Parliamentary Discourse Research in Sociology: Literature Review

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Parliamentary debates as an important source of sociologically relevant content

Main aim: to identify the potential of better integration of corpus-based approaches and parliamentary corpora into sociological research.

Structure:

- **Part 1**: Overview and analysis of the most commonly used methods in sociology
- **Part 2**: Overview and analysis of the most prominent sociological topics in parliamentary debates, approaches to data collection and analysis
- **Discussion**: prerequisites and affordances for sociological research to benefit from ParlaMint corpora and vice versa
METHODS

- Reviewed qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods approaches in sociology
- Various search engines for collection of papers
- Applied filters:
  - Publication period: 2012 – 2022
  - Discipline: Sociology and Social Science
  - Article ranking: “most relevant” and/or “most cited”
- Sociological journals: Discourse and Society, European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology, Gender and Society, etc.
- Relevant papers further researched
TOPICS AND METHODS

- Total number of papers: 37 (available here: https://bit.ly/3mg0Lpd)
- Number of reviewed papers: 16
- Number of topics: 6
  - Immigration and minorities (4 papers),
  - Health and social care (3 papers),
  - Victimization and criminalization (3 papers),
  - Gender and discrimination (3 papers),
  - Ideology, national identity, and political affiliation (2 papers), and
  - Populism and addressing the public (1 paper).

Methods employed:
- Discourse Studies (Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse Historical Approach) – 60%
- Content Analysis
- Mixed-methods approach (keyword + content analysis, corpus-based + survey-based approach)
FINDINGS

- Sociologists identified as an **important user group of ParlaMint database**, but they are **not accustomed to using corpora data** in their research.
  - Manual, time-consuming data collection methods
  - Data collected *hic et nunc*, interested in real-time, current and recent events, data would need to be as updated as possible

EXAMPLES:

Cheng E, Jennifer. (2015). Islamophobia, Muslimophobia or racism? Parliamentary discourses on Islam and Muslims in debates on the minaret ban on Switzerland. Discourse and Society, 26(5): 562 – 586.

Gianfreda, Stella. (2019). Using a Mixed-Method Approach to Examine Party Positioning on Immigration and the European Union in Parliamentary Proceedings. SAGE Research Methods Cases Part 2.

Goenaga, Austin. (2019). Defending popular sovereignty: discursive conflict in French and Swedish parliamentary debates on immigrant voting rights (1968-2017). Citizenship Studies, 23(8): 870-891.
FINDINGS

- Intertwining corpus-assisted methods with qualitative sociological analysis can produce results which would otherwise go unnoticed.

  EXAMPLE:

  Bijeikiene, Vilma and Utka, Andrius. (2006) Gender-Specific features in Lithuanian parliamentary Discourse: An interdisciplinary sociolinguistic and corpus-based study. SKY Journal of Linguistics, 19: 63 – 99.

- Sociologists have highly specific needs for parts of parliamentary discourse relevant for their study, for example PMQs. Explicitly marked sections and semantic annotations indicating subject of discussion would be useful.

  EXAMPLES:

  Fetzer Anita and Weizman, Elda. (2018). ‘What I would say to John and everyone like John is...’: The construction of ordinariness through quotations in mediated political discourse. Discourse and Society, 29(5): 495-513.

  Redd, Curtis and Russel K., Emma. (2020). It all started here and it all ends here too: Homosexual criminalization and the queer politics of apology. Criminology and Criminal Justice, 20(5): 590-603.
Instead of using corpora, sociologists collect, code, and analyze data on their own. They should be shown the amount of data that has already been collected and shown how to effectively use it.

EXAMPLES:

Bijeikiene, Vilma and Utkas, Andrius. (2006) Gender-Specific features in Lithuanian parliamentary Discourse: An interdisciplinary sociolinguistic and corpus-based study. SKY Journal of Linguistics, 19: 63 – 99.

Gianfreda, Stella. (2019). Using a Mixed-Method Approach to Examine Party Positioning on Immigration and the European Union in Parliamentary Proceedings. SAGE Research Methods Cases Part 2.

Riihimäki, Jenni. (2019). At the heart and in the margins: Discursive construction of British national identity in relation to the EU in British parliamentary debates from 1973 to 2015. Discourse and Society, 30(4): 412-431.

Ensuring smooth export and import options from the concordancer to add additional annotation and combine parliamentary data with other data sources.

EXAMPLE:

Joergensen, Kim and Praestegaard, Jeanette. (2017). Patient participation as discursive practice—A critical discourse analysis of Danish mental healthcare. Nursing Inquiry 25(2): 1-11.
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

- To encourage the use of corpora and train sociologists to use them, rich and user friendly workshops, tutorials and user manuals should be developed and documentation on how the data is collected and annotated should be clear and transparent.
  - User manuals and tutorials demonstrate the use of ParlaMint corpora and features of the concordancers.
- Use of corpora would encourage sociologists to conduct more international research.
  - ParlaMint offers corpora for 17 European countries and more are being developed.
- Machine translations of the documents and transcripts would enable cross-lingual research of parliamentary discourse.
“Thank you for your attention!”