decide what statements count as misleading, unreasonable, or contrarian from their own point of view. However, this also implies that it is impossible to use *trolling* as a scientific term without entirely relying on the users' subjective, contradictory, and often implicit perceptions.

Another issue is that users conceptualise trolling as a goal-driven behaviour (see Chapter 7), which means that researchers would have to *know* what the participants' intentions are to detect trolling in online interactions. However, as Hardaker (2013: 62) notes, researchers do not have access to the participants' mental states, which renders the academic detection of trolling inherently problematic. In sum, I argue that academics should see *trolling* not as a scientific term but as a metapragmatic label that ordinary internet users have developed to conceptualise others' behaviour. Of course, researchers might want to summarize the users' conceptualisations of trolling in context-sensitive definitions but when doing so, they should also point out that these definitions only apply to the analysed interactions (Hardaker, 2013: 82).

Secondly, although several British (Taylor, 2017; BBC, 2018) and Hungarian (Index, 2012; Origo, 2015) newspaper articles give the impression that certain

individuals have been prosecuted and convicted for trolling, trolling as such is not a criminal offence or a legal term in any country. Based on the findings presented in Chapter 5, I argue that this should remain the case and *trolling* should not be used as a legal term. As I have already pointed out, this is partly because users depict trolling as a multidimensional behaviour, which suggests that the term *trolling* is simply too vague to be used in legal documents.

Another argument against the legal use of *trolling* is that not all perceived troll actions are equally harmful. It is clear that some of the actions that users associate with trolling, such as personal harassment or online fraud, are deemed legal offences both in the UK and in Hungary. (See the *Malicious Communications Act 1988* § 1(1), the *Protection from Harassment Act 1997*, and the *Communications Act 2003* § 127(1–2) for the UK and the *2012. évi Büntető Törvénykönyv* (Criminal Code 2012) § 222 and § 373 for Hungary.) However, other perceived troll actions, such as posting incoherent comments or giving vague answers to questions, are arguably less likely to cause serious distress or harm to anyone. This overall suggests that internet users do not use *trolling* as a synonym for online crime.

In fact, the practice of using the term *trolling* when reporting on online crime could even be criticised. One problem is that by referring to those convicted of serious online abuse as trolls, journalists might shift their readers' attention away from the actual crimes these individuals have committed. These articles might also normalise grossly abusive online behaviours, such as death threats, by associating these with an online behaviour that ordinary internet users do not necessarily perceive as extremely harmful.

Finally, the main methodological implication of this thesis is that, although it is arguably labour intensive, researchers interested in users' conceptualisations of trolling should analyse large numbers of actual online interactions. This would be extremely important since, with some exceptions, such as Hardaker (2010, 2013) and Hopkinson (2013), previous research has mainly relied on case studies (Herring et al., 2002), interviews (Shachaf & Hara, 2010), and questionnaires (Maltby et al., 2016). This thesis has also demonstrated that widely used corpus methods, such as n-gram, collocation, and keyword analysis, can be beneficial for identifying the actions, motives, and aims that users associate with trolling. However, in order to give a full account of the users' metapragmatic discourses around trolling, one also needs to closely read the comments in which users call others trolls.

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APPENDIX A: The collected 90 British and 90 Hungarian political blogs

BRITISH BLOGS				
Name	URL	Author type	Political position	Launch date
<i>A Burdz Eye View</i>	burdzyeview.wordpress.com	Private citizen	Left-wing	28/08/2010
<i>Adam Smith Institute</i>	adamsmith.org/blog	Other organisation	Centre-right	01/01/2014
<i>Alastair Campbell Blog</i>	alastaircampbell.org/blog	Journalist	Left-wing	05/02/2009
<i>Alex's Archives</i>	alexarchives.org	Political analyst	Centre-left	28/10/2012
<i>Anna Raccoon</i>	annaraccoon.com/	Multi-authored	Centre-left	21/02/2009
<i>Another Green World</i>	another-green-world.blogspot.co.uk	Multi-authored	Left-wing	31/10/2006
<i>Archbishop Cranmer</i>	archbishopcranmer.com	Journalist	Right-wing	21/03/2006
<i>Bagehot's Notebook</i>	economist.com/blogs/bagehot	Multi-authored	Centrist	24/02/2009
<i>Bella Caledonia</i>	bellacaledonia.org.uk	Multi-authored	Left-wing	19/11/2007
<i>Benedict Brogan</i>	blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/author/benedictbrogan	Journalist	Centre-right	20/04/2009
<i>Bishop Hill</i>	bishophill.squarespace.com	Journalist	Centre-right	04/11/2006
<i>Bloggers4UKIP</i>	bloggers4ukip.org.uk	Multi-authored	Radical right	17/09/2008
<i>Capitalists@Work</i>	cityunslicker.co.uk	Multi-authored	Centre-right	16/08/2006
<i>Captain Ranty</i>	captainranty.com	Private citizen	Right-wing	27/04/2009
<i>Caron's Musings</i>	carons-musings.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Centrist	09/09/2006
<i>Charles Crawford</i>	charlescrawford.biz	Political analyst	Right-wing	03/07/2010
<i>Compass</i>	compassonline.org.uk/discussion	Other organisation	Centre-left	05/12/2012
<i>Conservative Home</i>	conservativehome.com	Multi-authored	Right-wing	28/03/2005

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<i>Dale & Co</i>	iaindale.com	Multi-authored	Right-wing	08/07/2011
<i>Dick Puddlecote</i>	dickpuddlecote.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	17/11/2008
<i>EUROPP</i>	blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog	Political institute	Centrist	14/01/2011
<i>Fabian Review</i>	fabians.org.uk/fabian-review	Other organisation	Left-wing	28/02/2013
<i>Guardian Politics Blog</i>	theguardian.com/politics/blog	Multi-authored	Centre-left	16/09/2004
<i>Guido Fawkes</i>	order-order.com	Multi-authored	Right-wing	09/01/2004
<i>Harry's Place</i>	hurryupharry.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	25/11/2002
<i>Head of Legal</i>	headoflegal.com	Political analyst	Centrist	23/11/2007
<i>Hopi Sen</i>	hopisen.com	Political analyst	Left-wing	02/01/2014
<i>John Redwood's Diary</i>	johnredwoodsdiary.com	Political analyst	Right-wing	03/08/2007
<i>John Rentoul</i>	blogs.independent.co.uk/author/johnrentoul	Journalist	Left-wing	26/05/2006
<i>Jonathan Fryer</i>	jonathanfryer.wordpress.com	Journalist	Centre-left	18/03/2007
<i>Joseph Rowntree Foundation</i>	jrf.org.uk/blog	Other organisation	Left-wing	01/04/2011
<i>Labour Hame</i>	labourhame.com	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/06/2011
<i>Labour List</i>	labourlist.org	Multi-authored	Centre-left	10/01/2009
<i>Labour Uncut</i>	labour-uncut.co.uk	Multi-authored	Left-wing	30/05/2015
<i>Lallands Peat Worrier</i>	lallandspeatworrier.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>Left Foot Forward</i>	leftfootforward.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>Left Futures</i>	leftfutures.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	23/03/2010
<i>Lenin's Tomb</i>	leninology.co.uk	Journalist	Radical left	24/06/2003
<i>libcom.org</i>	libcom.org/blog	Multi-authored	Left-wing	25/07/2006
<i>Liberal Bureaucracy</i>	liberalbureaucracy.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Centre-right	17/10/2005

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<i>Liberal Conspiracy</i>	liberalconspiracy.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/11/2007
<i>Liberal Democrat Voice</i>	libdemvoice.org	Multi-authored	Centrist	27/08/2006
<i>Liberal England</i>	liberalengland.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Centrist	04/03/2004
<i>Liberal Vision</i>	liberal-vision.org	Multi-authored	Centrist	25/03/2009
<i>Longrider</i>	longrider.co.uk/blog	Private citizen	Left-wing	23/10/2004
<i>Mark Pack</i>	markpack.org.uk	Political analyst	Centrist	07/04/2007
<i>Nick Tyrone</i>	nicktyrone.com	Journalist	Centrist	08/08/2012
<i>Obnoxio The Clown</i>	obothec clown.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Right-wing	01/07/2008
<i>Orphans of Liberty</i>	4liberty.org.uk	Multi-authored	Centre-right	19/04/2011
<i>Peter Hitchen's Blog</i>	hitchensblog.mailonsunday.co.uk	Journalist	Right-wing	28/02/2006
<i>Political Betting</i>	politicalbetting.com	Journalist	Centrist	24/03/2004
<i>Political Scrapbook</i>	politicalscrapbook.net	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>Politics and Insights</i>	kittysjones.wordpress.com	Private citizen	Left-wing	15/10/2012
<i>Quaequam Blog!</i>	theliberati.net/quaequamblog	Private citizen	Centrist	01/03/2003
<i>Raedwald</i>	raedwald.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Right-wing	22/01/2007
<i>Samizdata</i>	samizdata.net	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/11/2001
<i>Scot goes Pop!</i>	scotgoespob.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	03/05/2008
<i>Shiraz Socialist</i>	shirazsocialist.wordpress.com	Multi-authored	Left-wing	29/05/2006
<i>Slugger O'Toole</i>	sluggerotoole.com	Multi-authored	Centrist	05/06/2002
<i>Socialist Unity</i>	socialistunity.com	Multi-authored	Left-wing	05/02/2006
<i>Spectator Coffee House</i>	blogs.new.spectator.co.uk	Multi-authored	Right-wing	01/05/2007

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<i>Stephen Tall</i>	stephentall.org	Political analyst	Centre-left	10/01/2005
<i>Stronger Unions</i>	strongerunions.org	Other organisation	Left-wing	11/04/2008
<i>Stumbling and Mumbling</i>	stumblingandmumbling.typepad.com	Journalist	Centre-left	26/10/2004
<i>Subrosa</i>	subrosa-blonde.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	13/01/2009
<i>Syniadau</i>	syniadau--buildinganindependentwales.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	23/04/2009
<i>The Centre Left</i>	thecentreleft.blogspot.com	Journalist	Centre-left	23/10/2009
<i>The Conservative Woman</i>	conservativewoman.co.uk	Multi-authored	Right-wing	24/02/2014
<i>The Devil's Kitchen</i>	devilskitchen.me.uk	Multi-authored	Right-wing	11/02/2004
<i>The f word blog</i>	thefword.org.uk/blog	Multi-authored	Left-wing	15/04/2005
<i>The Grapevine</i>	atthegrapevine.com	Multi-authored	Centrist	01/09/2010
<i>The Rambles of Neil Monnery</i>	neilmonnery.co.uk	Private citizen	Centrist	02/09/2010
<i>The Slog</i>	hat4uk.wordpress.com	Private citizen	Centre-right	01/01/2010
<i>The Tap Blog</i>	tapnewswire.com/	Multi-authored	Centre-left	28/06/2006
<i>The Tea Room</i>	thecommentator.com/articles/tea_room	Multi-authored	Left-wing	08/06/2012
<i>The Void</i>	johnnyvoid.wordpress.com	Private citizen	Radical left	14/11/2015
<i>Think Left</i>	think-left.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	05/02/2012
<i>thinking liberal</i>	thinkingliberal.co.uk	Private citizen	Centre-left	08/02/2011
<i>Though Cowards Flinch</i>	thoughcowardsflinch.com	Multi-authored	Left-wing	20/09/2007
<i>Tim Worstall</i>	timworstall.com	Journalist	Right-wing	21/09/2007
<i>Touch Stone</i>	touchstoneblog.org.uk	Other organisation	Left-wing	11/08/2006

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<i>UK Polling Report</i>	ukpollingreport.co.uk	Political analyst	Centrist	19/05/2005
<i>Underdogs bite upwards</i>	underdogsbiteupwards.wordpress.com; underdogsbiteupwards.blogspot.co.uk	Multi-authored	Right-wing	25/01/2009
<i>Velvet Glove, Iron Fist</i>	velvetgloveironfist.blogspot.co.uk	Political analyst	Centrist	20/11/2009
<i>Victims Unite!</i>	victims-unite.net	Multi-authored	Left-wing	02/08/2010
<i>Vox Political</i>	voxpoliticalonline.com	Journalist	Left-wing	31/12/2011
<i>Westminster Blog</i>	blogs.ft.com/westminster	Multi-authored	Centrist	15/11/2008
<i>Wings over Scotland</i>	wingsoverscotland.com	Private citizen	Centre-left	08/04/2010
<i>Young Fabians</i>	youngfabians.org.uk/blog	Other organisation	Left-wing	06/12/2013
<i>Zelo Street</i>	zelo-street.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	17/03/2009

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Name	URL	Author type	Political position	Launch date
<i>1000 A Mi Hazánk</i>	hafr.blog.hu	Political analyst	Right-wing	22/12/2012
<i>A Körúton Kívül</i>	korutonkivul.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	12/09/2014
<i>A TASZ jelenti</i>	ataszjelenti.blog.hu	Other organisation	Centre-left	13/12/2009
<i>Alternatíva</i>	alternativa.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	21/10/2010
<i>Annyit</i>	annyit.atlatszo.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	08/08/2008
<i>Átlagpolgár</i>	atlagpolgar.blogstar.hu csuriakos.blog.hu	Journalist	Right-wing	07/04/2013
<i>Átlátszó blog</i>	atlatszo.blog.hu; blog.atlatszo.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	18/10/2012

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<i>az ugynevezett demokracia alkonya</i>	kommunizmustma.nol blog.hu	Private citizen	Radical left	14/08/2009
<i>Bádóg</i>	badog.blogstar.hu	Journalist	Right-wing	20/05/2015
<i>Banditapolitika</i>	banditapolitika.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	18/03/2011
<i>Boldogok a sajtókészítők</i>	boldogokasajtokeszitok. blog.hu	Journalist	Right-wing	04/04/2008
<i>Civilpolitika</i>	civilpolitika.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	19/06/2015
<i>Democrat blog</i>	democrat.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	22/01/2013
<i>Dinamó Műhely</i>	dinamo.blog.hu	Other organisation	Left-wing	03/12/2013
<i>DiploMaci</i>	diplomaci.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Centrist	07/10/2010
<i>Egyenlítő/B1</i>	egyenlito.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	31/10/2009
<i>egyszeregyopol politika közérthetően</i>	egyszeregyopol.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	19/04/2013
<i>Első változat</i>	magyarnarancs.hu/elso _valtozat	Private citizen	Left-wing	28/11/2011
<i>falramentaparlament</i>	falramentaparlament.at latszo.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	04/03/2015
<i>Fent és Lent</i>	fenteslent.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	16/09/2009
<i>Fideszfigyelő</i>	fideszfigyelo.blog.hu/	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>figyelő jehu</i>	figyelojehu.nolblog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	29/04/2012
<i>Föld S. Péter blog</i>	fsp.nolblog.hu	Journalist	Left-wing	01/02/2007
<i>GFG blog</i>	gfg.blog.hu	Political analyst	Right-wing	29/08/2012
<i>Gőg és Demagóg fiai</i>	demagog.blogstar.hu	Private citizen	Right-wing	25/08/2015
<i>Hacsaknem</i>	hacsaknem.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	31/01/2012
<i>IFL, Az őszinte gazdaság</i>	iflgazdasag.blog.hu	Political analyst	Centre-left	21/02/2013

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<i>Így íránk mi</i>	igyirnankmi.atlatszo.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	16/09/2010
<i>Intézet a Demokratikus Alternatíváért</i>	ideaintezet.blog.hu	Political institute	Left-wing	21/02/2013
<i>Jobbegyenes</i>	jobbegyenes.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	02/08/2012
<i>Jobbklikk</i>	jobbklikk.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	01/09/2007
<i>Kapitalizmus</i>	kapitalizmus.hvg.hu	Multi-authored	Centre-right	28/09/2011
<i>Kard</i>	kard.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	30/12/2011
<i>KerDem blog</i>	kerdem.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	03/01/2012
<i>Kérdezz bátran!</i>	kerdezzbatran.blog.hu	Private citizen	Centrist	05/07/2015
<i>Kettős Mércse</i>	kettosmerce.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	23/04/2008
<i>Konzervatórium</i>	konzervatorium.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	01/01/2007
<i>Köznapló</i>	koznaplo.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	24/04/2015
<i>Kritikusok</i>	kritikusok.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	09/11/2013
<i>Lehetmemberrel politizálni</i>	lehetvelem.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	13/12/2010
<i>Liberális szemmel - Republikon</i>	republikon.blog.hu; magyarnarancs.hu/republikon	Political institute	Left-wing	08/11/2010
<i>Liberatórium</i>	liberatorium.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	06/11/2010
<i>Lokális klímaváltozás</i>	lehetmasapolitika.blog.hu; lehetmas.blog.hu	Other organisation	Centre-left	05/03/2008
<i>mandiner blog</i>	mandiner.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	09/06/2006
<i>Méltányosság</i>	meltanyosság.blog.hu	Political institute	Centrist	02/10/2010
<i>Mérték blog</i>	mertek.hvg.hu	Other organisation	Centre-left	12/12/2011
<i>Mos Maiorum</i>	mosmaiorum.blog.hu	Political analyst	Centre-right	01/01/2011
<i>Mutyimondó</i>	mutyimondo.atlatszo.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	21/08/2011

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<i>Narancsblog</i>	magyarnarancs.hu/narancsblog	Multi-authored	Left-wing	16/10/2012
<i>Nem hiszem, hogy...</i>	nemhiszemhogy.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	11/04/2015
<i>Nem leszünk gyarmat!</i>	nlg.y.blog.hu	Private citizen	Right-wing	21/01/2014
<i>Nívó</i>	nivo.blog.hu/	Multi-authored	Right-wing	24/08/2009
<i>Örülünk, Vincent?</i>	orulunkvincent.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	02/03/2009
<i>Páholy</i>	mno.hu/paholyblog	Journalist	Right-wing	12/10/2013
<i>PC blog</i>	pcb.blog.atlatszo.hu	Political institute	Centre-left	11/04/2012
<i>Piroslap</i>	piroslapok.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	11/09/2011
<i>Pogátsa Zoltán blogja</i>	pogiblog.atlatszo.hu	Private citizen	Centre-left	20/05/2014
<i>Poldi bácsi megmondója</i>	poldi.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	01/01/2012
<i>Policity</i>	policy.blog.hu	Other organisation	Centrist	01/02/2011
<i>Polipraktika</i>	polipraktika.blog.hu	Journalist	Centre-right	03/11/2014
<i>Politikafüggő</i>	politikafuggo.blog.hu; mno.hu/politikafuggo	Political analyst	Centre-right	15/02/2015
<i>Politikáról azoknak, akiket érdekel a véleményem</i>	szilardba.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	02/04/2008
<i>Politikazabáló</i>	politikazabalo.blog.hu	Private citizen	Centrist	12/03/2012
<i>Politológusblog</i>	politologus.blog.hu	Private citizen	Centrist	24/11/2010
<i>PolMA Progresszív</i>	polma.blog.hu	Political analyst	Centre-right	24/10/2012
<i>Pozsonyi Ádám blogja</i>	pozsonyiadam.blogspot.co.uk	Journalist	Radical right	12/07/2010
<i>Progresszív blog</i>	progressziv.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Centre-left	28/04/2010
<i>Publius</i>	publius.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Centre-left	09/01/2011

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<i>Pupu blogja</i>	pupublogja.nolblog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	04/01/2015
<i>Radical Puzzle</i>	radicalpuzzle.blogspot.hu	Multi-authored	Radical right	30/03/2009
<i>Radikális BAL oldal</i>	radikalisbal.blogspot.hu	Multi-authored	Radical left	11/01/2009
<i>Sorok között</i>	sorkoz.blog.hu	Private citizen	Centrist	22/02/2011
<i>Szedett-vetett blog</i>	valikal.nolblog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	28/04/2014
<i>Szegedi Kattintós</i>	szeka.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	24/09/2014
<i>SZEMA-blog</i>	szema.blog.hu	Other organisation	Left-wing	01/11/2012
<i>Szembesítés</i>	szembesites.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	20/02/2013
<i>Ténytár</i>	tenytar.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Centrist	27/01/2010
<i>tldr</i>	tldr.444.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	15/09/2014
<i>törökgáborelem ez</i>	torokgaborelemezh.blogspot.hu	Political analyst	Centrist	02/11/2009
<i>Törvénygyártók</i>	torvenygyartok.atlatszo.hu	Political institute	Centre-left	03/06/2015
<i>Tuareg</i>	tuaregblog.blogspot.hu	Private citizen	Radical left	02/04/2014
<i>Tutiblog</i>	tutiblog.com; megmondjukatutit.blogspot.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	28/01/2013
<i>Üzenőfüzet</i>	uzenofuzet.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	22/03/2012
<i>Valódi demokráciát, most!</i>	valodidemokraciatmost.blog.hu	Other organisation	Radical left	10/12/2011
<i>Varánusz</i>	varanus.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	08/09/2009
<i>Vastagbőr</i>	vastagbor.blog.hu/ vastagbor.atlatszo.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	21/09/2007
<i>Véleményvezér</i>	velemenyevezet.444.hu velemenyevezet.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/01/2010
<i>Victorism blog</i>	victorism.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	10/12/2014
<i>W</i>	hvg.hu/w	Journalist	Left-wing	12/09/2011
<i>Y-GEN</i>	y-gen.blog.hu	Other organisation	Left-wing	08/11/2013

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BRITISH BLOGS				
Name	URL	Author type	Political position	Launch date
<i>A Burdz Eye View</i>	burdzeview.wordpress.com	Private citizen	Left-wing	28/08/2010
<i>Alex's Archives</i>	alexsarchives.org	Political analyst	Centre-left	28/10/2012
<i>Anna Raccoon</i>	annaraccoon.com/	Multi-authored	Centre-left	21/02/2009
<i>Archbishop Cranmer</i>	archbishopcranmer.com	Journalist	Right-wing	21/03/2006
<i>Bella Caledonia</i>	bellacaledonia.org.uk	Multi-authored	Left-wing	19/11/2007
<i>Benedict Brogan</i>	blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/author/benedictbrogan	Journalist	Centre-right	20/04/2009
<i>Bloggers4UKIP</i>	bloggers4ukip.org.uk	Multi-authored	Radical right	17/09/2008
<i>Capitalists@Work</i>	cityunslicker.co.uk	Multi-authored	Centre-right	16/08/2006
<i>Charles Crawford</i>	charlescrawford.biz	Political analyst	Right-wing	03/07/2010
<i>Conservative Home</i>	conservativehome.com	Multi-authored	Right-wing	28/03/2005
<i>Dale & Co</i>	iaindale.com	Multi-authored	Right-wing	08/07/2011
<i>Dick Puddlecote</i>	dickpuddlecote.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	17/11/2008
<i>EUROPP</i>	blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog	Political institute	Centrist	14/01/2011
<i>Fabian Review</i>	fabians.org.uk/fabian-review	Other organisation	Left-wing	28/02/2013
<i>Guardian Politics Blog</i>	theguardian.com/politics/blog	Multi-authored	Centre-left	16/09/2004
<i>Guido Fawkes</i>	order-order.com	Multi-authored	Right-wing	09/01/2004
<i>Harry's Place</i>	hurryupharry.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	25/11/2002
<i>Hopi Sen</i>	hopisen.com	Political analyst	Left-wing	02/01/2014

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<i>John Redwood's Diary</i>	johnredwoodsdiary.com	Political analyst	Right-wing	03/08/2007
<i>John Rentoul</i>	blogs.independent.co.uk/author/johnrentoul	Journalist	Left-wing	26/05/2006
<i>Joseph Rowntree Foundation</i>	jrf.org.uk/blog	Other organisation	Left-wing	01/04/2011
<i>Labour Hame</i>	labourhame.com	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/06/2011
<i>Labour List</i>	labourlist.org	Multi-authored	Centre-left	10/01/2009
<i>Labour Uncut</i>	labour-uncut.co.uk	Multi-authored	Left-wing	30/05/2015
<i>Lallands Peat Worrier</i>	lallandspeatworrier.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>Left Foot Forward</i>	leftfootforward.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>Left Futures</i>	leftfutures.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	23/03/2010
<i>Lenin's Tomb</i>	leninology.co.uk	Journalist	Radical left	24/06/2003
<i>Liberal Conspiracy</i>	liberalconspiracy.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/11/2007
<i>Liberal Democrat Voice</i>	libdemvoice.org	Multi-authored	Centrist	27/08/2006
<i>Liberal Vision</i>	liberal-vision.org	Multi-authored	Centrist	25/03/2009
<i>Longrider</i>	longrider.co.uk/blog	Private citizen	Left-wing	23/10/2004
<i>Obnoxio The Clown</i>	obothecrown.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Right-wing	01/07/2008
<i>Political Betting</i>	politicalbetting.com	Journalist	Centrist	24/03/2004
<i>Political Scrapbook</i>	politicalscrapbook.net	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>Politics and Insights</i>	kittysjones.wordpress.com	Private citizen	Left-wing	15/10/2012
<i>Raedwald</i>	raedwald.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Right-wing	22/01/2007
<i>Slugger O'Toole</i>	sluggerotoole.com	Multi-authored	Centrist	05/06/2002

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<i>Stronger Unions</i>	strongerunions.org	Other organisation	Left-wing	11/04/2008
<i>Stumbling and Mumbling</i>	stumblingandmumbling.typepad.com	Journalist	Centre-left	26/10/2004
<i>Subrosa</i>	subrosa-blonde.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	13/01/2009
<i>Syniadau</i>	syniadau--buildinganindependentwales.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	23/04/2009
<i>The Devil's Kitchen</i>	devilskitchen.me.uk	Multi-authored	Right-wing	11/02/2004
<i>The Rambles of Neil Monnery</i>	neilmonnery.co.uk	Private citizen	Centrist	02/09/2010
<i>The Slog</i>	hat4uk.wordpress.com	Private citizen	Centre-right	01/01/2010
<i>Think Left</i>	think-left.org	Multi-authored	Left-wing	05/02/2012
<i>Touch Stone</i>	touchstoneblog.org.uk	Other organisation	Left-wing	11/08/2006
<i>Velvet Glove, Iron Fist</i>	velvetgloveironfist.blogspot.co.uk	Political analyst	Centrist	20/11/2009
<i>Wings over Scotland</i>	wingsoverscotland.com	Private citizen	Centre-left	08/04/2010
<i>Zelo Street</i>	zelo-street.blogspot.co.uk	Private citizen	Left-wing	17/03/2009

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Name	URL	Author type	Political position	Launch date
<i>1000 A Mi Hazánk</i>	hafr.blog.hu	Political analyst	Right-wing	22/12/2012
<i>A Körúton Kívül</i>	korutonkivul.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	12/09/2014
<i>A TASZ jelenti</i>	ataszjelenti.blog.hu	Other organisation	Centre-left	13/12/2009
<i>Alternatíva</i>	alternativa.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	21/10/2010
<i>Átlagpolgár</i>	atlagpolgar.blogstar.hu csuriakos.blog.hu	Journalist	Right-wing	07/04/2013

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<i>Átlátszó blog</i>	atlatszo.blog.hu; blog.atlatszo.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	18/10/2012
<i>Boldogok a sajtókészítők</i>	boldogokasajtokeszitok. blog.hu	Journalist	Right-wing	04/04/2008
<i>Dinamó Műhely</i>	dinamo.blog.hu	Other organisation	Left-wing	03/12/2013
<i>DiploMaci</i>	diplomaci.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Centrist	07/10/2010
<i>Egyenlítő/B1</i>	egyenlito.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	31/10/2009
<i>egyszeregyopol politika közérthetően</i>	egyszeregyopol.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	19/04/2013
<i>falmentaparlament</i>	falmentaparlament.at latszo.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	04/03/2015
<i>Fideszfigyelő</i>	fideszfigyelo.blog.hu/	Multi-authored	Left-wing	01/01/2009
<i>figyelő jehu</i>	figyelojehu.nolblog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	29/04/2012
<i>Föld S. Péter blog</i>	fsp.nolblog.hu	Journalist	Left-wing	01/02/2007
<i>IFL, Az őszinte gazdaság</i>	iflgazdasag.blog.hu	Political analyst	Centre-left	21/02/2013
<i>Jobbegyenes</i>	jobbegyenes.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	02/08/2012
<i>Kard</i>	kard.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	30/12/2011
<i>Kérdezz bátran!</i>	kerdezzbatran.blog.hu	Private citizen	Centrist	05/07/2015
<i>Kettős Mércse</i>	kettosmerce.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	23/04/2008
<i>Konzervatórium</i>	konzervatorium.blog.h u	Multi-authored	Right-wing	01/01/2007
<i>Köznapló</i>	koznaplo.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	24/04/2015
<i>Lehetmemberrel politizálni</i>	lehetvelem.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	13/12/2010
<i>Lokális klímaváltozás</i>	lehetmasapolitika.blog .hu; lehetmas.blog.hu	Other organisation	Centre-left	05/03/2008
<i>mandiner blog</i>	mandiner.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Right-wing	09/06/2006
<i>Nívó</i>	nivo.blog.hu/	Multi-authored	Right-wing	24/08/2009
<i>Örülünk, Vincent?</i>	orulunkvincent.blog.h u	Multi-authored	Left-wing	02/03/2009

APPENDIX B: The shortlisted 50 British and 50 Hungarian political blogs

<i>Páholy</i>	mno.hu/paholyblog	Journalist	Right-wing	12/10/2013
<i>Piroslap</i>	piroslapok.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	11/09/2011
<i>Pogátsa Zoltán blogja</i>	pogiblog.atlatszo.hu	Private citizen	Centre-left	20/05/2014
<i>Policy</i>	policy.blog.hu	Other organisation	Centrist	01/02/2011
<i>Polipraktika</i>	polipraktika.blog.hu	Journalist	Centre-right	03/11/2014
<i>Politikafüggő</i>	politikafuggo.blog.hu; mno.hu/politikafuggo	Political analyst	Centre-right	15/02/2015
<i>Politikáról azoknak, akiket érdekel a véleményem</i>	szilardba.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	02/04/2008
<i>Politikazabáló</i>	politikazabalo.blog.hu	Private citizen	Centrist	12/03/2012
<i>Politológusblog</i>	politologus.blog.hu	Private citizen	Centrist	24/11/2010
<i>PolMA Progresszív</i>	polma.blog.hu	Political analyst	Centre-right	24/10/2012
<i>Progresszív blog</i>	progressziv.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Centre-left	28/04/2010
<i>Radical Puzzle</i>	radicalpuzzle.blogspot. hu	Multi-authored	Radical right	30/03/2009
<i>Radikális BAL oldal</i>	radikalisbal.blogspot.h u	Multi-authored	Radical left	11/01/2009
<i>Szegedi Kattintós</i>	szeka.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	24/09/2014
<i>Szembesítés</i>	szembesites.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	20/02/2013
<i>Ténytár</i>	tenytar.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Centrist	27/01/2010
<i>törökgáborelem ez</i>	torokgaborelemezblo .hu	Political analyst	Centrist	02/11/2009
<i>Törvénygyártók</i>	torvenygyartok.atlatsz o.hu	Political institute	Centre-left	03/06/2015
<i>Varánusz</i>	varanus.blog.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	08/09/2009
<i>Vastagbőr</i>	vastagbor.blog.hu/; vastagbor.atlatszo.hu	Multi-authored	Left-wing	21/09/2007
<i>Victorism blog</i>	victorism.blog.hu	Private citizen	Left-wing	10/12/2014
<i>W</i>	hvg.hu/w	Journalist	Left-wing	12/09/2011

APPENDIX C: The metadata of the collected troll threads

Due to its size, Appendix C has not been reproduced in hard copy. However, an electronic version of the appendix is available for download at http://bit.ly/appendix_c.

APPENDIX D: The regular expressions used to create corpus versions 2, 3, 4, and 5

VERSION 1 → VERSION 2		
All corpus files		
Removed pattern	Example	Regular expression
Embedded Tweet metadata (1)	— Nope, not Hope (@NopenotHope) May 1, 2015 <script async="" src="//platform.twitter.com/widgets.j... charset="utf-8"></script>	(\h*— .*@.*\d{1,2},\h*\d{4}\h*^\h*< script.*</script>\h*)
Embedded Tweet metadata (2)	Nigel Farage @Nigel_Farage 1h1 hour ago Nicola Sturgeon @NicolaSturgeon Sep 10	^.*@.*(ago (Jan Feb Mar Apr M ay Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec)\h*\d{1,2})\h*\$
Embedded Tweet metadata (3)	9:37 AM - 30 Jan 2015	^\h*\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h*[A P]M\h*\n -\n \h*\d{1,2}\h*(Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov D ec)\h*\d{4}(\h*.\h*Details)?\h* \$
Embedded Tweet metadata (4)	14 retweets 8 likes	^\[d\h]*Retweets?[\h\d]*(favour ites? likes?)?\h*\$
Embedded Tweet metadata (5)	Little Mix Retweeted Jeremy Corbyn MP	^\h*(\[w\h]{1,3}retweeted\h*((\[w\h]{1,3})?)?\$
Embedded Tweet metadata (6)	Reply Retweet 6 Like 11 More	^\h*Reply\hRetweet(ed)?[\d\h]* (Favou?rite[\d\h]*)?(\r\n\h*Like \h\d*)?(\r\n\h*More\h*\$)?
Read more: Follow us: on Twitter on Facebook	Read more: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/new... Follow us: @MailOnline on Twitter DailyMail on Facebook	^\h*Read\hmore:.*\r\n(\h*\r\n)? ^\h*Follow\hus:.*on\hTwitter\h\ \h.*on\hFacebook\h*\$

URLs and file names	<p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mimilita_veterans_in_British_politics icon_wink.gif</p>	<pre> \S*(http(s)?:\V)?(www\.)?[-a-zA-Z0-9@:%._\+~#=]{1,256}\.((?i)ac ad aero ae af ag ai al am ao aq arpa ar asia at au aw ax ba bb bd be bf bg bh biz bi bj bm bmp bn bo br bs bt bv bw bz cat ca cc cd cf cg ch ci ck cl cm cn coop com co cr cu cv cx cy cz de dj dk dm dz ec edu ee eg es eu fi fj fk fm fo fr ga gb gd ge gf gg gh gi gif gl gm gn gov gp gq gr gs gt gu gw gy hk hm hn hr ht hu id ie il im info int in io iq ir is it je jm jobs jo jp jpe jpe ke kg kh km kn kp kr kw ky kz la lb lc li lk lr ls lt lu lv ly ma mc md me mg mh mil mk ml mm mn mobi mo mp mq mt museum mu mv mw mx mz name nc net nf ng ni nl no np nr nu nz om org palp e pf pg ph pk pl pm pn png pro prt pt pw py qa re ro rs ru rw sa sb sd se sg sh si sj sk sl sm sn sr st su sv sy sz tc td tel tf tg th tif tiff tj tk tl tm tn to tp travel tr tt tv tw tz ua ug uk um us uy uz va vc ve vg vi vn vu wf ws xn)\b([-a-záéíúóüöüíÁÍÉÛÜÓÚÖÖ-9@:;,%-_\+~#?!&//=()*) </pre>
Emoticons	<p>:D :-))) ;-DDDD))</p>	<pre> ((?<=\\h)[:;][\r\n-])?[\\(\\)[\\pPoOlibBdDsS]+[^a-zA-ZáéíúóüöüíÁÍÉÛÜÓÚÖÖ:;\\r\\n\\h]*[[:;][\r\n-])?[\\(\\)[\\pPoOlibBdDsS]+[^a-zA-ZáéíúóüöüíÁÍÉÛÜÓÚÖÖ:;\\r\\n\\h]*(?=\\h)[[:;][\r\n-])?[\\(\\)[\\pPoOlibBdDsS]+[^a-zA-ZáéíúóüöüíÁÍÉÛÜÓÚÖÖ:;\\r\\n\\h]* </pre>

	Bella Caledonia Editor	Bella Caledonia Editor:	^Bella\hCaledonia\hEditor:?\$
	Time of posting	1 year ago	^[1 2]\hyears?\hago\$
	Reblogged this on	Reblogged this on Bampots Utd.	^\h*[Rr]eblogged\hthis\hon.*\$
capitalists_1	Time of posting and nickname	9:28 am Anonymous said...	(^\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h[a p m]\$\r\n)?(\h?.*said\.{3}\$)?
conservativ ehome_1-81	Number of replies, avatar, nickname, number of upvotes and time of posting	53 replies · active 55 weeks ago Allectus's avatar Allectus109p · 55 weeks ago	(^.*\hactive\hd+\hweeks?\hago\$\r\n)?(^.*s\havatar\h{2}\$\r\n)?(^.*\hd+\hweeks?\hago\$)?
europp_1	Nickname and time of posting	Starbuck September 7, 2015 at 11:53 pm	^.*\hd{1,2},\hd{4}\hat\hd{1,2}:\d{2}\h[a p m]h*\$
guardian_1-167	Nickname, addressee, date of posting, and number of upvotes	viewfromairstripone Vintagebeauty 13 Sep 2015 9:19 83 84	^.*\d{1,2}\h+(Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec)\h+\d{4}\h+\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h*((\r\n^\h*(Staff Contributor)\h*\$)?(\r\n){2})(^\h*\d+\h*\r\n)+^\h*\d+\h*\$)?
	Share, Facebook, Twitter, Report	Share Facebook Twitter Report	^\hShare\hFacebook\h{2}Twitter\hReport\$
	This comment was removed.	This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our community standards. Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see our FAQs.	^This\hcomment\hwas\hremoved\hby\ha\hmoderator\hbecause\hit\hdidn't\habide\hby\hour\hcommunity\hstandards\.\hReplies\hmay\halso\hbe\hdeleted\.\hFor\hmore\hdetail\hsee\hour\hFAQs\.\$
guido_1-391	Reply, share, nickname, and the time of posting	6 • Reply•Share › Avatar billbodge Otto von Bismarck • a year ago	(^\h*\d*\h{1,2})(\hReply)?•Share\h(\r\n+)?(^.*\h(a 2)\hyears?\hago\h*\$)?
	Thumbnail	Thumbnail	^\h?Thumbnail\$
	See more	see more	^see\hmore\$
	This comment is awaiting moderation.	This comment is awaiting moderation. Show comment.	^This\hcomment\his\hawaiting\hmoderation\.\hShow\hcomment\.\$

labourhame_1	Nickname and time of posting	Mike - December 14th, 2015 at 11:58 am none Comment author #132560 on Derek Mackay must listen to Alex Rowley and come clean by Labour Hame	^.*\h-\h(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{1,2}(st nd rd th),\h\d{4}\hat\h\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h[a p m]\hnone\hComment\hauthor\h#\d+\h\on\h.*by\hLabour\hHame\$
labourlist_1-433	Reply, share, nickname, and the time of posting	1 • Reply•Share › Pragmatic Red Stu • a year ago	(^\h*\d*\h{1,2}(\hReply)?•Share\h>(\r\n+)?(^\h*\h(a 2)\hyears?\hago\h*\$)?
	Thumbnail	Thumbnail	^\h?Thumbnail\$
	See more	see more	^see\hmore\$
	This comment is awaiting moderation.	This comment is awaiting moderation. Show comment.	^This\hcomment\his\hawaiting\hmoderation\.\hShow\hcomment\.\$
	Comments continue after advertisement	Comments continue after advertisement	^Comments\hcontinue\hafter\hadvertisement\$
This comment was deleted.	This comment was deleted.	^This\hcomment\hwas\hdeleted\.\$	
labouruncut_1-4	Nickname and time of posting	Tafia says: May 29, 2015 at 4:12 pm	^.*\hsays:\r\n^(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{1,2},\h\d{4}\hat\at\h\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h[a p m]\$
lallands_1-5	Nickname and time of posting	Running Man27 July 2015 at 14:19	^.*\h(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{4}\hat\h\d{2}:\d{2}\$
	Reply and replies	Reply Replies	^Repl(yies)\$
	This comment has been removed	This comment has been removed by the author.	^This\hcomment\hhas\hbeen\hremoved\hby\h(the\hauthor\ahblog\hadministrator)\.\$
leftfootforward_1-89	Nickname and time of posting	Fr.Duffy Fighting 69th September 25, 2015	^.*\r\n^(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{1,2},\h\d{4}\$
leftfutures_1-26	Nickname and time of posting	gerry December 22, 2015 at 9:23 am	^.*\r\n^(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{1,2},\h\d{4}\hat\h\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h[a p m]\$

leninstomb _1-8	Reply, share, nickname, and the time of posting	2 •Share › sartesian Makkah • a year ago	(^\h*d*\h{1,2})(\hReply)?•Shar e\h>(\r\n+)?(^\.*\h(a 2)\hyears?\h ago\h*\$)?
	Thumbnail	Thumbnail	^\h?Thumbnail\$
	See more	see more	^see\hmore\$
	This comment is awaiting moderation.	This comment is awaiting moderation. Show comment.	^This\hcomment\his\hawaiting\h moderation\.\hShow\hcomment\ \$
	Comments continue after advertisement	Comments continue after advertisement	^Comments\hcontinue\hafter\ha dvertisement\$
	This comment was deleted.	This comment was deleted.	^This\hcomment\hwas\hdeleted\ .\$
libdemvoic e_1-22	Nickname and time of posting	expats 20th Apr '15 - 2:22pm	^\.*\h\d{1,2}(st nd rd th)\h(Jan Fe b Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec)\h\d{2}\h- \h\d{1,2}:\d{2}[a p]m\$
longrider_1 -3	Time of posting, avatar and nickname	August 22, 2015 09:07 Stephen Stephen	^(January February March April May June July August Septembe r October November December)\h d{1,2},\h\d{4}\h\d{2}:\d{2}(\r\n [^] .*){2}\$
politicalbett ing_1-111	Nickname and number of posts	NemtynakhtNemtyna kht Posts: 200	^\.*Posts:\h(\d+ \d{1,2},\d{3})\$
	Quote	Nemtynakht said:	^\.*\hsaid:\$
	Show previous quotes	» show previous quotes	^»\hshow\hprevious\hquotes\$
	Time of posting	April 2015 edited April 2015	^(January February March April May June July August Septembe r October November December)\h d{4}(\hedited\h(January Febru ary March April May June July August September October Nove mber December)\h\d{4})?\$
	Citation needed	Citation needed	\W*Citation\h+needed\W*
	First/Downwards	First Downwards	^\h*(First Downwards)\h*\.\h*\$
	Embedded tweets	View image on Twitter	(^\h*View\himage\hon\hTwitter \h*\r\n)*^\h*Follow\h*\$\r\n(^\.* \$\r\n){1,8}(\h*\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h

		View image on Twitter Follow NumbrCrunchrPolitics @NCPoliticsUK What am I working on? A #GE2015 election model! The results so far are VERY interesting... http://www.ncpolitics.uk 2:30 PM - 24 Feb 2015 Retweets likes	*[A P M h*\- \h*\d{1,2}\h*(Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec)\h*\d{4}\h*^\.*Retweets?\. *likes?\h*\$)+
	Embedded tweets (2)	Twitter Greg Dawson @Gregstweet 50m50 minutes ago	^\h*Twitter\h*\r\n.*@.*ago\h*\$
politicalscr apbook_1-7	Nickname and time of posting	timmy says: February 3, 2015 at 8:13 pm	^\.*\hsays:\r\n^(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{1,2},\h\d{4}\h at\h\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h[a p]m\$
politicsandi nsights_1	Like, reply, pingback, nickname, and time of posting	Like Reply Pingback: Sturgeon's threats demonstrate the anti-democra... Luke W says: May 5, 2015 at 4:20 pm	(^Like(\r\n){2}^Reply\r\n(^Pingback:*\r\n)?^\.*\hsays:\r\n^(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{1,2},\h\d{4}\hat\h\d{1,2}:\d{2}\h[a p]m\$
	Reblogged this on	Reblogged this on sdbast.	^\h*[Rr]eblogged\hthis\hon.*\$
raedwald_1	Time of posting and nickname	13 December 2015 at 16:34 Budgie said...	(^\d{1,2}\h(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h\d{4}\hat\h\d{2}:\d{2}\$\r\n)?(^\.*\hsaid\.{3}\$)?
sluggerotole_1-74	Share, avatar, nickname, and the time of posting	3 •Share › Avatar Dan Guest • 2 years ago	(^\d*\h{1,2}•Share\h>\r\n)?(^Avatar\$\r\n)?(^\.*\h(a 2)\hyears?\hago\$)?
	Thumbnail	Thumbnail	^\h?Thumbnail\$
	See more	see more	^see\hmore\$
	This comment is awaiting moderation.	This comment is awaiting moderation. Show comment.	^This\hcomment\his\hawaiting\hmoderation\.\hShow\hcomment\.\$
Comments continue after advertisement	Comments continue after advertisement	^Comments\hcontinue\hafter\hadvertisement\$	

	This comment was deleted.	This comment was deleted.	^This\hcomment\hwas\hdeleted\.\$
	Featured by Slugger O'Toole	Featured by Slugger O'Toole	^\h*Featured\hby\hSlugger\hO'Toole\h*\$
stumbling_1	Nickname, time of posting and addressee of the comment	Posted by: gastro george September 29, 2015 at 10:26 PM greg @Peter:	^Posted\hby:\h[^\]*\h(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h{1,2},\h{4}\hat\h{2}:\d{2}\h[A P]M((\r\n){2}\h.*)?(\r\n^@\S*\h?[\^w"]*)?
syniadau_1-2	Nickname and time of posting	13 January 2015 at 17:44 MH said...	(^\d{1,2}\h(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h{4}\hat\h{2}:\d{2}\h{2}\r\n)?(^\.*\hsaid\.{3}\$)?
	This comment has been removed	This comment has been removed by the author.	^This\hcomment\hhas\hbeen\hremoved\hby\h(the\hauthor\h \hblog\hadministrator)\.\$
theslog_1-17	Like, pingback, nickname, and time of posting	Like Pingback: John Ward – Charlie Hebdo Attacks : Not So Much A False Flag As A Free Hand – 13 January 2015 Lucas 2012 Infos TFS January 13, 2015 at 9:53 am	(^Like(\r\n){2})(^Pingback:\h.*\r\n)*(^.*\r\n^(January February March April May June July August September October November December)\h{1,2},\h{4}\hat\h{1,2}:\d{2}\h{4}\h{ap}m\$)*
	Liked by 1 person	Liked by 1 person	^\h*Liked\hby\hd+\h(persons? people)\h*\$
	Reblogged this on	Reblogged this on Britain Isn't Eating.	^\h*[Rr]eblogged\hthis\hon.*\$
	Embedded tweets	View image on Twitter View image on Twitter Follow Patrick Chovanec @prchovanec ECB haircut guide: 11:33 PM - 6 Jul 2015 386 386 Retweets 213 213 likes	(^\h*View\himage\hon\hTwitter\h*\r\n)+^\h*Follow\h*\r\n(^.*\r\n){1,5}(^.*Retweets.*likes\h*\$)+
velvetglove_1	Reply, share, avatar, nickname, and the time of posting	3 • Reply•Share › Avatar Dragonmum • 2 years ago	(^\d*\h{1,2}•\hReply•Share\h\h\r\n)?(^Avatar\$\r\n)?(^.*\h(a 2)\hyears?\hago\$)?
	Thumbnail	Thumbnail	^\h?Thumbnail\$
	See more	see more	^see\hmore\$

	This comment is awaiting moderation.	This comment is awaiting moderation. Show comment.	^This\hcomment\his\hawaiting\h moderation\.\hShow\hcomment\.\$
	Comments continue after advertisement	Comments continue after advertisement	^Comments\hcontinue\hafter\hadvertisement\$
	This comment was deleted.	This comment was deleted.	^This\hcomment\hwas\hdeleted\.\$
wingsoverscotland_1-164	Nickname	frogesque says:	^.*says:?\$
	Time of posting	26 March, 2015 at 5:07 pm	^\d{1,2}\h(January February March April May June July August September October November December),\hd{4}\hat\hd{1,2}:\d{2}\h[ap]m\h*\$
	Addressee of the participant	@:dakk says: 26 March, 2015 at 2:03 pm:	.*@\d+[:\.]h*\d{2}\h*([ap]m)?[\W]*\$
	Embedded tweets	Twitter Kenny Farquharson @KennyFarq · 8m 8 minutes ago	^\h*Twitter\h*\r\n.*@.*ago\h*\$
zelostreet_1	Nickname and time of posting	31 DECEMBER 2015 AT 15:55 Gweedo Fawkes said...	(^\d{1,2}\h(JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)\hd{4}\hAT\hd{1,2}:\d{2}\r\n)?(^.*said\.{3}\$)?

Hungarian corpus files

Corpus file	Removed pattern	Example	Regular expression
1000amiha zank_1-56	Nickname and the time of posting	zipe moha 2015.07.20. 12:59:55	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@egyetmondok:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
alternativa_1-8	Nickname and the time of posting	trg 2015.05.22. 16:22:17	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@trg:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
ataszjelenti_1-10	Nickname and the time of posting	niemand1 2015.04.12. 14:20:43	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@FILTOL:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
atlatszo_1-10	Reply, share, avatar, nickname, and the time of posting	• Válasz•Megosztás › Profilkép Shayiskhun Livingstone • egy éve	(^\d*\h{1,2}•\hVálasz•Megosztás\h>\$\r\n)?(^Profilkép\$\r\n)?(^.*\h(egy 2)\h(éve)\$)?

	Comments continue after advertisement	A hozzászólások folytatódnak a hirdetés után	<code>^A\hhozzászólások\hfolytatódnak\ha\hhirdetés\hután\$</code>
	See more	nézz többet	<code>^nézz\htöbbet\$</code>
	Thumbnail	Előnézet	<code>^h?Előnézet\$</code>
	This comment was deleted	Ezt a hozzászólást eltávolították.	<code>^Ezt\ha\hhozzászólást\heltávolították\.\$</code>
b1_1-61	Nickname and the time of posting	Myladi 2015.10.14. 14:41:29	<code>^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$</code>
	Addressee of the comment	@Navarone:	<code>^(@([^\:]*):\h?)+</code>
	Reply to	Válasz erre	<code>^Válasz\herre\h*\$</code>
boldogokas_ajt_1	Nickname and the time of posting	mbond 2015.11.22. 00:37:25	<code>^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$</code>
	Addressee of the comment	@Börtönbe most már a fideszesekkel!:	<code>^(@([^\:]*):\h?)+</code>
	Reply to	Válasz erre	<code>^Válasz\herre\h*\$</code>
dinamo_1-3	Nickname and the time of posting	drx8 2015.09.16. 01:02:49	<code>^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$</code>
	Addressee of the comment	@Заграница нам поможет, запад с нами.:	<code>^(@([^\:]*):\h?)+</code>
	Reply to	Válasz erre	<code>^Válasz\herre\h*\$</code>
diplomaci_1-5	Nickname and the time of posting	toportyánzsóti 2015.05.15. 17:32:56	<code>^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$</code>
	Addressee of the comment	@maxval bircaman szerkesztő:	<code>^(@([^\:]*):\h?)+</code>
	Reply to	Válasz erre	<code>^Válasz\herre\h*\$</code>
falmentaparlament_1-2	Reply, share, avatar, nickname, and the time of posting	1 • Válasz•Megosztás › Profilkép EuDave Jerome • egy éve	<code>(^\d*\h{1,2}•\hVálasz•Megosztás\h>\\$r\n)?(^Profilkép\\$r\n)?(^.*•\h(egy 2)\h(éve)\\$)?</code>
	Comments continue after advertisement	A hozzászólások folytatódnak a hirdetés után	<code>^A\hhozzászólások\hfolytatódnak\ha\hhirdetés\hután\$</code>
	See more	nézz többet	<code>^nézz\htöbbet\$</code>
	Thumbnail	Előnézet	<code>^h?Előnézet\$</code>
	This comment was deleted	Ezt a hozzászólást eltávolították.	<code>^Ezt\ha\hhozzászólást\heltávolították\.\$</code>
ifl_1-12	Nickname and the time of posting	brumm.a.tejbe 2015.09.07. 15:51:35	<code>^.*\r\n^\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\$</code>
	Addressee of the comment	@Anti Liberal:	<code>^(@([^\:]*):\h?)+</code>
	Reply to	Válasz erre	<code>^Válasz\herre\h*\$</code>
jobbegyenes_1-11	Nickname and the time of posting	koala kóla 2015.01.12. 18:13:48	<code>^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$</code>
	Addressee of the comment	@csan2:	<code>^(@([^\:]*):\h?)+</code>
	Reply to	Válasz erre	<code>^Válasz\herre\h*\$</code>

kard_1-5	Nickname and the time of posting	Sexual Harassment Panda 2015.02.22. 16:29:51	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@panelburzsuj:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
kettosmerc_e_1-19	Like, Reply, time of posting, and nickname	Tetszik · Válasz · 2015. július 30. 2:35 József Kiss	^Tetszik\h·\hVálasz\h·\h(d+\h\h)?\d{4}\.\h(január február március április május június július augusztus szeptember október november december)\h\d{1,2}\.\h\d{1,2}:\d{2}(\h·\hSzerkesztve)?((\r\n){2}^.*\$)?
koznaplo_1-2	Nickname and the time of posting	Simlicske 2015.01.03. 11:35:27	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@Könnyen elkaptuk, uram!:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
mandiner_1-70	Nickname and the time of posting	búvár kondér 2015.03.23. 15:13:18	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@Tudományos libsizmus:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
nivo_1-2	Nickname and the time of posting	zorki 2015.05.31. 22:47:40	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@ccactus:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
orulunk_1-49	Nickname and the time of posting	Tehéntőgy 2015.12.26. 13:55:34	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@kerekes pereces:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
piroslap_1-2	Nickname and the time of posting	integrans 2015.04.25. 15:27:20	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@Gerilgfx:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
pogatsazoltan_1-3	Reply, share, avatar, nickname, and the time of posting	• Válasz•Megosztás › Profilkép bölcész mérnök hüje • 2 éve	(^\d*\h{1,2}•\hVálasz•Megosztás\h>\\$ \r\n)?(^Profilkép\\$ \r\n)?(^.*\h(egy 2)\h(éve)\$)?
	Comments continue after advertisement	A hozzászólások folytatódnak a hirdetés után	^A\hhozzászólások\hfolytatódnak\h\h\hirdetés\hután\$
	See more	nézz többet	^nézz\htöbbet\$
	Thumbnail	Előnézet	^\h?Előnézet\$
This comment was deleted	Ezt a hozzászólást eltávolították.	^Ezt\ha\hhozzászólást\heltávolították\.\$	
polipraktika_1-7	Nickname and the time of posting	Virágh et. 2015.12.05. 17:39:10	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h\d{2}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@Kelly és a szexi dög:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+

	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
politikafug go_1-2	Nickname and the time of posting	tralalala 2015.02.23. 09:25:33	^.*\r\n^{\d{4}}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h{\d{2}}:\d{2}:\d{2}\$
	Addressee of the comment	@Kényszerbagoly:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
politologus _1-2	Nickname and the time of posting	fidesz maszop dk egykutya 2015.10.25. 17:16:20	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h{\d{2}}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@midnight coder:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
progressziv _1-2	Nickname and the time of posting	mikimackó 2015.04.10. 21:41:31	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h{\d{2}}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@borzimirzi:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
szeged_1- 41	Nickname and the time of posting	bontottcsirke 2015.08.31. 21:20:49	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h{\d{2}}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@retrovirus:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
tenytar_1- 37	Nickname and the time of posting	bandinyúl 2015.06.11. 09:48:23	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h{\d{2}}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@a nagy hohoohoo:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
torokgabor _1	Nickname and the time of posting	korábban ulrike 2015.04.19. 22:14:15@Hepci:	^.*\h?\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h{\d{2}}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h?(@([\^:]*):\h?)?
	Addressee of the comment	@korábban ulrike: @szoja122:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
varanusz_1 -68	Nickname and the time of posting	Dr.Dottyka, a Vörös Cipellős, Katgimis Angyalka 2015.09.07. 09:34:42	^.*\d{4}\.\d{2}\.\d{2}\.\h{\d{2}}:\d{2}:\d{2}\h*\$
	Addressee of the comment	@DarthVader:	^(@([\^:]*):\h?)+
	Reply to	Válasz erre	^Válasz\herre\h*\$
vastagbor_ 1-11	Reply, share, avatar, nickname, and the time of posting	1 • Válasz•Megosztás › Profilkép Addam • 2 éve	(^\d*\h{1,2}•\hVálasz•Megosztás\h>\$\r\n)?(^\Profilkép\$\r\n)?(^\.*\h(egy 2)\h(éve)\$)?
	Comments continue after advertisement	A hozzászólások folytatódnak a hirdetés után	^A\hhozzászólások\hfolytatódnak\h\hirdetés\hután\$
	See more	nézz többet	^nézz\htöbbet\$
	Thumbnail	Előnézet	^\h?Előnézet\$
	This comment was deleted	Ezt a hozzászólást eltávolították.	^Ezt\h\hhozzászólást\heltávolították\.\$

w_1-17	Reply, share, avatar, nickname, and the time of posting	1 • Válasz•Megosztás › Profilkép klorofill • egy éve	$(^{\wedge}\{d\}^*\{h\}\{1,2\}\{h\}Válasz\{h\}Megosztás\{h\}\{r\}\{n\})?(^{\wedge}\{p\}rofilkép\{h\}\{r\}\{n\})?(^{\wedge}\{e\}\{g\}y\{2\}\{h\}(éve)\{h\})?$
	Comments continue after advertisement	A hozzászólások folytatódnak a hirdetés után	$^{\wedge}A\{h\}hozzászó\{l}\{a}\{s}\{o}\{k}\{h\}folytató\{d}\{n}\{a}\{k}\{h\}a\{h\}hirdetés\{h\}után\{h\}$
	See more	nézz többet	$^{\wedge}nézz\{h\}többet\{h\}$
	Thumbnail	Előnézet	$^{\wedge}\{h\}Előnézet\{h\}$
	This comment was deleted	Ezt a hozzászólást eltávolították.	$^{\wedge}Ezt\{h\}a\{h\}hozzászó\{l}\{a}\{s}\{t}\{h\}eltávolít\{o}\{t}\{t}\{á}\{k}\{h\}.$

VERSION 2 → VERSION 3

All corpus files

Removed pattern	Regular expression
Text before the first troll comment	$[^>]+(?:\r\n<tc>)$
Text between the troll comments	$(?<=<\ tc>\r\n)[\s\S][\s\S]^*[\s\S](?=<tc>)$
Text after the last troll comment	$(?<=<\ tc>\r\n)[^<]+$

VERSION 2 → VERSION 4

All corpus files

Removed pattern	Regular expression
All troll comments	$<tc>(\. \r\n)^*?<\ tc>$

VERSION 3 → VERSION 5

All corpus files

Removed pattern	Regular expression
Text before the first troll token	$(?<=<tc>)[^<]+(?:<tt>)$
Text between the troll tokens	$(?<=<\ tt>)[^<]+(?:<tc>)$
Text after the last troll token	$(?<=<\ tt>)[^<]+(?:<\ tc>)$
Troll comment and troll token tags	$<\ ?t[tc]>$

APPENDIX E: The five versions of the British and Hungarian corpora

Due to its size, Appendix E has not been reproduced in hard copy. However, an electronic version of the appendix is available for download at http://bit.ly/appendix_e.

APPENDIX F: The British and Hungarian troll comments

Due to its size, Appendix F has not been reproduced in hard copy. However, an electronic version of the appendix is available for download at http://bit.ly/appendix_f.

APPENDIX G: The British troll comment n-grams, collocates, and keywords

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APPENDIX H: The Hungarian troll comment n-grams, collocates, and keywords

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