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From Discourses to Corpora: Cognitive Approaches to (Lexical) Meaning-Making

Many discourse-semantic studies focus on the role of lexical units (e.g., key words, focal words, stigmatizing words, buzz words, etc.) as ‘carriers’ of ideological framing, emphasizing multiple ways of coining and framing word meaning within public discourse, including mass media. In this field of research, one of the most exciting issues is to identify and describe strategies of semantic coining in public language use. In contemporary political discourse in Germany, for example, buzz words such as *Heuschrecke* (‘locust’) and *Herdprämie* (‘bonus to remain at the cooking stove’) do not only provide access to rich lexical meanings but, more importantly, also to an entire discourse. What is more, they could even convey political attitudes and ideologies.

Corpora help capture processes and results of (lexical) meaning-making in discourse. How could, however, patterns of semantic coining be identified in corpora? Which quality criteria should apply when setting up corpora? Which methods and linguistic tools could support analyzing discursive processes of meaning-making? More generally, what kind of theoretical framework allows analyzing conceptual framing in public discourse?

Addressing such research questions, the talk pursues three aims. First, it introduces a cognitive- and discourse-linguistic framework, namely cognitive discourse semantics, as well as a set of linguistic categories, including frames, semantic roles, resp. frame elements, and (argument structures) constructions relevant for scrutinizing ways of shaping concepts in discourse. Second, it reports on corpus technologies, particularly the software Lexico3, useful for quantitatively comparing related discourses in terms of their vocabulary. Finally, four case studies should exemplify ways of investigating lexical meaning-making with respect to (a) processes of coining word meanings, (b) conceptual metaphors, (c) key words in argument structure constructions, and (d) key words in topoi. The subject of the studies is the key word *crisis* within the discourse on the “financial crisis” documented in a corpus of about 6,000 newspaper articles.