

Parliamentary Discourse Research in Sociology: Literature Review

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Abstract

One of the major sociological research interests has always been the study of political discourse. This literature review gives an overview of the most prominent topics addressed and the most popular methods used by sociologists. We identify the commonalities and the differences of the approaches established in sociology with corpus-driven approaches in order to establish how parliamentary corpora and corpus-based approaches could be successfully integrated in sociological research. We also highlight how parliamentary corpora could be made even more useful for sociologists.

Keywords: parliamentary discourse, sociology, parliamentary corpora

1. Introduction

Parliamentary debates are an important source of sociologically relevant content since parliament is an institution responsible for shaping legislation that impacts people's everyday lives and is as such a source of power for members of parliament and other politicians (Bischof and Ilie, 2018). In addition, parliaments and parliamentary debates are crucial in creating political identities (Van Dijk, 2018) which too are of major interest and importance for sociological research.

This literature review has been conducted in the context of the ParlaMint II project (Erjavec et al., 2022) which compiles comparative corpora of parliamentary debates for multiple parliaments in Europe and aims to develop training materials and showcases in order to maximize their reuse in various disciplinary research communities that are interested in analyzing parliamentary debates. In this review, we focus primarily on the most prominent topics and research approaches in sociology. Its main aim is to identify the potential of better integration of corpus-based approaches and parliamentary corpora into sociological research.

The review consists of two parts. The first part is methodological and focuses on the description of research approaches which are most commonly used by sociologists when studying parliamentary debates. The second part presents the most prominent and sociologically relevant research topics of parliamentary debates and their approaches to data collection and analysis. We conclude the review with a discussion of the affordances and prerequisites for sociological research to benefit from the ParlaMint corpora and vice versa.

2. Literature Selection and Methods

Sociological research is frequently interdisciplinary since sociology as a discipline touches on various fields of social science, among others also on history, psychology, ecology, linguistics, and political science. It is mostly the interconnectedness with linguistics on the one hand and political science on the other that results in sociological interest in researching parliamentary debates and political speech. Sociology is also distinctive in its welcome of methodological diversity and its capacity to apply various methods to the study of social phenomena.

Sociology combines both, quantitative and qualitative research methods with the latter being especially popular because they work with non-numerical data and seek to interpret meaning from the data that help understand social life through the study of targeted population and places. This is highly important in sociological research because social and cultural contextual factors play a prominent role in analyzing parliamentary debates and political discourse.

One of the problems of qualitative analysis and the problem that sociology often faces is that researchers can influence data collection and analysis through subjective interpretation, leading them to make premature or unfunded conclusions. This exposes sociological research to subjectivism and bias and can impact and in extreme cases even change research outcomes. ParlaMint could help reduce the research bias by providing not only up-to-date, comprehensively, and transparently collected, and richly annotated corpora but also tutorials and showcases for sociologists that demonstrate the use of the corpora and its annotations in research.

2.1 Selection of Articles

This literature review presents an overview of the various qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that sociologists use when researching

political discourse. The reviewed articles were carefully selected among hundreds of sources which focus on parliamentary debates by considering some important research criteria. We identified the following scholarly search engines to look for the articles:

- Taylor and Francis Online (<https://www.tandfonline.com>),
- SAGE Journals (<https://journals.sagepub.com>),
- Semantic Scholar (<https://www.semanticscholar.org>), and
- Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com>).

We applied the following filters in order to identify the relevant articles:

- Publication period: 2012 – 2022,
- Discipline: Sociology and Social Science, and
- Article ranking: ‘most relevant’ and ‘most cited’.

By using those filters, most prominent sociological journals were identified, such as *Discourse and Society*, *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, and *Gender and Society*, although articles included in this review were also published elsewhere. All articles the title of which was considered potentially relevant were skimmed, especially the abstract, methodology and analysis sections, to confirm their relevance. It needs to be noted that due to language constraints, only articles in English have been chosen. This could be considered a limitation since we did not analyze the research in other languages which might show different results.

2.2 Overview of Methods and Topics

A total of 37 articles were determined as sociologically relevant and are listed in a Google spreadsheet.¹ We then thematically analyzed them and selected those which revolved around the most common topics. This resulted in 16 articles on 6 topics that were selected for a detailed analysis: Immigration and minorities (4 articles), Health and social care (3 articles), Victimization and criminalization (3 articles), Gender and discrimination (3 articles), Ideology, national identity, and political affiliation (2 papers), and Populism and addressing the public (1 paper).

The goal of sociological research of parliamentary discourse is to analyze political discourse and language, which results in specific methodological approaches. A total of 7 methodological approaches have been identified. Out of 16 articles, 10 employed a methodological framework of Discourse Studies (Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis or Discourse Historical Approach), 4 employed Content Analysis and 2 a Mixed-methods approach, one combining content and keyword analysis and the other corpus-based and survey-assisted research. The fact

that Discourse Studies was used altogether in over 60% (10) of the reviewed research means that this is the dominant methodological approach in sociological analyses of parliamentary discourse, closely followed by Content Analysis, another major research strand in sociology.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Discourse Studies (DS)

Discourse Studies refers to a field of research which includes various either qualitative or quantitative methods and different genres such as news reports or parliamentary debates (Van Dijk, 2018). In this review, we have identified three salient methods of Discourse Studies: Discourse Analysis (DA), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Discourse Historical Approach (DHA).

Discourse Analysis (DA) can be described as an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of language in which speech, texts and conversations are analyzed (Konecki, 2017). It has emerged in the 1960s and is still one of the most widely used research methods in sociology, especially in cultural and political sociology, the focus of which is frequently the study of language, speech, and text.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has become one of the most visible branches of discourse analysis and examines the means by which political power is manifested or abused through discourse structures and practices (Dunmire, 2012). It is frequently applied to parliamentary communication with one of its major roles being to provide a critical context in which the debates occur.

Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) shares various common features with the CDA. The main distinctive feature of DHA is that it integrates the historical context and historical dimensions of discursive actions (Wodak, 2015).

Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) presents a useful link between sociological and linguistic research and is an invaluable research method for the study of political discourse and parliamentary data (Rubtcova et al. 2017). CADS methodological framework shows that the interconnection of sociological and corpus-based approaches can be mutually beneficial both in terms of ease to access the data as well as to obtain more reliable results. One of its major benefits is most definitely the elimination or at least reduction of the research bias. Because of the frequently qualitative nature of sociological studies, the sociological interpretation of data can quickly become too subjective which can result in biased research results.

¹https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19xMBR-qHVZtQbYpgesgovFsiSfoMN1Q_pTAQCYvPxg8/edit#gid=1938758934

3.2 Content Analysis (CA)

Content Analysis (CA) focuses on the analysis of the society and social life by examining the content of the texts, images, and other media products. It is referred to as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their contexts (Mihailescu, 2019). It is a common sociological method and employs a subjective interpretation of textual data “through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Lilja, 2021).

The main difference between Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis (DA) is that the former focuses on the content, whereas the latter focuses on the language. We could therefore understand CA as a method for retrieving meaningful information from document and DA as focusing on the language that is used in a specific text and context.

Although content analysis was initially highly quantitative, the switch was made to qualitative content analysis where the focus fell more on the context of the textual understanding. Quantitative CA has again gained in popularity with the development of computational approaches to study larger amounts of texts and data more efficiently, to move from simple word counts to more advanced research of debates and discourse. It needs to be noted, however, that the majority of sociological data is still coded by researchers themselves and that the use of computational approaches is still underdeveloped.

3.3 Mixed Methods Approach

The mixed methods approach draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, which results in showing a more complete picture of the research problem (Shorten and Smith, 2017). One of its major benefits is its complementarity, which means that results produced by one of the methods can be elaborated and clarified with the findings from the other method (Molina-Azorin, 2016). In addition, it results in more in-depth findings, enhanced validity of the research, and limits research bias. In such a setting, researchers must develop a broader set of research skills and widen the repertoire of the methodologies used. Mixed methods requires a thorough integration and interconnection of the two methods where the results from each of them complement and further enforce one another.

4. Research Topics

Society constantly faces changes and challenges, and the role of politicians is to respond to them. This is why they constantly reflect on and respond to societal issues and challenges in parliamentary debates. This section gives an overview of the most prominent sociological research that look into societal issues as debated in parliament.

4.1 Immigration and Minorities

The topic of immigration, racism, and minorities is one of the most salient and most frequently discussed research topics in sociology.

4.1.1 Immigrant Rights

Research problem: Goenaga (2019) investigated immigrant voting rights in French and Swedish parliamentary debates. He examined how actors challenge and reinforce dominant ideas about the link between nationality and political rights. The aim of his research was to compare legislative debates that followed different paths towards democracy and show how different political cultures shape the structure of discursive conflicts around the political inclusion of foreigners in contemporary Western democracies.

Data collection: Goenaga analyzed legislative debates in France and Sweden between 1968 and 2017. The data consisted of 522 French and 149 Swedish statements from every debate in Swedish Riksdag and in the French Senate and National Assembly which focused on enfranchising non-citizen residents in both countries. Goenaga also used related statements made in debates on other topics that were identified through keyword searches. The statements were hand-coded according to different criteria and properties, such as the name, party, and sex of the speaker, as well as their position (for or against), whether they discriminated between non-citizens according to their country of origin, the frame and sub-frame speakers used to justify their positions and whether their argument referred to voting rights for local and national elections. The author also ensured that the categories were mutually exclusive and exhaustive across national contexts and actors by conducting a pilot analysis on media articles and grey literature on the same topic in France, the US and Sweden.

Research method: Goenaga used Discourse Analysis, intertwined with the research of social movements and the concept of framing theory. In sociology, this theory is predominantly used to analyze how people understand certain situations and activities. His analysis showed that the discursive strategies of the actors have consequences on the long run and that in both countries these discursive strategies are used differently but that certain similarities between strategies of right-wing and left-wing parties can be observed.

Discussion: Although the amount of analyzed data was quite extensive, Goenaga opted for manual collection of the data and hand coding. This enabled him to analyze the statements both comprehensibly and in depth and identify the main topics which were salient for his analysis.

4.1.2 Religious Rights

Research problem: Cheng (2015) researched the topic of banning the construction of minarets in Switzerland and studied the expressions of Islamophobia and racism in Swiss federal parliamentary debates on the popular initiative “Against the Construction of

Minarets” in March 2009. The debates focused on determining the validity of the said initiative and checking whether it breached any international laws. Cheng aimed to investigate whether political arguments for the ban of minarets were Islamophobic, Muslimophobic and/or racist. Her research revolved around the depiction and description of Muslims in Switzerland as well as the reasons for the implemented ban. She was mostly interested in political justifications of such decisions and the reasons behind it.

Data collection: Cheng obtained the relevant debates from the website of the Swiss parliament but gave no information about the size of the analyzed data or if it was manually coded in any way.

Research method: She relied on the methodological framework of Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) as introduced by Reisigl and Wodak (2017). She points out that DHA sees ideology as a vehicle for establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse and that for the DHA, language is not powerful on its own but is rather made powerful by powerful people (Cheng, 2015).

Discussion: Cheng does not account for the processing and size of the analyzed data.

4.1.3 Media Influence on Political Discourse About Minorities

Research problem: Aydemir and Vliegenhart (2016) studied political discourse about minorities and focused on the question of how discursive opportunities shape representative patterns in the Netherlands and the UK. They studied to what extent media coverage on immigrant minorities can influence or shape parliamentary activities in the two countries.

Data collection: The dataset consisted of parliamentary questions posed by minority legislatures between 2002 and 2012. They were collected in a two-step procedure. First, all parliamentary questions were downloaded by manually entering the names of the relevant MPs. Then, only the documents which were specifically related to immigrant minorities were selected through a keyword search. The keywords were selected in a preliminary analysis of the most frequent words used in the discourse of immigration. This yielded 252 parliamentary questions for the Netherlands and 214 questions for the UK. The dataset for media analysis was collected through a keyword search for the same time period and with the same terms as before for three prominent and widely read newspapers from each country with different political ideologies. They only focused on the keywords in headlines and after the initial search, all the irrelevant articles were removed by manual inspection. This produced 731 media documents for the Dutch and 269 document for the UK media. After both datasets were collected, the authors manually coded them and

searched for positive and negative tone on the minorities in both countries.

Research method: The authors performed Content Analysis on both datasets and used Regression Analysis which showed correlation between the two types of political discourse.

Discussion: The authors do not give a detailed description as to how the coding and content analyses were performed and do not publish the annotated dataset.

4.1.4 Immigration in the EU

Research problem: Gianfreda’s (2019) paper on immigration in European Union is an illustrative example of the common difficulties that sociologists face when researching large amounts of data. She focused on how politicians position themselves when addressing the question of immigration in the EU.

Data collection: She analyzed parliamentary debates and mostly focused on low chambers’ plenaries. Like many sociologists, she faced the problem of selecting the appropriate texts from a large amount of the available data. She relied on a list of search words which was compiled based on her deep knowledge of European integration and immigration. In addition, some manual work was needed to scan the relevant texts and exclude those with only passing reference to migration or European issues. Another challenge that needed to be overcome was the problem of retrieving debates from the parliamentary websites without having to manually select each. Gianfreda relied on Python-based script which helped her build a collection of speeches which were divided by political party and by politician; in that way she compiled her own corpus of machine-readable texts. Because of so many selected politicians, she needed to reduce their number to, on the one hand maintain a sufficiently large sample but on the other not be buried in too much data. She overcame it by selecting only the speeches made by key parliamentarians, e.g., those holding key roles within the political group, members of parliamentary commissions, etc.

Research method: She employed a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative content analysis and keyword analysis, for the analysis of party positioning on immigration discourse. The qualitative content analysis was performed using a manual qualitative coding software tool called MAXQDA² (VERBI GmbH, 1995), where texts were divided into “quasi-sentences” and then codified according to the previously set dimensions of the European Union. Quantitative keyword, analysis on the other hand, was conducted by using a tool of corpus linguistic called WMATRIX³ (Rayson, 2008).

Discussion: Gianfreda pointed out numerous problems which social science researchers face when conducting their own research and showed that the use of computer software can help make their work much easier and

² <https://www.maxqda.com>

³ <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix/>

much more efficient. In addition, a mixed methods approach “enables the researcher to reduce interpretation biases in the analysis of language through the use of software” (Gianfreda, 2019). With the methodology outlined above, Gianfreda shows that mixed methods are one of the most useful approaches when studying political discourse and that it offers interesting insights into not only how social science researchers should handle large amounts of data but also how they can minimize the interpretation bias and further improve the quality of their research.

4.2 Health and Social Care

Health and social care have always been high on the sociological agenda and a high volume of research focused on political representation and understanding of health and social care problems.

4.2.1 Reproduction Rights

Research problem: Eslen-Ziya (2021) conducted a study which focused on how population politics, reproduction rights, and fertility are addressed in Turkish parliamentary debates with the aim of stopping the decline in fertility and promote higher fertility rates.

Data collection: She analyzed parliamentary debates from 2008 until 2016 which were collected from an open-access database of the Turkish parliament. The preliminary document selection included a systematic investigation of data tracing by focusing on the ‘three children’ slogan introduced by Prime Minister Erdogan. This helped her determine the frequency of such debates. Once the preliminary selection of the text was completed, all the politicians’ statements were merged in a simple plain text file upon which a keyword search was conducted to extract all the relevant paragraphs. Keywords such as ‘three children’, ‘birth rate’, ‘abortion’ and others were searched, and all the relevant paragraphs were then extracted for easier processing. The relevance of the debates was determined by applying an inductive research method which allowed her to see how the texts focused on the context of the population decline. After all the applied criteria and the selection, only 10 percent of the articles qualified for inclusion in further qualitative discursive analysis.

Research method: Eslen-Ziya employed a Discourse Analysis approach and focused her research on “normative, religious, and communicative dimensions of the population politics unfolding in Turkish parliament” (Eslen-Ziya, 2021).

Discussion: Eslen-Ziya’s method included the analysis of parliamentary records, however, she fails to give an account of how her discursive analysis was performed and goes straight to the interpretation of results.

4.2.2 Mental Healthcare

Research problem: Joergensen and Praestegaard (2017) focused on the question of mental healthcare in Denmark. The aim of their study was to explore the issue of patient participation and how discourses about

it are at play in official legal and political documents as well as patient recordings.

Data collection: They started by searching for legal and political documents published after 2009 that are relevant to patient participation within the Danish psychiatric context. Eight relevant documents were identified, two of which were focused on legislation about patient participation whereas the other six were guidelines which considered patient participation on a more operational level. In addition, the authors explored nurses’ notes in patient records since they are the ones who actively deal with patients on everyday basis.

Research method: The authors employed a Critical Discourse Analysis as inspired by Fairclough (1995), which included the analysis of various textual documents. On the one hand, they analyzed political and legal documents and on the other they also focused on the nurses’ notes in patient records about patient participation. The study related to the critical social-constructionist frame of understanding (Fuglsang, Bitsch Olsen, & Rasborg, 2013 in Joergensen and Praestegaard, 2017), in which the real world is understood as a series of social constructions and was designed as an exploratory critical documentary analysis. Their analysis was three-dimensional, focusing on basic text analysis, the analysis of the discourse practice and the analysis of the social practice. In the first part, the documents were read and analyzed word by word to grasp how patient participation is referred to. In the second part, the authors analyzed intertextual chains and coherence and connected the patient records with the findings of textual analysis. In the third part, the authors discussed the findings of textual analysis and discourse practices and examined how discourse practices influence social practices and therefore specify their nature.

Discussion: This research showed how incorporating various sources in the analysis ensures sociological broadness and yields more relevant and in-depth results than the analysis of only one source.

4.2.3 Housing Crisis

Research problem: White and Nandedkar (2019) analyzed the crisis of housing in New Zealand. This research introduces the problem of housing as one of the important social care topics and focuses on how politicians approach this problem in their political discourse and how the housing crisis is defined in different discourses.

Data collection: They conducted their research by analyzing the transcripts of the speeches, delivered in the New Zealand parliament. They limited their analysis to the terms of three consecutive governments, which attributed to the timespan between 2008 and 2017. They analyzed the discourse of the Labor Party and other smaller opposition parties. Their search terms were limited to ‘housing supply’ and ‘housing affordability’ and they identified 18 bills or 611 speeches from the actors which were then analyzed in detail. After that, another search was performed but

was limited to the keyword ‘crisis’ which yielded additional 32 readings of 18 bills or 144 speeches. Once all the relevant texts were selected, the authors applied a manual coding technique which coded the data into two themes which were then qualitatively studied.

Research method: CDA was identified as particularly well suited for the study of discourse impact on the institutional and social organizations.

Discussion: The analysis is predominantly discursive with manually coded and selected texts. The authors note that this is the first such study in New Zealand and therefore consider the availability of the parliamentary documents especially valuable for such research.

4.3 Victimization and Criminalization

The topic of criminalization and victimization is relevant for sociological research and frequently observed in parliamentary debates.

4.3.1 Victimization

Research problem: Aronson (2021) investigated how individuals and groups can be positioned as victims by Swedish politicians and political discourse. He showed that the ‘normal’ majority has frequently been positioned as victims whereas the heterodox minorities were positioned as offenders.

Data collection: His analysis included eight longer political speeches as well as 56 addresses to the Swedish parliament. The speeches were uttered by leaders of all eight political parties which occupy seats in Swedish parliament and were gathered over the course of one year (from January 2019 to January 2020). The 56 political addresses were held in six parliamentary debates whereas eight additional political speeches were held during the ‘democracy week’ by party leaders. The official transcripts of the political debates were downloaded from the website of Swedish Riksdag whereas the transcripts of the eight speeches were gathered from the official website of ‘democracy week’. It needs to be highlighted that all debates were conducted before the Covid-19 epidemic when the topics of criminality and migration were the most salient concerns of the Swedish parliament.

Research method: Discourse analysis was used to analyze the selected texts. All transcripts were closely read and reread by the author to become familiar with the data and temporary notes about patterns of interests were created. He mostly paid attention to and elaborated upon the patterns of consistency and those which were contrary to the main findings were given attention as the patterns of contradiction.

Discussion: The study lacks the description of not only how discourse analysis was performed but also the account of what was determined as crucial in the selected transcribed speeches and debates. This is yet another sociological research where data was gathered

manually and downloaded directly from the respective websites.

4.3.2 LGBTQ+ Rights

Research problem: Redd and Russell’s (2020) research is slightly different since it does not analyze parliamentary records but focuses on the study of the first apology for the criminalization of homosexuality to the LGBTQ+ community by the parliament in Victoria, Australia. To successfully develop the analysis, the authors outlined the conventional framework for understanding state responses and apologies to historic injustices within criminology. They were mostly interested in why the Victorian government was particularly concerned to seek forgiveness from the LGBTQ+ community and what was the basis for the apology.

Data collection: This analysis focuses on one particular parliamentary speech, namely the apology itself. It undertakes a line-by-line thematic coding of 25 pages of the apology.

Research method: The authors performed a Critical Discourse Analysis of the apology as well as analyzed and discussed the key topics that emerged from the discourse. These topics revolved around the inexplicable positioning of homophobia, the conjuring of post-homophobic society, the transformation of shame into state pride and subsuming the unhappy queer through the expectation of forgiveness. In the second part of their research, Redd and Russell applied a line-by-line thematic coding to the 25 pages of parliamentary documents with the help of NVivo software⁴ (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2020), a qualitative data analysis tool which helps researchers organize and analyze qualitative data more efficiently and determine the main topics of a discourse analysis. The second analysis included the study of apologies made by the State Premier and the leader of the Labor party as well as 16 other politicians.

Discussion: This research is particularly interesting because it presents an analysis of a different but equally important type of political discourse. The utilization of the NVivo tool is also exemplary.

4.3.3 Drug Abuse

Research problem: Lilja (2021) explored how Russian parliamentary discourse discusses illegal drugs and their abuse.

Data collection: The research was based on a qualitative study of 177 speeches made in the lower house of the Russian parliament (State Duma) between 2014 and 2018. The data was collected by downloading all the relevant transcripts from the official website of the Russian parliament. Because of the large volume of the downloaded texts, the selection was further limited to only those speeches which explicitly discussed illegal drugs. The speeches which just mentioned the phrase ‘illegal drugs’ were

⁴<https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo-qualitative-data-analysis-software/home>

excluded. This yielded 177 speeches altogether which were included in the analysis. Although there are six political parties in the State Duma, only four were included in the analysis, which was the consequence of the aforementioned text selection criteria.

Research method: The author applied qualitative content analysis to analyze the speeches. The themes were defined and organized into a coding frame which distinguished between the extent of the problem, its causes, and solutions during a preliminary analysis of the data as well as based on the author's prior theoretical understanding of the studied topic. The coding frame was then used to annotate the dataset.

Discussion: Although such procedures are common in sociology, certain limitations can be observed. First, qualitative content analysis is subjective as it is based on the researcher's own knowledge of the topic and their belief about the saliency of certain themes. This can result in a biased preparation and coding of the material which can result in misleading or incomplete results.

5. Political Identities and Communication

Political identities as defined by Van Dijk (2004) are a type of social identities and as such constructed in different settings. Even though politicians can have different political affiliations and party memberships, they can share political identities. Similarly, a politician can display various political identities, however, there is usually one that prevails over others. Parliamentary discourse is therefore saturated with different political identities and the interaction between them results in a particular relationships not only between politicians but also between politicians and the public.

5.1 Gender Relations, Equality, and Discrimination

The relations between male and female politicians and gender discrimination and the differences between male and female language use in parliamentary discourse are relevant not only in sociology, but also in sociolinguistics, rhetoric, media, and other disciplines.

5.1.1 Surrogacy

Research problem: Eriksson (2021) researched discursive representation of gender equality policies and focused on how Nordic parliamentary debates talk about surrogacy.

Data collection: Her research material consisted of laws, bills, initiatives, and parliamentary proceedings between 2002 and 2018 with all documents publicly available on the official websites of both parliaments. Altogether 32 documents were included in the analysis. These documents were then manually coded and analyzed.

Research method: Eriksson's research combines the methodological framework of discourse analysis as well as rhetorical analysis and entails a combination of CDA, metaphor analysis and 'what's the problem'

approach introduced by Bacchi and Eveline (2010). This is the only article in this review which employs the 'what's the problem' approach which focuses on analyzing the problem's discursive constitution in the policy or proposals as well as the underlying presuppositions and assumptions of the problem. Initial coding occurred in the preliminary analysis where Eriksson searched for keywords such as 'surrogacy' and 'equality' in order to get an overview of the important terms and discursive articulations. This enabled a deeper study of the connections between articulations as well as their usage. The second part of the research focused on the analysis of competing discourses by paying attention mostly to problem representations of altruistic and commercial surrogacy as well as domestic and cross-border surrogacy. Problem representation builds on the aforementioned approach and understanding of the discursive construction of social problems in policy documents. Eriksson also focused this part of her research on the analysis of metaphors and metonymy as rhetorical representation which conceal certain aspects and reinforce others.

Discussion: Methodologically speaking, this research is different from all the above-mentioned research and although Eriksson states differently, we could argue that she employed a mixed methods approach by combining three different but interconnected methodological approaches.

5.1.2 Gender Equality and Competitiveness

Research problem: Kylä-Laaso and Koskinen Sandberg (2020) analyzed the consequences of the Competitiveness Pact introduced by the Finnish government in order to increase the competitiveness of the Finnish economy by lowering labor costs. This pact mainly affected the feminized public sector which had clear gendered consequences and impacts. The authors studied affective institutional work and ordoliberal governance in the parliamentary discussion on these measures.

Data collection: Their research data consisted of Finnish parliament plenary sessions from 2015 to 2017 and included 27 different documents. These discussions were gathered from different stages of the process that lead up to the acceptance of Competitiveness Pact and were in downloaded from the official website of the Finnish parliament.

Research method: The authors utilized Critical Discourse Analysis, starting from the laws, and then moving on to the agreement over the pact. Those documents, in which the laws or the pact were central, provided the most information and were the most valuable. Various quotes were selected and analyzed based on how relevant the subject of the debate was.

Discussion: This research showed how CDA can be usefully applied when studying affects, gender equality and ordoliberal governance.

5.1.3 Gendered Language

Research problem: Bijeikiene and Utka (2006) focus on the linguistic features of gendered language in parliamentary discourse. They are interested in whether there exist gender-specific linguistic differences in political discourse and how the public sees and perceives such differences. In addition, they focus on examining what kind of language the general public considers gender-specific and whether this can be confirmed by a corpus linguistic study.

Data collection: The corpora consisted of stenographs from the Lithuanian parliament and the basic unit of study was the utterance. Almost 200 stenographs were randomly selected, one half for male and the other one for female politicians. No annotation other than the speaker's name was included.

Research method: The authors employed two methodological frameworks. The first one was sociolinguistic inquiry in which a questionnaire was prepared and distributed among university students to see how they perceive gender-specific language. The questionnaire consisted of two parts where the first part focused on respondents' opinion on existence of gender-specific language in political discourse, whereas the second part contained 11 short extracts from parliamentary talks and wanted to check if the respondents could determine whether the utterance was produced by a male or a female politician. The second method was corpus linguistics, where the answers of the first study were quantitatively checked in the two corpora of parliamentary debates.

Discussion: This research clearly shows the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative methods and underlined the need for qualitative analysis results to be checked quantitatively to avoid possible research biases which could affect the final results of the research.

5.2 Ideology, National Identity, and Political Affiliation

The defining characteristics of parliamentary discourse are among others also its ideological nature, the influence it has on national identity and the construction of political identities according to the political affiliation.

5.2.1 Construction of the National Identity

Research problem: Riihimäki's (2019) studied the discursive construction of the national identity of the United Kingdom in the European Union.

Data collection: The timeframe of the analysis was between 1973 and 2015, from the year of UK becoming a member state until the year when a vote on an EU membership was promised. The data analyzed consisted of all the debates that occurred in House of Commons in that period and were all retrieved from the Hansard website. For debates between 1973 and 2004 the author used a local copy of Hansard corpus (which was prepared especially for her use) whereas for

debates between 2004 and 2015 the data was collected from Commons Hansard archives and manually compiled into an unannotated corpus. Both corpora together comprised around 450 million words.

Research method: Riihimäki utilized Corpus-Linguistic methods to find relevant parts of text for a closer analysis using the CasualConc concordance⁵ (Yasu, 2008). She searched for those excerpts in which the pronouns 'us' and 'we' were included and co-occurred with phrases 'European Union', 'European Community' or 'European Communities'. The relevant hits were then analyzed in two stages; firstly, the referents of the pronouns were manually identified and only those which referred to 'the UK' (meaning the country or British people) were included in the second stage of the study. In the second stage she read through the hits and searched for those instances in which character or actions of the United Kingdom in the EU were described. Those instances were then divided into identity categories. These identities were then further closely examined and analyzed by employing critical discourse analysis.

Discussion: Riihimäki shows that the methodological framework applied was particularly useful because pronoun use deserves a special attention inside CDA, especially in political rhetoric. Her approach also showed how important and useful corpus-linguistic methods can be in researching political discourse, mainly because they offer methodological approaches which help researchers gather data quickly and efficiently without employing too much manual work.

5.2.2 Negative People Representation

Research problem: Salim Nefes (2021) conducted a study which focused on how right-wing political discourse predicts a negative representation of certain groups of people, in this case Armenians, and how traditionalized values and a somewhat negative perception of people can be seen in the case of right-wing political discourse against immigrants and minorities.

Data collection: The study analyzed the mention of the word 'Armenian' in Turkish parliamentary debates and was conducted for parliamentary debates between 1983 and 2018. The unit of the analysis was a speech of the Turkish MP and the analysis happened in four methodological steps. The documents which contained the word 'Armenian' were selected and read. A coding scheme was developed which was then used for coding the data and calculating the intercoder reliability. The coders analyzed whether the general tone of the speech was negative. In the last step the data was quantitatively analyzed.

Research method: The method employed was Content Analysis.

Discussion: Salim Nefes does not specify where the parliamentary texts were collected from and how the timeframe of the analyzed texts was chosen.

⁵ <https://sites.google.com/site/casualconc/>

5.3 Populism and Addressing the Public

Political communication with the public and voters is a frequently researched sociological topic which has in recent years been extended to the study of populist political discourse on social media since they are becoming a frequently used communication channels through which politicians connect with the public.

5.3.1 Construction of (Extra)ordinariness

Research problem: Fetzer and Weizman (2018) analyzed how politicians, who are classified as ‘extraordinary’, use the quotations to refer to the general public (or the ‘ordinary’) and bring the public into the political arena.

Data collection: Fetzer and Weizman focused on the analysis of 20 sessions of PMQs and answers between David Cameron (then Prime Minister) and Jeremy Corbyn (then Leader of the Opposition) in 2015 and 2016. Transcripts of the debates were downloaded from the Hansard website whereas the comments, which were also analyzed, were gathered from commenter’s section of the Channel 4 News as well as from YouTube. Quantitative analysis of the official transcripts focused on the question-response sequence between Cameron and Corbyn and in connection to that, 120 questions and responses were analyzed. Qualitative analysis, on the other hand, paid attention on the one hand to the question-response relationship between the two speakers as well as to a set of comments which explicitly referenced the “brought-in extraordinariness” by Jeremy Corbyn. For qualitative analysis 2238 comments were downloaded and analyzed.

Research method: They base their research on Critical Discourse-Analytic perspective. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses are carried out in order to obtain best possible results.

Discussion: This research showed that although other data sources can be used together with parliamentary data, the latter present a basis for the analysis of parliamentary discourse and should be included in sociological research.

6. Conclusion

This review shows that sociological research of parliamentary discourse is based on real-world data gathered from parliamentary records and related official documents as well as mass and social media content. The data is nearly always collected hic and nunc with time-consuming, manual methods, which makes sociologists potentially a very important user group of the ParlaMint corpora. However, the review also shows that sociologists are predominantly interested in current events, which means that it is of crucial importance for the ParlaMint corpora to be updated on a regular basis. Given the prevalent methodological approaches, most scholars will wish to be able to examine the relevant debates in their entirety, which is why it is important that hits in

ParlaMint contain links to the original parliamentary records or recordings.

Apart from the access and scope of the data included in ParlaMint, their encoding is equally important since as it is clearly shown in this review, sociology scholars have highly specific needs for the parts of parliamentary debates that are relevant for their study. For example, some researchers will wish to focus only on the MP’s questions to the government, so it would be very useful if they were explicitly marked in the ParlaMint corpora. More importantly, since most sociological research is focused on a specific concept, a major struggle in the research community is to define the relevant query terms, which are most commonly defined on a highly intuitive basis or in a highly reductionist way. It would therefore be a major added value to the entire research area if the ParlaMint corpora contained semantic annotations, indicating the subject of discussion.

The review clearly shows that sociologists collect, code, and analyze data by themselves instead of relying on existing corpora. One of the tasks of ParlaMint is therefore to show to sociologists that the data relevant for their research is already collected and processed and to show them how such data can be used in sociological research. It needs to be noted, though, that sociologists will often need to add additional annotations as well as combine parliamentary data with other data sources, so it would be very helpful to ensure smooth export and import options from the concordancer to an annotation software.

In terms of approaches to data analysis, this review indicates the need for technical support for more systematic, transparent, and replicable quantitative and qualitative analyses, which makes corpus-based approaches ideally suited for sociological research of parliamentary discourse. It is therefore of paramount importance that rich and user-friendly documentation on how the ParlaMint data was collected, processed, and annotated is made available, along with quick user manuals, tutorials and showcases that demonstrate the use of ParlaMint corpora and features of the concordancers.

This review also shows that sociological research of political discourse are frequently limited to a national level and only occasionally research it comparatively or transnationally. This underlines the potential and the added value of the ParlaMint corpora which enables researchers to access comparably sampled, uniformly coded and annotated corpora of 17 European parliaments with further corpora being added in the second phase of the project. Another reason for the lack of pan-European analyses of parliamentary debates is also the language barrier to access the parliamentary transcripts released in the national languages. This is why machine translations of the transcripts which are planned in ParlaMint would enable more cross-lingual research of parliamentary political discourse.

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