

"We will hunt Merkel":
Representations of the German elections 2017 in British and
American newspapers

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Uutisvälineiden tehtävä on tiedottaa maailman tapahtumista objektiivisesti suurelle yleisölle, mutta usein mediainstituutioiden tavoitteet määrittävät uutisraportoinnin näkökulman. Kielen käytöllä on tärkeä rooli mediadiskursseissa, ja erityisesti representaatioiden luomisessa. Median kuvaukset voivat vaikuttaa yleisön mielipiteeseen aiheista, joihin ihmisillä ei ole kosketusta jokapäiväisessä elämässä. Maan ulkopolitiikka ja väestön mielipide muista maista kuten esimerkiksi Saksasta, joka on johtavassa asemassa Euroopassa, on tärkeä globalisoituneessa maailmassamme.</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on tarkastella miten Saksan parlamenttivaaleja 2017 representoidaan brittiläisessä ja amerikkalaisessa sanomalehdessä sosiaalisten identiteettien ja suhteiden rakentamisen kannalta. Kolmen artikkelin vertaaminen Daily Telegraph-lehdestä ja New York Times -lehdestä näyttää millaisia kielellisiä valintoja on tehty tietyn kuvan muodostamiseksi. Kriittisen diskurssianalyysin menetelmää hyödyntäen ja Agenda Setting -teorian innoittamana tämä tutkimus pyrkii paljastamaan ideologioita ja piilotettuja yhteyksiä kielen ja vallan välillä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat hienovaraisia eroja tärkeimpien osallistujien representaatioissa erilaisten kielellisten keinojen käyttämisellä. Tiettyjen näkökohtien keskeiseksi nostamisella ja muiden elementtien poissulkemisella esitetään eri fokuksia, mutta pääasiallisesti molemmat sanomalehdet seuraavat kanslerin näkökulmaa. Näihin tuloksiin perustuen on tärkeä nostaa lukijoiden keskuudessa kriittistä tietoisuutta kielten käytöstä mediassa.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of mass media is to inform a large, heterogeneous audience about happenings near and far. News media usually claim to provide the reader with a realistic, unbiased picture of what happens in the world. Nonetheless, all kinds of media institutions, including newspapers, have social, economic and political interests, which determine the perspective of news reporting. While one might find more differentiated views about local happenings, reporting about foreign politics is often one-sided. The number of news sources has increased a great deal with the advent of the internet, but fake news have become an influential and worrying issue at the same time. Research has shown that the media has a significant effect on people and their opinion on issues they do not have direct contact to (McCombs & Shaw 1972; McCombs, Shaw & Weaver 1997; Zucker 1978, cited in Miller 2002: 262). Thus, the quality and truthfulness of news media is crucial, because they can have a substantial impact on one's worldview depending on one's access to other sources of information.

Since linguistic choices at different levels affect the objectivity of the media coverage and the resulting image of an event, language use in media discourse is of particular importance (Fairclough 1995b, Dijk 1988a). By comparing several news articles, this study will show that news do not mirror reality but that identities, relationships and events are constructed. Instead of focusing on the media content and responses of the audience, as is common in research using Agenda Setting Theory, this study will utilize the analytical tools of Critical Discourse Analysis to show how the influencing happens at the linguistic level by shedding light on hidden connections between language, power and ideology. Furthermore, previous Critical Discourse Analysis research has concentrated on issues such as racism and gender in media discourse (e.g. KhosraviNik 2010, Owens & Hawes 2015) whereas only little attention has been paid to the representation of the politics, such as the parliamentary elections, of a foreign country. The range of research topics should be extended and cover not only minorities but also the representation of politicians, for instance, since ideologies play a significant role in the news coverage of political events.

The purpose of this study is to examine the representation of the parliamentary elections in Germany in September 2017 in British and American newspapers. By analysing the construction of social identities and power relations through language in three pairs of news articles, differences and similarities in the perspective of reporting of the Daily Telegraph and the New York Times will be shown. Germany has been playing a major role in European politics for a long time, which is why it is interesting and important to consider how Germany and its politicians are represented in other countries. Moreover, as a German citizen, I am familiar with my home country's politics, and the elections were a current topic during the writing process of this thesis, as the coalition talks were still going on and the new government had not been formed yet.

The thesis is structured in the following way. In the background, the basic concepts of the Agenda Setting Theory will be introduced in the context of news media discourse, followed by an overview of the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis and a short review of previous research. Next, the research questions and data collection will be described together with the methodological approach. The analysis involves six news reports about the German elections, which will be examined and compared in pairs. In the conclusion, the main findings will be summarized and potential implications will be discussed in addition to suggestions for further research.

2 LANGUAGE IN THE MEDIA

In this section, I will explain the theoretical framework of my study and provide a synthesis of relevant previous research. Moving from the general topic area to my specific issue, the basics of news media discourse will be introduced first, followed by an overview of the history and developments of the Agenda Setting Theory. Finally, the ideas and principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) will be explained, as they function as the theoretical and analytical tools of this study, and recent studies in this field will be briefly reviewed.

2.1 News Media Discourse

Mass media are a significant part of our daily life in a globalized world, and especially news media are a powerful and influential instrument in society, since they control our access to information about both local and distant happenings. Pearce (2009: 623) defines mass communication as “the process by which a person, group of people, or large organization creates a message and transmits it through some type of medium to a large, anonymous, heterogeneous audience”. The properties of mass communication are described by Fairclough (1995b). A characteristic feature is, for instance, that while the public domain and the private domain are connected through a chain of communicative events, text production and consumption differ in terms of time and place. Hence, the mass audience cannot directly contribute to the media. Moreover, print media is less personal than media, where the audience can view or hear the reporters, such as in radio or television (Fairclough 1995b).

Fairclough (1995b) states that there are typically three main categories of participants: the reporters (1) mediate between the audience (2) and the public domain (3), which may be represented by politicians, experts or witnesses. It is important to consider what kinds of social agents belong to the different categories, as their access is limited due to various factors. Furthermore, the goals and the relationships of the participants differ fundamentally. While the audience is probably mostly interested in seeking information and relies on the media, the media are basically profit-making organizations, who exercise power over the consumer by determining the content. Fairclough (1995b) stresses that the different voices in a news report are usually not represented equally and that, therefore, a thorough analysis of the ordering of voices is necessary. Moreover, he mentions framing and its manipulative effects and describes "how surrounding features of the reporting discourse can influence the way in which represented discourse is interpreted" (Fairclough 1995b: 83). This is related to the assumption that by making choices based on their interests and goals the producers of media texts have a great impact on the picture of reality spread in the media. They decide which information is included or excluded, presupposed, backgrounded or foregrounded (Fairclough 1995b). For example, foregrounding may be achieved through headlines that emphasize a particular angle of the reported event or through the ordering of main and subordinate clauses.

Dijk (1988a) emphasizes that in order to understand the structures of news reports they should be analyzed at various levels. In addition to the linguistic analysis, which may shed light on the perspective of the newspaper, the social context featuring processes of production and reception should be considered. Text production processes, for instance, involve journalists, producers, editorial staff and technical staff, who are responsible for different steps from collecting and selecting material to editing texts (Fairclough 1995b). Dijk (1988b) names five main categories of a news report with different functions: summary, main events, backgrounds, consequences and comments. He also points out that qualitative "analyses are necessary to establish not only what but also how the world press covers events in different countries" (Dijk 1988a: 35).

Garrett and Bell (1998: 6) note that the media's "pivotal role as discourse-bearing institutions" constitute it a common research subject in CDA, as it may provide insights into the unequal power relations reproduced by discourse. Particularly, a comparative analysis as in the present study is insightful, because it shows how the originally same communicative events have been recontextualized in different ways according to the political stance of the newspapers.

Additionally, the present study contributes to the growing body of media discourse research; only the combination of qualitative and quantitative studies enables researchers to demonstrate the powerful influence of mass media in social reproduction. The repetition of particular ways of representing people and events has far-reaching consequences "because of the very scale of the modern mass media and the extremely high level of exposure of whole populations to a relatively homogenous output" (Fairclough 2001: 45). The effects of media have been researched from different perspectives, and one interesting approach is the Agenda Setting Theory. The following section deals with the basic concepts of this social science theory, which is well-known in communication studies.

2.2 Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda Setting Theory explores the media's impact on the public's opinion on certain issues as well as the relationship between media coverage and reality. A broad-scope view of agenda-setting conceives the following three agendas, studied by scholars of different disciplines, as variables that are interrelated and affect each other (Miller 2001). While media sources, such as newspapers, TV and radio, set the topics of the media agenda, the public agenda involves issues

that the public audience considers important. The policy agenda, on the other hand, includes topics that decision makers, such as legislators or officials, believe are important. However, this review focuses on a more narrow-scope view of agenda-setting, which deals mainly with the connection between the media agenda and the public agenda and is studied mostly in the field of communication (Croucher 2016).

The following overview of the theoretical developments will provide a more precise picture of the core assumptions and statements of the Agenda Setting Theory. Ideas about the power of the media have circulated among researchers for a long time, and so wrote Walter Lippmann (1922) in *Public opinion* already in the 1920s about images of events in our minds that are shaped by the mass media. Similarly, it was pointed out by Bernard Cohen in 1963 that the media determines the topics people think about (Cohen 1963). Only in 1972 McCombs and Shaw introduced the actual term *Agenda Setting* based on their Chapel Hill Study, in which they examined the role of the media in the context of the presidential election of 1968 and found considerable correlations between the media agenda and the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw 1972). When investigating the following presidential election campaign, Shaw and McCombs (1977, cited in Severin and Tankard 1988: 269) considered also the causal direction of agenda setting, i.e. the media's impact on the public's opinion and not vice versa. The causal direction was a little later experimentally proven by Iyengar et al. (1982). The original approach was developed further with the second-level agenda setting, which says that the media do not only set the topics people think about but that the media also affect the public's opinion on those topics (McCombs, Shaw & Weaver 1997). The concept of the third-level agenda setting was presented by Guo, Vu and McCombs (2012), who researched how the media induces the audience to perceive relationships between certain elements, for example in a network, by presenting those elements repeatedly as related.

Several important factors restrain the universality of agenda-setting and its effects. Weaver (1991) explained that someone's responsiveness towards the influences of the mass media depend on their need for orientation, which can be enhanced by a high interest and a high uncertainty about a particular issue. According to Zucker (1978, cited in Miller, 2002: 262), obtrusiveness is another factor, as agenda-setting affects only unobtrusive issues, such as foreign policy, to which the audience does not have direct contact and thus relies purely on the news. An important psychological process related to the agenda-setting effect is priming, and it deals with

the media's impact on people's valuation standards. The more space and time is dedicated in reports to certain issues, the more relevant they appear to the reader and these primed topics also matter when analysing other information (Severin & Tankard 1988: 273). Another significant concept is the framing of a story by highlighting and ignoring certain aspects of an issue, as explained above in relation to media discourse (Croucher 2016: 209). Moreover, the above described agenda-setting effects of traditional media should be considered with regard to the significant features of the Internet, such as that content can be basically produced by every user and that there is a wider range of agendas to choose from (McCombs, Shaw, Weaver 2014: 793-794). Due to the continuous changes in society and media, agenda-setting remains an interesting research object.

While most agenda-setting research consists of two parts, namely the analysis of the media agenda and the study of the public agenda (Agenda setting theory 2012), the scope of the present study allows only the analysis of the media content, i.e. newspaper articles. In contrast to content analysis and surveys, the traditional methodological approaches in agenda-setting research, the methods of CDA will provide us with insights into *how* mass media texts influence the audience. Thus, this theory serves more as a reason for the critical discourse analysis of the data and it could be possibly extended in the future.

2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA unites scholars from various academic backgrounds, including their different theoretical and methodological approaches, who share a particular perspective on discourse analysis. This includes not only linguistics but also social sciences, for instance. The interdisciplinarity is supported by many researchers, as the relationships between language and society are considered very complex (e.g. Dijk 2001, Wodak 2001). In CDA, language use is seen as a form of social practice and more specifically as “a socially and historically situated mode of action” with consequences (Fairclough 1995a: 131). This means that language is at the same time socially conditioned and socially constitutive; language shapes the world and the world shapes language (Fairclough 1995a). This world formed by language consists of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1995a).

According to Wodak (1995), the concepts of power, history and ideology are crucial in CDA. As language use always takes place in a certain situation determined by time and space, the consideration of text production and reception, related discourses, i.e. intertextuality, and the socio-cultural context play a major role in its analysis. Wodak (1995: 204) states that the purpose is to critically examine “opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language”. In other words, this approach is critical, since it aims at uncovering hidden connections between language and power and the resulting social inequality that people are often unaware of despite the impacts on their life (Fairclough 1998). This is based on the assumption mentioned above that language use involves choices, which construct a certain picture of reality (Fairclough 1995b). By developing and spreading critical awareness of ideology and the relations between language and power, CDA may ideally lead to empowerment and change (Fairclough 1995a).

Hall (1997: 17) defines representation as "the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language". This implies the notion that meaning is constructed and does not inhere in things, meaning all entities in the world. Thus, the interpretation process is an important aspect to consider when analysing media language, as there are inevitably smaller or greater differences in the understanding of a meaning between writer and readers. Syntactic structures and lexical choices play a significant role in representations and can reveal hidden ideologies as well, for example through the nominalization of a process, which causes the omission of participants and their agency (Fairclough 1995b). In other words, nominalizations or the use of passive verb forms may conceal negative actions of the elite or generally background someone's active role (Blommaert 2005).

The representation of different social groups and the construction of identities and roles in institutional, political and media discourses as well as gender issues and racism belong to the most common topics in CDA research (Wodak 2001). Examples of typical data are journalistic texts and their multimodal elements, websites and social media, advertisements, political documents, speeches and debates as well as interviews and ethnographic data. Similarly to the variety of research themes, methodologies used in CDA range from small qualitative studies, such as this study, to large data corpora (Wodak 2001). CDA has been chosen as the theoretical and methodological approach for the present study, since the concepts and aims are the most

appropriate and because it has “become the standard framework for studying media texts within European linguistics and discourse studies” (Garrett & Bell 1998: 6). Keeping in mind Dijk’s (2001: 95) words that “CDA can be conducted in, and combined with any approach and subdiscipline in the humanities and the social sciences”, Agenda Setting Theory serves here as the overarching theory. This study follows mainly Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework, which suggests an analysis that relates microlevel linguistic choices to the macrolevel social context (see Chapter 3). Fairclough’s approach draws on Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics, which “analyses a language as shaped (even in its grammar) by the social functions it has come to serve” (Fairclough 2001b: 126).

2.4 Recent Research

Previous research in CDA has concentrated on the representation of women and minorities, such as immigrants, in media, since racism and gender are topics in which social inequality is clearly an issue (e.g. KhosraviNik 2010, Owens & Hawes 2015). The representation of politicians, elections or foreign news in general, which are popular topics in agenda setting research, seems to have been widely disregarded by CDA researchers although ideologies can play a role here as well. Only few studies have dealt with similar questions as the present study and they are briefly summarized in this section in addition to the thoughts of a German communication researcher on German media. In an interview with Media Tenor (2005), Brettschneider (the interviewee) points out problems in the coverage on the German parliamentary elections in national news media: the personalization and popularization of coverage, the growing amount of pundit talk instead of the politicians’ original standpoints as well as horse race journalism. He also states that voters perceive issues as important or primed according to the media coverage.

Vertommen, Vandendaele and Praet (2012) support with their study on foreign media coverage of a Belgian governmental crisis the assertion mentioned previously that choice-making is central to news production. Their cross-textual analysis showed that journalists decide differently what kind of, how much and in which way information about the same event is presented. For example, British news articles were less specific than French, Dutch and German reports in terms of the representation of Belgian politicians, parties and concepts. Interviews with the British correspondents confirmed these observations and “limited relevance and impact of Belgian

politics for their intended readership" compared to the other neighbouring countries were cited as reasons (Vertommen et al. 2012: 133). Li (2010) compared the representation of a political event and its social actors in the New York Times and China Daily in 1999, namely the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia, which had a negative impact on the relationships between the China and the US. By focusing on the analysis of transitivity and lexical cohesion, Li found that both newspapers construct highly opposing images trying to defend members of their own country and accuse members of the other country. Similar results were provided by Retzlaff (2010), who investigated the portrayal of the EU in Canadian newspapers during the climate change debate in 2007. Based on the analysis of a number of linguistic features, such as lexical choices, speech acts and modality, Retzlaff gained the following findings: the representations of the role of the EU in climate change differ in the examined newspapers according to an either pro- or anti-EU discourse.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Research aim and questions

The object of this study is to compare the representation of the German elections 2017 in an American and in a British newspaper. The objectivity of news reports is often questioned and criticized for ideological orientation. As pointed out before, language use is socially constitutive, i.e. it has both maintaining and transforming effects on “(1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough 1995: 55). This view is crucial to the research questions of this study, since the profound examination of groups, power relations and conflicts is a central part of an ideological analysis (Dijk 1998). By answering the following questions, I want to find out in which way and from which perspective the UK and the US newspapers report about the German elections:

1. How are German politicians represented in the two newspapers: The Daily Telegraph and The New York Times? What kinds of identities are constructed through language?
2. What kind of power relations are created between the politicians represented in the articles?

3.2 Description of the data

The data consists of six news reports from two English-speaking newspapers, the New York Times (NYT) and The Daily Telegraph (DT). The former is a liberal broadsheet from the US, and the latter is a conservative broadsheet from the UK. Both are leading daily newspapers in their countries and reach a wide international audience as well. The comparison of newspapers from these two countries is interesting, as the UK is (currently still) part of the EU while the US are not part of the EU. Furthermore, both countries have a shared history and strong relationships with Germany, and they are in general economically, politically and culturally very powerful and influential countries. I have selected articles about politics in Germany, because I am very familiar with the topic, it is of current interest and it is foreign news to the UK and the US. Dijk (1998) explains that background knowledge about the facts of a conflict and its participants is essential in an ideological analysis.

The data was collected online with the help of the databases International Newsstream (ProQuest) and US Newsstream (ProQuest) and the online archives of the newspapers. The articles were found through keywords, such as *German elections* or *Angela Merkel*, and a limited period of time for the publication date was set, namely September till November 2017. I have chosen three articles from each newspaper: one article from before the elections, one from the day of the elections and one from two months later. The pairs of articles deal with relatively similar topics. The early articles, *Far-Right German Party Is Poised to Break Postwar Taboo* (Eddy & Erlanger 2017) from the NYT and *German election: How the right-wing AfD could take the country by surprise* (Huggler 2017) from the DT, focus on the right-wing party *Alternative für Deutschland*, its increasing popularity and their possible entrance into parliament. The second pair, consisting of *Angela Merkel Makes History in German Vote, but So Does Far Right* (Erlanger & Eddy 2017) from the NYT and *Far-right returns to German parliament for first time in 60 years as Angela Merkel wins 4th term* (Huggler & Rothwell 2017) from the DT, deals with the election results and first reactions. The last articles, *Angela Merkel's Tortuous Path Toward a German Coalition* (Eddy 2017) from the NYT and *Angela Merkel's leadership in the balance as German coalition talks collapse* (Young-Powell 2017) from the DT, are about the ongoing respectively failed coalition negotiations on forming a government.

3.3 Methods of analysis

The data has been analyzed with the qualitative research methods of CDA. Using Fairclough's (1995a) three-dimensional framework, the analysis consisted of three steps: the analysis of the written text, the analysis of the discourse practice and the analysis of the sociocultural practice. CDA researchers such as Dijk (2001) and Fairclough (1995b) agree on the point that a complete discourse analysis would be practically too extensive so that usually certain emphases and relevant structures are chosen. Hence, considering the small scale of this study, the textual analysis involved only the examination of a few linguistic features, namely lexical choices as well as grammatical choices, such as agency. Moreover, taking into account what choices have been made in terms of the presence and absence of information and voices, foregrounding and backgrounding of information and also explicit statements and implicit presuppositions shed light on hidden ideologies and the framing of the stories (Fairclough 1995b). Concerning the depiction of information, the themes of the articles were considered, too. The analysis of the second dimension of Fairclough's framework provided insights into text production, distribution and consumption. Intertextuality played here a role as well. All of these findings were finally analyzed in relation to their sociocultural context. Following Fairclough's (2001) procedure, the analysis progressed from description to interpretation to explanation. The articles were compared in pairs and in temporal order.

4 REPRESENTATIONS OF GERMAN POLITICS

Both broadsheets seem to keep their distance from the political groups by not dividing the participants into Us and Them. Hidden ideologies surface, therefore, in a quite subtle way, which causes the diversity of examples of linguistic features contributing to the construction of social identities and relationships. The focus is on the main participants of the articles and other participants were only taken into account if they contribute in some way to the construction of the main identities and their relationships or if they are of importance in terms of power and ideology present in the article.

4.1 The AfD's possible entrance into parliament

The two articles from a few days before the elections attempt to predict the probable election results and possible consequences. The focus is on the polarizing right-wing party AfD, whose

increasing popularity is described as a consequence of the government's migration policy and the consensus of the main parties. The headlines of both articles convey different impressions of the situation due to the level of assertiveness. While the DT announces the depiction of a possible election outcome in a mitigated way with the modal auxiliary *could* and the interrogative format indicated with *how* (example 1), the NYT presents the event as highly likely with the phrase *is poised to* (example 2). Furthermore, the NYT word choice of *Break Postwar Taboo* is more sensationalist, especially because the context of the elections is not mentioned at all, unlike in the DT headline. The use of the word *taboo* implies also that a right-wing party in a powerful position is regarded as undesirable and unusual. Headlines are a significant part of news articles, since potential readers usually decide to read or not to read the whole article based on these. In addition, particularly on the internet it has become more common that people tend to read only the headlines and draw conclusions from that.

- (1) German election: How the right-wing AfD could take the country by surprise (Huggler 2017)
- (2) Far-Right German Party Is Poised to Break Postwar Taboo (Eddy & Erlanger 2017)

The identity of the AfD is built in different ways in the two news articles. The DT describes the AfD's own point of view by quoting multiple times Gauland, one of the party's top candidates. He has made racist, anti-Muslim statements and, for example, praised the military achievements of the soldiers in the Second World War. As the article's main identity, Gauland is also grammatically depicted as a somewhat powerful agent with the metaphor *set alight* in example 3, supported by the following two sentences starting with the pronoun *he*. However, before his views and actions are reported, a biased atmosphere is set at the beginning through the mention of police forces guarding his visit and the tourist office fearing trouble.

- (3) Seventy-six-year-old Mr Gauland has set alight the German election campaign that had looked like a victory procession for Angela Merkel. (Huggler 2017)

The British newspaper also includes Gauland's critical view on Brexit, which is presumably considered an interesting aspect for their British audience. Moreover, his positive opinion on Trump is cited, which contributes to the construction of his multi-faceted identity. At the end of the DT article, Patzelt, Gauland's opponent of the electoral district, is introduced as someone *who*

could not be more different from Mr Gauland. Commenting only on Gauland and not on other election topics, Patzelt's figure seems to function exclusively as an antagonist (example 4).

(4) "But I told him I'm not coming into the grave with you." (Huggler 2017)

Compared to the DT article, which represents the AfD quite specifically through the eyes of one politician, the NYT describes the *anti-immigration* party in a more general way by assessing the situation in relation to the other parties and the chancellor Angela Merkel, who is expected to win the elections. She is described at the beginning of the NYT article on the one hand as *the Continent's most powerful figure* and on the other hand with *a colorless campaign* leaving a part of the German people unsatisfied, which indicates a partly controversial identity. Gauland is mentioned only towards the end of the article and two examples of his *extreme, nationalist tone* are given (as demonstrated by one of his remarks in example 5), which are also part of the DT article. These are the only quoted words of a politician in the NYT article besides several utterances of experts and voters. The fact that the NYT also shows Merkel's criticizing reaction to Gauland's remark (example 5) underlines the chancellor's powerful position in her relationship with the AfD despite the party's popularity in East Germany, which *has dealt the Christian Democrats [Merkel's party] humiliating election defeats in state elections there.*

(5) He stood by his call last month for Ms. Merkel's integration minister to be "disposed of" in Anatolia, the home of her grandparents, even when the chancellor pointedly called the remarks racist. (Eddy & Erlanger 2017)

Although both newspapers report in a neutral tone about the right-wing party and their views, the negatively connoted term *Nazi* is used several times in the articles, which relates the party to a certain context. Furthermore, the decision to include Gauland's extreme statements contributes to a somewhat negative representation of the AfD. The large amount of quotes of politicians, experts and voters could be seen as an attempt by the newspapers to distance themselves from the views. It is probably still right to assume that both newspapers represent an implicit ideology that is politically located somewhere on the left side of the AfD. There are a couple of sentences, in which the DT journalist expresses more overtly doubt on Gauland's politics through the reporting verbs *claim* and *concede* (examples 6 and 7). These verbs frame the represented information in a

particular way, which leaves room for interpretation of how Gauland's politics could be viewed (Fairclough 1995b).

(6) He claims to have figures showing that there will be 240 million more Muslims in Europe by 2050. (Huggler 2017)

(7) "Even if we get 20, 22 per cent, we're going to be in opposition," he concedes. (Huggler 2017)

4.2 Election Day

When comparing the two news reports from the Election Day, it is important to note that the NYT article is about twice as long as the DT article. Hence, the NYT reports in more detail about all aspects and provides more background information, which enable the reader to see the happening in a wider context. Both articles deal with the election results, immediate reactions of different parties and possible forms of the new government. The DT gives a relatively short overview of the political event and in addition to a couple of experts only politicians of the three biggest parties are quoted. Merkel's Christian democratic CDU won the elections and the social democratic SPD became second again, but both of the major parties lost votes to the benefit of the right-wing AfD, who became the third largest party and entered parliament for the first time. In the DT and in the NYT, the smaller parties are exclusively mentioned with regards to a possible coalition. It is worth noting that the left-wing party Die Linke (the Left) is not thematized at all in the DT although they reached the same percent of the vote as the Greens, who are briefly mentioned. In the NYT article, the Left is thematized only at the very end. One reason for this backgrounding and underrepresentation could be that the Left does not play a role in the new government formation, because Merkel has categorically denied a coalition with them. Thus, the newspapers seem to adopt the chancellor's point of view (Fairclough 1995b).

Differences between the news articles in the foregrounding and backgrounding of the main participants can be found in the headlines and leads. In the DT article, both the headline and the first two sentences name first the success of the far-right and then Angela Merkel. Thereby, the information repeatedly mentioned first is foregrounded and may be perceived by the readers as more important, interesting or surprising (Fairclough 1995b). By contrast, the NYT presents the information vice versa: the headline and the lead foreground Merkel and mention the far-right afterwards. Additionally, a note at the end of the article says that the article appeared in print with

the headline *Merkel Claims A Fourth Term, With Obstacles*. Information about the success of the right-wing party is here left out completely, which contributes to the framing of the election results, as Merkel's victory is presented as the most important information. Furthermore, both reports quote Merkel before representatives of the AfD. Nevertheless, both the identities of Merkel and the AfD are in focus, as they are regarded as the most relevant and also opposing figures or groups of the elections.

The DT represents both parties, AfD and CDU, partly as powerful winners and partly as weakened by their opponents. This can be seen, for example, in the agency of some sentences, in which one of the participants, the agent, limits the achievement of the other participant (examples 8 and 9). The chancellor seems to be considered more positive, since her political comeback is regarded as *remarkable* whereas the gains of the AfD are described a little later as *dramatic*.

- (8) The success of the far-Right Alternative for Germany [...] tempered a remarkable political comeback by Mrs Merkel [...]. (Huggler & Rothwell 2017)
- (9) But Germany's system of coalition government will limit the impact of the AfD as mainstream parties unite against it. (Erlanger & Eddy 2017)

In the NYT, the mixed election results are similarly made visible throughout the article with the help of short, alternating segments that either highlight Merkel's or the AfD's success or that refer to the respective counterweight, i.e. the right-wing party or all mainstream parties united. In both reports, the SPD, Merkel's former coalition partner, who announced to go into opposition, is also represented as having a limiting impact on both Merkel and the AfD.

Merkel's identity in the NYT is not only constructed in the context of the other parties and domestic politics. Her leading role in the EU is also presented positively in contrast to the political style of the American president, which is criticized for being *unpredictable* (example 10). This sheds light on the newspaper's ideology of what a good president should be like. Additionally, the journalists included a critical quote by a CDU member, which describes US politics negatively, without further commenting on it (example 11).

- (10) It also represents a vindication of her pragmatic leadership and confidence in her stewardship of Europe's largest economy and of the European Union itself in the face of populism, challenges from Russia and China and uncertainty created by the unpredictable policies of President Trump.

- (Erlanger & Eddy 2017)
 (11) “As in the U.S., hate became part of politics. The CDU cannot and must not match this attitude.”
 (Erlanger & Eddy 2017)

Concerning the identity construction of the AfD, the comparison of the two news articles reveals a considerable difference in the lexical choices in the presentation of the same quote. The statements by Gauland, the party’s top candidate, on election eve made headlines in Germany and his aggressive language use was indignantly discussed in social media. While the DT represents the politician with an exact translation of his own words (example 12), the NYT downplays his word choice by translating *jagen*, the German word for *to hunt* (animals), with *go after*, which has different connotations (example 12). By mitigating Gauland's actual wording, the extreme language use characteristic for the right-wing party appears to be withheld in the NYT. The DT qualifies Gauland’s statement by pointing to the mainstream parties’ resistance, and the NYT refers to protests outside the AfD’s election night party and supports this criticism of the right-wing party with a quote of a political scientist. The criticism seems legitimized by both newspapers, as the reactions of the right-wing politicians on their electoral success are neither taken up in the reporter's voice nor supported by any quoted experts (Fairclough 1995b).

- (11) “We will hunt Merkel, and reclaim our country and our people.” (Huggler & Rothwell 2017)
 (12) “We will go after them. We will claim back our country.” (Erlanger & Eddy 2017)

4.3 Merkel and the Coalition Talks

The last two articles differ in terms of the time of publication, as the NYT reports during the coalition talks between the four parties CDU, CSU, FDP and the Greens and the DT article is about the collapse of the talks. Both headlines still foreground the chancellor’s position, which implies that Merkel is regarded the most important German politician despite the fact that coalitions involve many delegates from different parties. The focus on the viewpoint of the leader of the coalition talks can be seen in examples 13 and 14.

- (13) Ms. Merkel has no interest in another election. (Eddy 2017)
 (14) Mrs Merkel had hoped to wrap up the exploratory talks [...] in order to avert fresh elections that could destabilise Germany and Europe. (Young-Powell 2017)

Despite this emphasis, both newspapers also recognize Merkel's uncertain future. The NYT describes her, for example, as *politically weakened* and *struggling* and the DT describes her as *increasingly vulnerable*. While focusing on Merkel, the NYT report gives an overview of the current situation and the struggles of the coalition talks between the four parties. The depicted relationship between the FDP leader and the chancellor exemplifies the tensions and reminds of the relationship between a schoolboy and his teacher due to the word choice *rebuke* (example 15). With respect to the gap between the views of FDP and the Green, some content of the coalition talks is mentioned, while the opinion of the CSU seems to be left out in this article.

- (15) The Free Democrats' leader, Christian Lindner, went so far as to bluntly declare that his party had "no fear of new elections" should the current efforts fail. That threat earned him a rebuke from the chancellor, who has otherwise been mostly silent on the progress of the talks. (Eddy 2017)

In the DT article, the parties are represented quite equally with quotes and with information about their views and the content of the coalition talks. The liberal FDP play a slightly bigger and controversial role, since they ended the talks and the other parties did not approve of that decision. The ordering of voices let the FDP appear as an opposing identity to Merkel and the other parties, as the FDP leaders' statements are quoted twice first, followed by the regretful reactions of the other parties (examples 16-18). The description of Lindner walking out of the talks as *dramatically* carries a criticizing overtone. Regardless of the opposition, all parties are described as a unity against the right-wing AfD (example 19).

- (16) "The four discussion partners have no common vision for modernisation of the country or common basis of trust," Mr Lindner said in the early hours of Monday morning, after dramatically walking out of coalition talks. (Young-Powell 2017)
- (17) "We believe we were on a path where we could have reached an agreement," Mrs Merkel [...] said. (Young-Powell 2017)
- (18) While Gerd Müller, CSU politician, expressed frustration over the timings of the walk-out: "We actually had the breakthrough now," he said. (Young-Powell 2017)
- (19) Failure to reach a deal could lead to new elections, something all the parties are anxious to avoid as they fear this could lead to the far-right AfD making further gains [...]. (Young-Powell 2017)

Furthermore, when comparing the two articles, it stands out that the NYT presents a new election as the only possible option in case of failing coalition talks. The DT, on the other hand, thematizes twice a minority government, which is known to be Merkel's dispreferred option.

This contributes to the impression mentioned above that the NYT adopts Merkel's view by excluding this information.

Unlike all the other reports, the DT article does not contain any expert evaluations. Instead, the DT refers among others to the Bild newspaper, a tabloid and the German newspaper with the widest circulation. This reference is a little questionable, since the tabloid is widely known and criticized for its tendency to simplifications and its craving for sensation. The Bild quote does not provide any new information but simply puts the DT's assessment of the impact of the failed coalition talk on Merkel's chancellorship in other words. Moreover, instead of quotes of voters the DT refers to a poll by another German newspaper, belonging to the same publisher as Bild, in order to represent voices of the public. Even though the German people are not represented through quotes, they are depicted as strong agents, who decide who to give their vote (example 20). Likewise, the NYT article does not include voices of the public either but mentions briefly polls.

(20) After September's election, Mrs Merkel has been left without a majority, as voters angered by her liberal refugee policy turned to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). (Young-Powell 2017)

4.4 Discussion of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework

The textual analysis of the six news articles has shown that the same events and participants are represented in different ways. Through the foregrounding of certain elements and the backgrounding or exclusion of other aspects, a particular image of the main identities has been created. The main findings are summarized in more detail in Chapter 5.

The choices that have been made in the reports are related to the discursive practices, i.e. the processes of text production, distribution and consumption, and to the social practices, which form the second and third dimension of Fairclough's framework. Newspapers feature institutional routines concerning the gathering and selecting of material as well as their transformation into texts and the tasks are performed by a group of people following the stance of the newspaper (Fairclough 1995b). The access to the groups of people involved in the production and consumption processes is restricted. The material selected for the articles of this study include, for instance, quoted utterances of politicians and voters, evaluations of experts and references to

polls and other newspapers. Since events such as elections involve a large number of participants, the DT and the NYT chose mostly different quotes for the discourse representation. Moreover, the media exercises power over the represented politicians and the readership, as the former usually cannot affect which statements are selected, quoted or possibly taken out of context and, similarly, the latter has no direct influence on the content and might be, therefore, unsatisfied with the given amount and quality of information.

Due to the online availability, the two newspapers can be theoretically accessed by every internet user, which excludes people with very low income and without a certain level of education. Although the newspapers reach, particularly online, generally a wide audience, it is not clear how many people actually read the particular articles chosen for this study. The target audience, however, seems to include people who are interested in politics or have some sort of relationship to Germany, as they read the articles voluntarily. The articles do not demand a great deal of background knowledge of German politics, as the positions of politicians, the political system and the locations of cities mentioned in the articles are briefly described. Furthermore, the focus is probably on the biggest parties in order to keep it simple. The overview of the political situation in Germany is, therefore, slightly superficial and imprecise. This is in line with the Belgian study carried out by Vertommen et al. (2012), who observed that British reports were less specific since Belgian politics were assumed to be less relevant for the audience. Short references to EU and US politics make clear that the audience of the DT and the NYT is assumed to be international. The diverse socio-cultural and political knowledge of an international audience may influence their interpretation, which can differ from the writers' intention since meaning is constructed by the language users (Hall 1997). Concerning potential consequences, news reports about the consensus politics in Germany do not have such a drastic impact as news media in crisis areas can have. Nevertheless, due to the chosen emphases of the newspapers, the audience might perceive the election results differently. For example, with regards to the foregrounding of the success of the right-wing party in the second DT article and the focus on Merkel's victory in the NYT, the audience could feel worried or encouraged depending on their personal political view.

Since all of the articles were written in the context of the parliamentary election, the political discourse, with particular focus on right-wing populism, is the most prominent in the texts. This entails social and ideological connections such as various views on the election issues including the migration discourse. As indicated in the textual analysis, the journalists present those ideologies as views of the participants in the articles. Following the principles of the genre news report, the journalists do not openly express their viewpoint as, for example, in an opinion piece. Hence, the political stance of the journalists or the newspapers shines through only a few times, such as in positive and negative word choices, in the use of reporting verbs and in the absence of information worth mentioning. Concerning social and cultural processes to which the texts relate, the values and beliefs of a democracy are clearly present. Parliamentary elections as features of the political system in a democratic state are assumed to be generally known and therefore not explicitly explained. However, as the electoral systems vary between different countries, the German system is briefly explicated in some of the articles.

5 CONCLUSION

This study has shown that identities, relationships and events in the news are constructed in different ways depending on the goals of the press. The textual analysis has demonstrated that language use always involves choices at different levels, which is in line with previous research on media discourse (e.g. Fairclough 1995b, Vertommen et al. 2012). Lexical and grammatical choices play an important role in media representations, which convey a certain version of reality to the audience. It has been shown that while it is widely known that tabloids tend to use a biased and sensationalist reporting style, also broadsheets report from a particular point of view but in a more subtle way. Since the general picture of the German elections conveyed by the DT and the NYT is quite congruent, with subtle differences, and relatively neutral instead of explicitly anti- or pro-Germany, this study stands in contrast to the research of Li (2010) and Retzlaff (2010), who examined the opposing images created by different newspapers. This difference is probably related to the fact that Li's and Retzlaff's data dealt with more conflictual topics. Nevertheless, my analysis revealed both similarities and differences in the reporting of the DT and the NYT. The focus chosen by the newspapers moved alike from the right-wing party AfD in the first

article pair to the chancellor Merkel and the AfD in the second pair and finally to Merkel in the last pair of articles.

In the first article pair, which predicts the AfD to enter parliament for the first time, a somewhat negative picture of the party is created in different ways. While the NYT chose a sensational headline, the DT decided to begin the article with side information setting a biased context. Furthermore, the NYT highlights the aggressive and populist language use of the party by quoting exclusively the party's top candidate and no other politicians. The DT article, on the other hand, shows a larger number of AfD quotes, which conveys a clear picture of the party's racist views and frames some of them with the help of reporting verbs. By depicting also opponents of the AfD, a common method in news media (Fairclough 1995b), both articles create the image of a controversial party.

The comparison of the articles published on the Election Day revealed that different participants were represented as the most important. While the headline and lead in the NYT report focuses on the winner, Merkel, the DT foregrounds the success of the AfD. However, the backgrounding of one of the smaller parties through exclusion of information indicates that both newspapers concentrate on Merkel's view. The analysed examples of framing are typical for media discourse and agenda setting (Fairclough 1995b, Croucher 2016). Both articles illustrate the mixed results with the opponents Merkel and AfD, but choices in the wording let the chancellor appear in the DT more positive than the AfD. Differences in the translation of a controversial quote exemplify how important precise language use in news media is.

The two articles about the coalition talks represent the chancellor as the most significant politician by foregrounding her figure in the headlines while they also recognize her instable position throughout the text. The NYT expresses Merkel's high position, for example, in her relationship to the leader of the liberal FDP. Similarly, the DT pays attention to the role of the FDP and constructs an opposing identity through the order of voices. The analysis of the representation of voices in all of the articles confirms Fairclough's (1995b) observation that voices are rarely handled equally in news reports. The absence of the option of a minority

government in the NYT article adds to the impression that the newspaper represents mainly Merkel's view.

Concerning the construction of power relations between the politicians, it can be said that the powerful chancellor is part of every article and her dominance is, for example, conveyed through the fact that she is assumed to be generally known while all the other politicians are briefly introduced. Furthermore, Merkel seems to stand above other politicians through her function as the leader who rebukes other politicians for their missteps, for instance, and she is also described in a positive way in her relation to other countries. Her migration politics, however, has weakened her power by causing the loss of approval of the people and by strengthening the AfD. The AfD, who is sometimes represented by individual politicians but mostly as the whole party, appears influential considering the amount of supporters and opponents, which are represented through quotes and poll results. By emphasizing the fact that the mainstream parties unite against the AfD, which has attracted former voters of the major parties, it is shown that the party is taken seriously. The AfD appears more powerful in those articles paying more attention to the party than for example in the last articles, which turn to the FDP in addition to the chancellor. The power relations of other politicians and parties play only minor roles in the articles and contribute to the overall picture. This study about foreign news coverage both confirms and stands partly in contrast to the problems in national news media pointed out by Brettschneider's interview with Media Tenor (2005). On the one hand, the DT and NYT articles do not supply any human interest stories but focus on political content. On the other hand, most of the articles cover polling results and present a good deal of pundits interpreting the situation instead of concentrating solely on the candidates' political standpoints.

The results of this study could be interesting for different groups of people. From a CDA point of view, it would be ideal to remind the content producers of news media of the principles of journalism to report objectively, but it is unrealistic that publishers or editors change their goals and attitudes, since newspapers are businesses with commercial interests. Hence, it is important to educate the consumers of news media and raise critical awareness among the readers by, for example, promoting media literacy in schools. This study shows that it is advisable to make use of several news sources, for instance. According to Fairclough (1995b), critical media literacy

does not only concern language and discourse but also awareness of the economics and production processes of media. CDA may also help us to consider our own language use, which may include hidden power relations that we consider common sense and take for granted. As explained in Chapter 2, studies like this contribute to the growing body of media discourse research. A large research body is important, because mass media is powerful by influencing their wide audience through the repetitions of particular ways of representing happenings (Fairclough 2001).

At the same time, this also limits the relevance of this single study. Findings of the analysis of six newspaper articles cannot be generalised for the whole of news media. Furthermore, Fairclough (1995b) states that a CDA analysis should be multisemiotic, but due to the narrow scope of this study the selection of aspects to be analysed had to be limited and the emphasis was chosen to be on the textual analysis. However, the results could be used with regards to agenda setting research when studying the audience's response to the selected articles. Moreover, further research could be conducted to compare foreign and national (German) news reports in order to reveal differences and similarities in the coverage of the same events. For example, it would be interesting to see how foreign newspapers covered the entire process of the new government formation of record-breaking length.

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