

DISCOURSE STUDIES IN PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

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The monograph *Discourse Studies in Public Communication* comprises 13 chapters authored by different scholars from a variety of disciplines and research traditions. At first sight, these look heterogeneous, but there is a connection in their authors' interest in the analysis of *public communication* or, as Andreas Mussolf labels it in the preface, *public discourse studies*. This preface also suggests attributes shared by these chapters, which explicitly define their aims, relate them to specific discourse genres relevant for their objects of study (namely, political, gender-related, business, and academic) and explicate in detail their methods, including multimodal analysis.

Subsequent insights on the aims of this book are provided by the editor himself (Crespo-Fernández) in the Introduction to the volume, where he sets the boundaries of public communication as the basic object of analysis across the chapters: “any communication in any form directed at the general public and specific social groups for a variety of purposes” (1). Several examples of its scope are also provided, together with labels that typically abound in research in this direction, such as public sphere and hegemonic dominance, among others. Furthermore, Crespo-Fernández emphasises the fact that public communication is discourse-shaped and, as such, entails practices that are invariably tied to the cultural setting where these discourses are produced and interpreted, in other words, discourse “as language use in social life, as text in context” (2).

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The editor acknowledges that the varieties of discourses and practices that can generically be labelled as “public communication” are enormous and also heterogeneous (this is also inevitably reflected upon the chapters selected for the book), and the fact that the discourse-analytic approach is also heterogeneous does not make things easier for the research in this direction. This is a consequence of the parallel difficulty of analysing discourse from a single (i.e. unified) approach. Crespo-Fernández lists three possible definitions of discourse: beyond the sentence, as language in use, and as social practice. The third one is deemed important, as corroborated by Fairclough (1992), for whom discourse *constitutes* the social side. This provides a further connecting attribute across the chapters in this volume: public communication is shaped as discursive phenomena and, as such, “they are socially oriented and they fulfil a social and communicative purpose in particular real-life contexts, as is the case in the contributions to this volume” (3).

216 The Introduction also summarises what the reader is expected to find in the chapters of the book, which reflect the heterogeneous nature of real-life discourses and provide evidence of society, social life, and social problems. Indeed, the chapters focus on different kinds of discourse (e.g. political, journalistic, computer-mediated, commercial, corporate, academic), approached from different research frameworks (critical discourse analysis, multimodality, cognitive metaphor theory, critical metaphor analysis, appraisal theory), analysing heterogeneous data (advertisements, television series, obituaries, lyrics, political manifestos and essays, newspaper editorials, cartoons, academic talks, company brochures, entrepreneurial pitches), extracted from different communicative contexts (classroom, office workspace, etc.) and through different media (social media, the written press, television, motion pictures, etc.).

Part I is devoted to political studies and comprises six chapters. In Chapter 1 (“Imagining the nation in British politics”), Ruth Breeze addresses the discursive representation of the nation/people from an exploratory, comparative perspective drawing from corpus assisted discourse studies, with a mixed methodology, and focusing on the politics of Great Britain. Her analysis shows how “naming practices and patterns surrounding key lexical items referring to the nation serve as discursive markers of political parties’ ideologies, particularly as far as populism and nationalism are concerned” (34).

Chapter 2 (“Political and journalistic discourse regarding the Catalan declaration of independence. A critical analysis”), by Luis Escoriza Morera, starts with the claim that journalistic and political texts are ideal for the transmission of ideologies, and the chapter offers a critical discourse analysis of various political texts. Specifically, it examines the treatment of the concept of nation in the electoral manifestos presented by the five most-voted parties in the 2019 general election in

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Spain. Catalonia is also an important issue of the chapter, as well as the scope of the label “Spain” itself.

In Chapter 3, María Muelas-Gil analyses “National vs international cartoons depicting Catalonia’s independence process in the press” with a critical multimodal metaphor approach. She aims to contrast the metaphoric domains used by the press in political cartoons depicting Catalonia’s independence process. Besides, she analyses the political and cultural (mis)conceptions behind the cartoons and their potential implications for the international audience’s perception of Spain.

Chapter 4 by Gérard Fernández Smith is called “A corpus-assisted qualitative approach to political discourse in Spanish print and digital press.” He describes persuasive communicative goals extracted from written Spanish media, focusing on a series of key words frequently used by politicians and reproduced by the media, and previously gathered from the main Spanish parties’ electoral programs. Fernández Smith shows how politicians’ discourses are reproduced in the press, specifically as part of an establishment that promotes and defends a particular way of thinking. Discourses are then built up as conceptual networks that are materialised through lexical combinations of key words.

Rosa María López-Campillo studies “Persuasive discourse in Daniel Defoe’s political essays” in Chapter 5. Specifically, she focuses on two common rhetorical strategies used by Daniel Defoe as a political journalist in the first decades of eighteenth-century Britain: boosting and hedging. While the former is used to reinforce feelings of group membership and engagement with readers, the latter in turn conveys deference, humility and respect.

The last chapter of Part I is “Politics beyond death? An analysis of the obituaries of Belgian politicians” (Chapter 6), by Priscilla Heynderickx and Sylvain Dieltjens. They underline the importance of obituaries and focus on two aspects: their qualities (e.g. the indication of how a society copes with death and the fear of dying) and the presence of political orientation in the description of the deceased. Within the topic of politicians’ obituaries, the authors conclude that one of the main characteristics of the obituaries of political figures is the coexistence of two discourses, namely the political discourse itself and the discourse about the personal qualities of the deceased.

Part II focuses on gender and sexuality studies, with four chapters. In Chapter 7 (“It all comes down to sex. Metaphorical animalisation in reggaeton discourse”), María José Hellín García analyses sex functions as the main conductive thread in reggaeton musical discourse, specifically how metaphorical animalisation frames the male perception of women. Animal metaphors indicate that perception as sexified, with parallel praising of beautiful and attractive physical appearance, outfits, suggestive dancing or provocative attitudes displayed by women.

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Furthermore, this “female animalisation” conveys an image of today’s woman as sexual and disinhibited in reggaeton.

In Chapter 8 (“Cyberbullying and gender. Exploring socially deviant behavioural practices among teenagers on Twitter”), Antonio García-Gómez explores the discursive strategies and self-presentation strategies that both male and female teenagers deploy and the impressions that they exhibit when they verbally abuse and victimise others, demonstrating tight relationships between the self-presentation strategies selected by each gender and the type of behavioural practices exhibited in the (cyber-)violence-related online communication acts analysed.

Chapter 9 (“A visual critical discourse analysis of women representation in Dolce & Gabbana advertising”), by María Martínez Lirola, uncovers the visual discursive representation of women in a sample of advertisements from a critical discourse analysis perspective, examining whether visual choices used by publicists to portray the woman in the corpus contribute to perpetuating gender stereotypes. She concludes that women are indeed represented as stereotyped, following traditional beauty standards, with their bodies portrayed as objects of desire. The female body is thus a symbol with a clear persuasive burden: the slim, young, and beautiful bodies have to be imitated because they conform to the cultural canons that are broadly accepted.

A TV series is the object of analysis in Chapter 10 (“Let’s talk about sex in high school. The TV series *Sex Education*”) by Raquel Sánchez Ruiz. The focus is euphemistic and dysphemistic discourse as used by teenagers in that series when talking about sex, which provides evidence of their beliefs and value judgements related to sexuality. This includes borrowings from other languages and abbreviations (clippings, initialisms), as well as metaphors, all of which work as euphemistic devices to talk about sex and related matters.

Finally, Part III is devoted to business and academic discourse studies, with three chapters. Chapter 11 (“Paralinguistic resources in persuasive business communication in English and Spanish”) by Ana M. Cestero Mancera and Mercedes Díez Prados addresses how nonverbal paralinguistic signs are used in persuasive business communication in two parallel Spanish/British English corpora of TV entrepreneurial pitches. From all the paralinguistic possibilities, pauses/silences are underlined as the most profusely used in the corpus. These fulfil different functions: emphasising or regulating discourse. The chapter includes an analysis of how the use of paralinguistic resources is constrained by gender.

In Chapter 12, Carmen Varo Varo studies “Business discourse from a psycholinguistic approach,” with an emphasis on (1) the mental organisation of linguistic knowledge into networks; (2) the strong ties between linguistic processes

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and other cognitive functions; and (3) the effectiveness of the contrast principle which emerges from the lexical units and transcends the textual level.

Finally, Chapter 13 (“Compensatory discourse strategies in the bilingual university classroom”) by Mary Griffith revolves around specific issues such as the errors in spoken performance in the bilingual classroom and the impact of these errors on overall intelligibility. A special emphasis is laid upon multicompetence, for which users must reflect on the formal aspects of language in use with regard to effective communication in bilingual public discourse.

The monograph *Discourse Studies in Public Communication* provides the reader with a glimpse of the kind of research carried out within the broad label of *public communication*. As mentioned above, the list of frameworks, approaches, contexts and discourses delimited within this generic label is wide-ranging, and so are the chapters of the book. In addition, the pieces of research selected by the editor to be included in the book are interesting, well-documented, rigorous and worth reading for anybody interested in the study of public communication. The volume can be considered as a complement to previous studies in the field of discourse-analytical research (Wodak and Koller 2008; Tannen, Hamilton and Schiffrin 2015) and, more specifically, to those regarding taboo and taboo naming in real life discourse practices (Crespo-Fernandez 2018).

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Works Cited

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