

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POP SONGS A RESEARCH PLAN

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Overview

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Introduction

- Aim of my dissertation:
- investigate discursive construction of national identity in/through Austrian pop songs
- Pop songs:
- oral texts, can serve to construct national identity

Central Research Questions

- 1) Do Austrian pop songs support the construction of national identity? If so: which linguistic and non-linguistic means contribute to this?
- 2) Does the choice of language and linguistic features play a part in constructing national identity? If so: which ones?
- 3) Can the variety of German be chosen freely when singing pop songs in Austria? Which varieties of German support /do not support the construction of national identity? Why?

Theoretical Background

- Discourse / Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)
- (National) Identity
- The sociolinguistic situation in Austria
- Pop Music / Austropop

What is discourse?

- Discourse: a social practice, a form of social action
- Dialectical: shapes society, at the same time is shaped by society
- signifying element can be spoken or written, moreover other semiotic elements may be included (sounds, graphics)
- Songs: signifying elements oral language (as songs are sung) and sound (not my field of research)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

- Critical Discourse Analysis:
 - critical stance
 - analysis of linguistic forms and structures, also other potential semiotic levels of a text
 - highlight and uncover factors such as roles, relationships and identities
- e.g. Fairclough & Wodak (1997), Wodak et al. (2009), Machin (2010)

Identity

- Multidisciplinary topic
- Approached from different fields of research
- My focus: combination of cultural studies, communication studies and linguistics (as songs and their lyrics are the central element of my dissertation)
- e.g. Hall (1990), Littlejohn and Foss (2008), Wodak et al. (2009)
- Constructivist approach: identity is not given, social construct
- Communities of practice (Wenger 1998, Bucholtz & Hall 2005)

National Identity

- Nations are mental constructs, constructed through discourse (cf. Wodak et al. 2009)
- Members of a nation do not know each other personally, yet they usually believe in being part of a special collective because they share certain media like newspapers, TV and radio programmes (Wodak et al. 2009)
- ❖ And because they share songs (my claim)



Source: <https://www.kraushaar-gitarren.de/cms/austria.html>

The Sociolinguistic Situation in Austria

- German: official language of Austria (according to the Austrian Constitution)
- Several minority languages (regional) which are officially recognized
- Important: Status of German as a pluricentric language
- German is also the official language of Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Luxembourg
- Different centres of codification for Standard German

The Sociolinguistic Situation in Austria, cont.

- At least three varieties of German in Austria (Wiesinger 2008: four)
 - Non-standard dialects, either of Bavarian or Alemannic origin
 - Colloquial language (ranging in between non-standard dialects and the standard)
 - Austrian Standard German (ASG)

- Non-standard dialects in Austria:
 - Regional dialects as well as social dialects

- Colloquial language: very important but difficult concept (Clyne 1995)

Pop Music

- Pop: Frith (2001) uses broad term
 - pop ↔ classical music and folk, otherwise every sort of style
 - „designed to please everyone“ (Frith 2001, p.95)
 - Development: rooted in the blues, in folk elements and in the boogie-woogie
 - i.e. roots in the English-speaking world
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- ❖ German-speaking „Schlager music“: rooted in Viennese operetta

Austropop

- Austropop:
 - emergence in 1971
 - phenomenon arisen in the 1960s (notion coined in 1977, Larkey 1992)
- Four phases in the history of Austropop
- Phase 3: de-anglicisation (Larkey 1992)
- Austropop is rooted in the English-speaking pop tradition
- Transition to German language (although not exclusively, Austropop is not German-speaking music by definition)

Austropop, cont.

- Austropop: mix of novel musical styles with native Austrian elements (Larkey 1992)
- Highly important issues (Larkey 1993):
 - content of lyrics
 - use of language
- Moreover: negotiation of the (rather complicated) relationship between Austria and Germany

Methods

- Emergent design
- Corpus-based analysis
- Mixed method study

- Quantitative aspects: statistical analysis of variable linguistic phenomena → establish accent features (or other features indicating certain linguistic varieties)
- Qualitative aspects: CDA, analysis of linguistic elements and thematic content, adhering to principles established by Wodak et al (2009), Machin (2010), Fairclough (1995) etc.

Linguistic Elements and Thematic Content

Elements to look for include e.g.:

- Personal and possessive pronouns
- Vocabulary
- Other forms of reference, e.g. Personal names (incl. personification of the nation)
- Toponyms

Are there typical Austrian topics?

- Landscape?
- Food? Beverages?
- Lifestyle, e.g. skiing?
- Politics?



Corpus

- Austropop songs
- Plan: between 50 and 100 songs
- Timeframe: 1971–2021
- Songs that are known nationwide
- Plan: get a playlist of Austropop Songs by Austria's radio station ö3 which broadcasts nationwide
- Alternatively: use a collection of daily playlists which can be retrieved at <https://onlineradiobox.com/at/hitradiioe3/>

Fears and Problems

- The relationship between radio station Ö3 and Austrian musicians is not the best (musicians complain they feel neglected by Ö3) – what if there are problems in obtaining the corpus? → use of an additional radio station, FM4?
- What if the corpus is too small to be representative?
- What if the corpus is too large to handle all the data?
- The problem of colloquial language in Austria: not clearly defined

Conclusion

- my dissertation will show the tendency of a “classical” CDA approach (van Dijk 1997):
 - Focus on a certain issue (identity)
 - Multidisciplinary
 - All levels of discourse

- Close research gap between popular cultural studies and linguistics

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THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION!

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