Silence and Concealment in Political Discourse

Melani Schröter
University of Reading

This book constitutes a significant contribution to political discourse analysis and to the study of silence, both from the point of view of discourse analysis as well as pragmatics, and it is also relevant for those interested in politics and media studies. It promotes the empirical study of silence by analysing metadiscourse about politicians’ silence and by systematically conceptualising the communicativeness of silence in the interplay between intention (to be silent), expectation (of speech) and relevance (of the unsaid). Three cases of sustained metadiscourse about silent politicians from Germany are analysed to exemplify this approach, based on media texts and protocols of parliamentary inquiries. Ideals of political transparency and communicative openness are identified as a basis for (disappointed) expectations of speech which trigger and determine metadiscourse about politicians’ silences. Finally, the book deals critically with the role of those who act as advocates of ‘the public’s’ demand to speak out.

Table of contents
List of abbreviations
Acknowledgements
Chapter 1. Introduction: Silence and concealment in (the study of) political discourse
Chapter 2. Intention, expectation and relevance: Determinants of meaningful silence
Chapter 3. Empirical study of silence: A methodological proposal
Chapter 4. Remaining silent and waiting until the dust settles: Helmut Kohl and the CDU party donation scandal
Chapter 5. Dangerous intelligence: The SPD’s silence in the Barschel and drawer scandals
Chapter 6. Hiding or highlighting: ‘Dr Merkel’s collected silences’
Chapter 7. What needs to be said: And who cares
References
Appendix. German originals of translated quotations from primary sources
Author index
Subject index

“Melani Schröter has provided us with a much needed and incisive investigation of discursive absences and the metadiscourse about such absences. The silence of politicians is something that should concern us as much as, if not more than, their noisy media messages. This is a timely book.”
Paul Chilton, University of Lancaster

“Based on detailed analyses of three cases of high-profile “silences” in German political discourse over the past decades, Schröter’s book (...) makes an important contribution to the communicative ethics of political discourse.”
Professor Andreas Musolf, University of East Anglia

“Melani Schröter gives a thorough account of the context for politicians’ silences, and an exhaustive discussion of the metadiscourse of silence.”
Prof. Dennis Kurzon, University of Haifa