

French enunciative pragmatics meets German discourse linguistics based on Foucault: the concept of polyphony as an operationalization instrument of “voice” in discourse

The aim of the present contribution is to demonstrate how the largely parallel practices of discourse linguistics (cf. Angermüller 2014a: 111, Weiland 2020: 16) that are used in France and Germany can be interlinked via the concept of polyphony. The overall idea of polyphony is to challenge the modern linguistics postulate of the uniformity of the speaker and to reflect on the enunciative heterogeneity of utterances. The concept of polyphony has been used in France in the field of enunciative pragmatics (cf. Ducrot 1984), which is considered to significantly impact the French method of discourse analysis (cf. Angermüller 2014a: 111, Angermüller 2014b: 11, Maingueneau 2009: 67). Although the research field of German discourse linguistics that is based on Foucault recognizes the general importance of the concept of voice (cf. Warnke/Spitzmüller 2008: 32-36), no fruitful dialogue appears to take place between the French and German national disciplines (cf. Angermüller 2014a: 111; Weiland 2020: 16). What's more, despite the potential for cross-disciplinary enrichment that has been articulated by different authors (cf. Weiland 2020; Landschoff/Münch 2020; Iakushevich 2021), no systematic integration or methodological operationalization of the concept of polyphony has yet taken place (cf. Warnke 2018, Niehr 2014).

Thus, my contribution will first try to create awareness of the enunciative dimension of Foucault's understanding of discourse (cf. Angermüller 2007), which got lost in the German and English translations of his work (cf. Angermüller 2014a: 113) in order to show that a “docking spot” – or compatibility – between a form of discourse linguistics that relies on Foucault and the concept of polyphony is consistent. In his definition of statements, Foucault dissociates between the author as the empirical instance of the world who transmits the signs (i.e., the “speaking subject” in terms of polyphony, cf. Ducrot 1984: 171) and the enunciating subject as a functional entity on the discourse level (i.e., the “locutor” in terms of polyphony, Ducrot 1984: 172). At this point, the integration of the polyphonic approach allows for a more fine-grained understanding and linguistic operationalization of the enunciative heterogeneity discussed by Foucault.

Second, my contribution will therefore present concrete tools for analyzing the role of polyphony in discourse. The presented typology is a mixture of Gévaudan's (2021) deductively generated categorization of types of polyphony and of my own inductively driven corpus analysis of polyphonic patterns in pandemic discourse of French politicians in power on Twitter from 2020. The aim of this corpus analysis is to demonstrate how the voice of “the French people” – who perceive a deep chasm in French society between the political elite and themselves (cf. Sciences Po CEVIPOF 2022) – is integrated into the political crisis discourse in order to establish an alternative pattern of knowledge that frames French society as a unified nation. This constructivist element is highly compatible with Foucault's understanding of discourse (cf. Foucault 1972: 52). Generally, the people's voice can be integrated on either the illocutionary level (cf. Gévaudan 2021: 59-65, Ducrot 1984: 215) or the locutionary level (cf. Gévaudan 2021: 55-59) in both a more explicit and more implicit manner. On the illocutionary level, for example, it is possible to identify a dialogue among different enunciators, who are responsible for a given standpoint that is connected to a specific illocution (e.g., in concessions, a dialogue occurs between an enunciator [here, the people], who asserts standpoint *p*, and another enunciator [here, the governing politicians], who grants standpoint *p* a certain right to exist; cf. Ducrot 1984: 229-231). On the level of locutionary polyphony, however, more than one locutor can be located (cf. Ducrot 1984: 196), for example when the politicians in charge seem to speak with the people's voice.

The different types and categories of polyphony will be systematically presented and illustrated with concrete examples of French political crisis discourse in order to create a useful operationalization of the concept of voice as well as of its constructivist and perspectivizing functions for German discourse linguistics based on Foucault.

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¹ Angermüller changed his name to Angermüller in 2012.