

Study will track change via Hansard

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A STUDY to measure how the language used in the UK Parliament has changed over the past 200 years has been launched by Scottish linguistic experts.

Researchers at the University of Glasgow will analyse over 2.3 billion words compiled from parliamentary speeches made between 1803 and 2003 and use them to chart the popularity of various topics such as war, honesty, honour, homosexuality and terrorism.

It is hoped they will be able to build up a picture of why and when certain topics are raised in parliament and how their use and significance has evolved over time. They will also chart how the language of individual MPs changed over the course of their terms in office.

The 15-month project will use Hansard, the official Westminster records, which contain reports of all parliamentary speeches, votes, ministerial statements and parliamentary questions given in the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

Lead investigator, Dr Marc Alexander from the University of Glasgow, said: "Looking at Hansard will hopefully reveal big-scale patterns in our society and culture. We will use it to analyse how parliament anticipates or reacts to major global events and social issues."

