



Book Review

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Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines

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Zappettini, F. (2019). *European Identities in Discourse: A Transnational Citizens' Perspective*. Bloomsbury Academic. 232 pages; ISBN: 9781350042988; £95 (hbk).

The debate on European identity has become increasingly popular in recent years, as phenomena such as the global financial crisis, the enlargement of the European Union (EU), and the re-emergence of populist beliefs have impacted Europe and the Europeanization process. These events raised concerns regarding the efficiency of neoliberal policies aimed at supporting the European integration process, alongside discussions on the limited development of a common socio-political European identity.

This book aims to analyse the discursive construction of European identities from a bottom-up, grassroots level. In this volume, Zappettini (2019, p. 3) argues that European identities, also interchangeably referred to as Europeanness, are discursively created through the intersection of “the individual, the social, the agentive and the structural dimensions of society”. The analysis of Europeanness from a bottom-up viewpoint contributes towards filling the existing gap in the literature, which Zappettini aptly identifies, based on the literature reviews of Checkel, Tarrow, Mercer and others. The book employs the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical and analytical framework of the research. More precisely, the multilevel approach to text, present in the DHA, was applied in this book, by analysing discourse in relation to its specific social and historical contexts.

Prior to conducting the analysis, the necessity of this study is further explored in Chapter 1 of the book, where Zappettini highlights the importance of analysing Europeanness through macro-social, cultural, political, economic and local frames. To analyse Europeanness, focus groups and interviews were

held with members of the transnational NGO called *European Alternatives* (EA) in local groups based in London, Cardiff, Bologna and Cluj-Napoca. An overview of EA, its activities and mission are also discussed in Chapter 1.

In Chapter 2, the book draws on key theoretical concepts and theories, such as identity, power and social order, as discussed in the works of Foucault and Bourdieu. Zappettini provides a comprehensive view of identities as social constructs, created through the amalgamation of personal experiences, macro-social contexts and politics of belonging, and mediated by discourse.

In his analysis of communities and identity, Zappettini's arguments align with the sociolinguistic views of DHA. Chapter 2 successfully supports Wodak et al.'s (2009) representation of identity through micro linguistic elements and 'macro-propositions of discourse'. Zappettini's favourable position towards DHA as the key theoretical approach in this book underpins his argument regarding the direct link between discourse and identity. Moreover, Anderson's (2006) notion of 'imagined communities' becomes a key theme discussed in Chapter 2 of this book. Chapter 2 also includes a comprehensive discussion of Europeanness, where Zappettini refers to a number of different identity models, such as the 'Matruska doll' or the 'marble cake' model.

The notion of transnationalism gains particular importance in this book; in this sense, Chapter 3 focuses on unpacking the different cultural, social, political and economic dimensions of transnationalism. This chapter provides a novel discussion of the role of transnationalism in transforming established perceptions of nationhood and community belonging through physical, social and cultural spheres. In addition to reshaping established views, Zappettini convincingly furthers his argument by providing examples of how transnational language helps create new understandings of identity, citizenship and language. One strong example includes the repercussions transnational migratory movements have had on individuals' allegiance to a national community; rather than being entirely loyal to one nation, individuals can exhibit multiple loyalties to a number of nations. Following this discussion, Zappettini seeks to explore these topics further in his thorough analysis of EA members' beliefs, presented in this book in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 offers a methodological description of the study, which was carried out through focus groups with two EA members from London, six from Bologna, six from Cluj, three from Cardiff, as well as nine interviews with one London EA member and eight members based in Rome. Zappettini's choice of methodology is suitable for analysing the interviewees' discourse when expressing 'national versus supranational interests'. Employing both focus groups and interviews provides 'breadth' and 'depth' to Zappettini's research, thus facilitating the exploration of the participants' transnational and European identities. As well as explaining his rationale for the chosen methodological approach, Zappettini also provides a strong argument for analysing his data using corpus linguistics. Furthermore, the subjectivity drawback often attributed to CDA is aptly dispelled in the same chapter, by clearly advocating for a poststructuralist approach to research, which accepts and embraces the lack of an entirely neutral analytical position. In doing so, Zappettini embraces the potential researcher bias present in social research,

as he argues that any research of this kind, including his own, is influenced by how the writer and the reader perceive social reality.

Chapter 5 includes an in-depth discussion of the DHA multilevel data analysis and findings. This includes macro- and micro- strategies, patterns of argumentation, topoi, as well as linguistic devices and features used by the interviewees to construct and explore their Europeanness. In stage one of the analysis, a thematic evaluation of the main topics and themes was carried out, using corpus linguistics. In stage two, a comprehensive discussion of the linguistic elements, as well as the topoi etc., was provided. It must be noted that the multilingual nature of the dataset adds depth and complexity to this study.

A key element in Chapter 6 is Zappettini's analysis of transnationalism in the context of identity. Following his discussion of transnationalism as a framework through which the EA members critically and reflexively reflect on their identities, Zappettini introduces a 'Europeanness model', which moulds the different levels of Europeanness into three frames of an individual's social 'situatedness': nation-centric, Euro-centric and cosmopolitan or polycentric. With regard to his dataset, Zappettini convincingly argues that the interviewees do not acquire their European identity in a linear manner, but rather through multiple and dynamic processes. Therefore, Europeanness is achieved through the respondents' identification with several communities, which links together both individual and collective narratives. Zappettini therefore successfully analyses how European identities are produced at a grassroots level, through discourse.

In the final chapter, Zappettini carefully discusses the limitations of his study. Firstly, the limited generalisability of the study is highlighted, due to key variables in the analysis, such as the participants chosen for the study, their age range, political views and others. A second limitation addressed by Zappettini is the interpretive, subjective nature of CDA. As well as actively minimising his bias, Zappettini also highlights his positive stance towards interpretive analysis, therefore addressing this limitation to a satisfactory level. The limitations do not detract from the study's findings and arguments put forward.

In addition to the limitations identified by Zappettini, this review will also argue that a future edition might benefit from a more detailed explanation of the concept of transnationalism, particularly for readers who have less or no prior knowledge of this concept and how it is applied in this book. Additionally, a subsequent edition of this book might provide a post-Brexit perspective on European identities. Although not a limitation per se, the analysis carried out in this study reflects the views of European citizens at a time when the Brexit process was ongoing. It would be particularly interesting to evaluate whether the interviewees' positions have remained unchanged following the completion of the Brexit process, or whether they have altered, and if yes, how. Nevertheless, Zappettini's book complements existing literature on topics such as identity, Europeanness, and nationalism, by providing a bottom-up evaluation of the interplay between Europeans' transnational beliefs and the production and reproduction of identities. This book could become a useful tool to students and lecturers of political sciences,

area studies, linguistics, as well as readers from different disciplines, interested in the EU, Europe and institutional identities amongst the continent's citizens.

In conclusion, this book is a worthy contribution to Critical Discourse Studies. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between language and identity, and, at a wider level, between language and society. In doing so, it makes for an engaging and stimulating read. The semi-structured format of the interviews, allowing the participants to expand on subtopics of interest, as well as the structure of the book itself help the author's arguments flow. Observing how Europeanness is constructed and reshaped through localised, global and historical perspectives is successfully highlighted throughout Zappettini's book. Through the analysis of grassroots perspectives on Europeanness and European identity, Zappettini's book is an insightful discussion of socio-political matters like national identity, Europeanness, language and how these interact in society.

References

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