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FOLLOW-UPS ACROSS DISCOURSE DOMAINS: A CROSS-CULTURAL EXPLORATION OF THEIR FORMS AND FUNCTIONS

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Introduction

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In our modern European society, political discourse can no longer be conceived of only as a static notion which has been produced at some more or less specific location and some more or less specific time. Rather, political discourse has become more and more dynamic. This is due to ongoing changes in modern and post-modern societies in general, and to our mediatized society and the so-called new media in particular. These modern technologies enable us to transmit information instantaneously to anybody who is a member of the web-anchored community. Against this background, it is necessary not just to analyse political discourse as a product, to employ socio-pragmatic terminology, but rather as a process. For this reason, the communicative act of follow-up, which is a process-oriented concept par excellence, is expected to shed new light on the process-oriented nature of political discourse.

This process-oriented approach to political discourse is manifest in the transmission of the discourse as such, for example in (1) Prime Minister's Question Time (and its functional equivalents in other countries) and web-based discussion forums, (2) panel interviews with audience participation and follow-up chat sessions with the politicians interviewed, (3) mediatized party-political conferences with follow-up interviews and web-based discussion forums, (4) live-reports of mediations concerning controversial decision-making processes, and (5) rather spontaneously organized – and videoed – demonstrations, marches or sit-ins. Common mediatized reality thus becomes a kind of common ground.

The process-orientation of political discourse has also become a constitutive part of political decision-making on both micro- and macro-levels of communication, regarding both professional politics and grassroot politics. E-mobility has thus not only changed the interpersonal domains of society but has also transmitted public politics into the private domains of society, as is reflected in the participation of larger – and often also more heterogeneous – groups of society organising successful protests against macro-political

decisions, such as youth unemployment in Spain, mass demonstrations in Egypt and other countries, or the building of extremely expensive public buildings in Germany.

The goal of the edited volume is to present up-to-date and original interdisciplinary research from the fields of linguistics, discourse analysis, socio-pragmatics, media communication, political science, computer science and psychology. The researchers represented here have examined the heterogeneous field of political discourse and its manifestation in diverse discourse genres with respect to different degrees of directness in the presentation of politics and political information; different degrees of responsiveness, directness, indirectness and evasiveness in answering interviewer's questions; various manifestations of redundancy in mediated political discourse in general and in political statements in particular; professionalism and the de-construction of discourse identities in political discourse, to name but the most prominent research questions.

All of the chapters examine the forms and functions of follow-ups, that is, how a particular discourse, discourse topic or discourse contribution is taken up in discourse and negotiated between the communicators, and how it is commented on. Follow-ups are conceptualized as communicative acts (or dialogue acts), in and through which a prior communicative act is accepted, challenged, or otherwise negotiated by third parties. The discourses under investigation comprises political discourse across spoken and written dialogic genres considering (1) the discourse domains of political interview, editorial, op-eds and discussion forum, (2) their sequential organization as regards the status of initial (or 1^{st} order) follow-up, a follow-up of a prior follow-up (2^{nd} order follow-up), or n^{th}-order follow-up, and (3) their discursive realization as regards degrees of indirectness and responsiveness which are conceptualized as a continuum along the lines of fully explicit and fully responsive not containing any attenuation devices.

Most of the chapters use compositional methodology. Within this common framework, perspectives vary representing (1) socio-pragmatics as regards context, sequentiality, participant format, communicative action, and implicature, (2) corpus linguistics as regards quantification of data in order to identify possible communicative patterns across discourse domains and cultures, (3) discourse analysis as regards the definition of genre, and (4) social psychology as regards face and face-work, and evasiveness.

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