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Review of Gómez-Jiménez, Eva María and Michael Toolan eds. 2020. *The Discursive Construction of Economic Inequality: CADS Approaches to the British Media.* London: Bloomsbury. ISBN: 978-1-350-11128-8. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350111318

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This volume is part of the Bloomsbury Academic *Research in Corpus Discourse* series, edited by Wolfgang Teubert and Michaela Mahlberg. The book is the result of a symposium held at the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom) in 2018, in which Eva María Gómez-Jiménez and Michael Toolan have gathered a number of works presented at the event with the addition of later works on related topics.

The monograph consists of 227 pages and comprises an introduction by the editors followed by nine chapters and a final afterword by Danny Dorling. The different chapters delve into the discursive representation of the multiple forms of exclusion, inequality and discrimination in some of the mass media public discourses of modern Britain, and they are ordered chronologically according to the socio-historical issues they cover. The book examines, from a corpus perspective, diverse public discourses to investigate how economic inequality has been portrayed in the British media from the Second World War to the present day. Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) are defined elsewhere as a "set of studies into the form and/or function of language as communicative discourse which incorporate the uses of computerised corpora in their analyses" (Partington *et al.* 2013: 10). The contributors make use of the CADS approach and combine a number of quantitative techniques with qualitative discourse analysis that permit to uncover meanings that are not open to direct observation in discourse. These non-obvious meanings (Partington 2010: 88) occur mainly because of

the semi-automatic choices made by the speaker or writer in terms of linguistic aspects such as transitivity or vocabulary, among others.

The introduction provides the context for the book as a whole. The editors justify the importance of discussing economic inequality, both from a social and a linguistic viewpoint, and provide background information about the existing literature on the subject matter. Next, they overview the different chapters included in the book and discuss some of their methodological aspects.

In their chapter "Poverty and social exclusion in Britain: A Corpus-assisted discourse study of Labour and Conservative Party leader's speeches, 1900–2014", Nuria Lorenzo-Dus and Sadiq Almaged investigate the discursive mechanisms by which the leaders of the two main British political parties, namely the Conservative and Labour parties, have represented poverty and social exclusion (henceforth PSE) in the party conference speeches held between 1900 and 2014. PSE issues have become the focus of political attention over time, and they have received considerable interest in academic studies (see Lansley 2012 and Heath *et al.* 2013). However, the discursive construction of PSE by political elites across time has received little attention in the literature. In order to fill this gap, the authors examine the speeches delivered by 51 different Conservative and Labour party leaders at their annual conferences during the period mentioned above. Lorenzo-Dus and Almaged identify two main types of PSE discourse: finance and hardship. The former is more present in the speeches delivered by the Conservative party and the latter is more frequently used by the Labour party. Their study also reveals similarities between the two political parties: namely that both represent those suffering from PSE as passive entities that need to be acted upon. Finally, the study also reveals a change in the position of both parties towards PSE after 2001, with an increase in their use of combat metaphors.

Social stratification entails what Foley (1997: 313) calls a 'social deictic' phenomenon since the use of language serves as evidence of the social position of its speakers. In the second chapter, Joe Spencer-Bennet considers some of the strategies the *Mass-Observation* project recommended to the Ministry of Information during the Second World War in order to solve the social deictic problem. Spencer-Bennet, by focusing on the metalinguistic practices that surround the political texts, carries out an analysis on how political discourse plays a role in the reproduction of social inequality. The proposal of the *Mass-Observation* includes a more vernacular, simple and personal

language but his findings suggest that mass language is stereotyped and used as a means to control the masses.

In their chapter, Isabelle van der Bom and Laura L. Paterson examine the representation of the welfare state in texts from the *Times* retrieved from 1940 to 2009. The authors observe that the welfare state is connected to a number of key concepts throughout the decades. A look into the thematic collocates reveals that the main elements related to the welfare state remain unchanged over time, especially those collocates associated with metaphors and benefits. They also note that there is a somewhat consistent discourse that connects the welfare state with neoliberalism, (im)morality and the creation of a social underclass.

In the last decades, child poverty has been on the increase in Britain to such an extent that a third of all children in the United Kingdom are in poverty nowadays (Child Poverty Action Group 2019). Michael Toolan's chapter "What can be done about child poverty? What the *Times* said then and what it says now" investigates, with a special look at the change in the discourse, how this problem is addressed by the *Times* in the 1970s and how it is thought about in the 2000s. The author puts forward two contrasting scripts about child poverty in the press: 1) a script representing the United Kingdom as a reasonable country where everyone has a chance to live decently and, consequently, individuals are responsible for their economic status; and 2) a script considering the British system as one where not everyone has the opportunity to prosper. The comparison of keywords and key semantic domains in the corpora suggests a shift in the way that child poverty has been dealt with in the press across the decades. The evidence from the 1970s corpus is in line with the second script whilst the opposite is observed in the data retrieved from the 2000s. In this decade, child poverty is treated as the responsibility of individual citizens and aspects such as providing children with decent housing and schools are reported to be beyond the power of the state by the media.

The chapter by Ilse A. Ras analyses, from a corpus-based perspective, the use of words connected with (in)equality, responsibility, and accountability in national newspapers from the United Kingdom between 2004 and 2016. The source of evidence comes from the *Corporate Fraud Corpus* (CFC) and the *Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Corpus* (MSC). Corporate fraud and modern slavery are understood as sets of crimes, since these terms cover behaviour outlawed in the United Kingdom. These types of crimes differ from other crimes in that they are committed by the social elite,

and they entail what Sykes and Matza (1957) call 'techniques of neutralization' by which arguments are given before and after committing the wrongdoing so as to assuage the guilt and shame. The frequency and c-collocate data suggest that reporting on these crimes normally ignores the focus of responsibility, and that the discussion on responsibility is more frequent in corporate fraud, with a slight tendency towards victim blame. The results show that the United Kingdom newspapers do not seem to link (in)equality with corporate fraud but modern slavery is clearly associated with different types of (in)equality.

Jane Mulderrig's chapter "Health inequality and the representation of 'risky' working-class identities in obesity policy" focuses on the United Kingdom government's anti-obesity policy strategy through Change4Life's social marketing campaign. The data are retrieved from a corpus of policy documents issued on behalf of the United Kingdom government and a corpus of advert broadcasts on TV and social media as part of the Change4Life marketing campaign. The findings demonstrate that the adverts are aligned with neoliberalism, since they favour the position of the food and drinks industry as advantage stakeholders, whereas obesity is understood as a matter of individual choice and responsibility.

The chapter by Lesley Jeffries and Brian Walker investigates the word *austerity* in two corpora collected from print newspaper data: the *Start of Austerity* (SoA), covering the period 2009–2010 which follows the financial crush in 2008, and the *End of Austerity* (EoA), covering the period 2016–2017 when austerity is reported to come to an end as a political strategy. The authors combine computational (keyword analysis and concordances) and qualitative methods to trace the change in the discoursal context of the word *austerity* in relation to (in)equality in the periods mentioned above. The results show that austerity is the central topic in 2009–2010 while it becomes peripheral in 2016–2017 as a negative background to other concerning issues. The findings related to analysing the co-text of *austerity* also indicate a more negative evaluation of the word in the later period, where it becomes less epochal sounding.

In the chapter "More inequality, but less coverage: How and why TV news avoided 'The Great Debate' either side of the financial crisis 2008–14", Richard Thomas addresses the coverage of poverty, wealth, the squeezed middle and income inequality (henceforth PWSIE) in the BBC and ITV 10 p.m. bulletins in the time span 2007–2014. A combination of content and Critical Discourse Analyses (CDA) is used to

explore how PWSIE issues are approached in the TV news channels with the aim of identifying how they are linguistically addressed. Using CDA, Thomas aims to identify implicit meanings and assess the way in which ideology and power are spread and preserved. He finds out that PWSIE issues are more dominant in the BBC where they are reported thematically (that is, addressed in general terms) and do not rely on personal stories and narratives to define them. From a diachronic viewpoint, the data show that the number of items mentioning PWSIE issues decrease during the financial crisis, since they are less prominent in 2014 than in 2007. The author also remarks that both the BBC and ITV seem to support a neoliberal approach in 2014.

In the next chapter, Wolfgang Teubert delves into the link between democracy and economic inequality in the Western world. He suggests that the concept of democracy, as understood in Western societies, is spurious and does not allow citizens to have an active role in the decisions related to the well-being of a nation. Teubert's research is based on the *Hansard Corpus*, with a particular focus on the discussions leading to the reform acts of 1832, 1867, 1884, 1918 and 1928. By means of a collocational analysis, Teubert offers a discussion on the concept of democracy in relation to economic inequality across the two centuries and demonstrates that inequality has gradually become accepted by the British Parliament.

Finally, the afterword by Danny Dorling provides a thoughtful reflection on economic inequality. Following the tenet by Sandel (2012) that we have passed from having a market economy to being a market economy, Dorling claims that the situation in the United Kingdom was different in the past insofar as becoming a market economy has favoured inequalities. The present volume has shown the way in which society has been fooled with the passing of time and how the media has represented inequalities to such an extent that they are now seen as natural. However, Dorling offers an optimistic view for the future as he states that we do not know yet what will happen next. In this sense, he argues that whenever economic inequality rises it eventually falls again, although in a different way.

On the whole, the volume under review is an outstanding collection of chapters that investigates the different forms of wealth inequality and how they have been portrayed in the British media since the Second World War. A variety of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies analyses are provided and they enable authors to address major issues concerning economic inequality from both diachronic and synchronic

perspectives. As such, this edited collection will certainly attract the scholarly attention that it deserves.

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