

*Nuclear phase-out* in public-political discourse  
A contrastive analysis in German and South Korean media report

Sora Lee

German Linguistics

Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf

sguoun817@gmail.com

This study is about the discourses on the nuclear phase-out of the German and South Korean language communities from a linguistic contrastive point of view. The main question is, how the discourses can be described linguistically and how the associated knowledge can be presented and compared with each other. Based on the assumption that social knowledge is recognized in the language (Busse 2013), the focus is on language use in public-political discourse.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis takes place within the framework of contrastive discourse linguistics (in German *Kontrastive Diskurslinguistik*), which aims not only to point out the differences and similarities of the language manifestations in the discourse but also to investigate the social knowledge structures (Böke et al. 2000; Czachur 2013). The contrastive perspective allows to find out to what extent the ways of knowledge, thoughts, and culture in the language differ.

To compare two different languages in the discourse, the multi-level analysis model is employed in terms of a comparative methodology, the so-called DIMEAN from discourse linguistics (Warnke and Spitzmüller 2011). The model consists of mainly lexicon, metaphor, and argumentation patterns, which are regarded as *tertium comparationis* (Spieß 2011). From those analytical tools, the focus is on the results of the argumentation patterns or topos, which represent the thought patterns on certain political issues in a language community. This linguistic approach makes it possible to develop regularly recurring argumentation patterns and associated ways of thinking, which support and justify political decisions as well.

The argumentation pattern is the highest level of the linguistic components in the discourse, in which smaller language units are structurally embedded. The lexical units (including metaphors) function as indicators for identifying recurrent patterns. In the discourse, it is possible to recognize context-specific topoi with similarities and differences in the subjects and emphasis between the two countries. In general, context-specific topoi are the cost, safety, danger, history, tempo, country comparison, and lack of experts.

To highlight a few results, the argumentation pattern about costs is used in a similar form in Germany and South Korea. In Germany, this argumentation emphasized the costs incurred in the event of a possible nuclear catastrophe. On the other side, nuclear phase-out opponents worry about the increase in electricity costs. In South Korea, opponents point out by means of using this topos that a large amount of costs is invested in the already approved construction work of nuclear reactors and thus there can be an enormous cost loss due to sunk costs.

In both countries, the pattern of safety is closely linked to the topos of history, which functions

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, the corpus consists of 119 German and 102 Korean articles from newspapers that were published between March to July 2011 in Germany and May to October 2017 in South Korea, when the climax of discourse has reached.

as supporting the main argumentation. Recurring historical events in Germany, plane crashes, sabotage, and terrorist attacks are mentioned as safety threat factors. On the contrary, the South Korean discourse refers more to earthquakes and tsunamis.

The danger topos in the German discourse is differentiated into three representative argumentations. One variant argues that the competitiveness of the German nuclear industry (including the labor market) is being jeopardized by the nuclear phase-out policy. The following variant is the idea that the German nuclear phase-out might endanger other European countries. The danger to the achievement of climate protection goals is the content of the danger topos as well. These last two variants are only evident in the German discourse. In the South Korean discourse, the danger topos is differentiated into two forms: danger for industry and academic field. Similar to the German discourse, the argumentation about danger in the industry also claims that the nuclear phase-out policy threatens the domestic nuclear industry. The danger topos for the academic field drives to the risky consequences in science. In the discourse, it is explicitly stated that existing departments for nuclear energy and energy technology can be disappeared due to the policy and technicians migrating abroad. It is interesting to note that this variant is constitutive of the South Korean discourse, while it appears to no extent in the German discourse.

This is how the topos can be differently described determined by the respective political and social context. In further work, both the language – German and Korean – in the discourse and the social knowledge will be presented and compared from a contrastive point of view.

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