Chapter 6

A Methodological Framework of Stance-Taking and Appraisal in the Parliament

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ABSTRACT

The chapter proposes a methodological framework to study stance/appraisal in parliamentary discourse. Little previous research exists on the marking of stance/appraisal, despite its pervasiveness in such contexts. The researcher is currently unaware of any framework that has been developed to help analysts situate the phenomenon of stance-taking in parliamentary discourse. The first section defines the concept of parliament and discusses its roles as a political institution. The second section highlights specific features relevant to the nature of interaction in parliaments by considering the sequential nature of its discourse, shedding light on how stance is uttered and embedded in both parliamentary questions and parliamentary answers. The final section presents a proposed methodological framework combining Van Dijk’s conceptual approach on parliamentary context, Du Bois’s stance triangle, Ilie’s account on political arguments, and Martin and White’s Appraisal Framework to contextually and theoretically frame stance-taking in parliamentary discourse.
INTRODUCTION

Much of what is discussed and debated inside parliament eventually results in social and political actions in the wider world, underscoring parliament’s significance as a central political institution. One of the characteristic features of parliamentary discourse is the expression of speakers’ stance. The stances uttered in parliamentary debates will eventually shape the political identity of their speakers and their political parties. Thus, an important way to explore the significance of parliamentary practices in any context is by examining the stances uttered in parliaments. But, how can we examine these stances?

This chapter proposes a methodological framework for analyzing stance in parliamentary discourse. Little previous research exists on the marking of stance, despite its pervasiveness in such contexts. The researcher is currently unaware of any framework that has been developed to help analysts situate the phenomenon of stance-taking in parliamentary discourse. The present chapter attempts to address this lacuna by proposing a framework that helps identify contextual cues that might influence the expression of stance in parliaments. As Du Bois points out, “A real utterance is always framed by its context of use” (2007, p. 147). Thus, to develop a comprehensive account of stance-taking in parliaments, some characteristic contextual features that play a major part in realizing stance must be considered. This chapter explains in what way the features of global context and local discursive moves determine how stance is expressed by parliamentarians.

According to Ilie (2010) that in order to understand the ideological bias and stance-taking in parliaments, it is essential first to study the main recurrent language and discourse practices preferred by parliamentarians. Thus, the chapter begins by presenting an overview of parliamentary discourse where the first section defines the concept of “parliament” and discusses its roles as a political institution. The second section highlights the importance of language and its fundamental role in conducting parliamentary activities. This section differentiates between parliamentary and unparliamentary language and how does it affect stance-taking and positioning of MPs in the Parliament. Also, by considering the sequential nature of parliamentary debates, the chapter sheds light on how stance is uttered and embedded in both parliamentary questions and parliamentary answers. The final section presents a proposed methodological framework that can help analysts situate the phenomenon of stance-taking in parliamentary contexts. Before presenting the framework, various definitions of stance by different scholars will be presented. This is followed by examining the phenomenon of stance beyond texts to test how the global context influences the stance produced in texts at the House of Parliament. Finally, a proposed methodological framework is presented. This framework is informed by Van Dijk’s (2004) conceptual approach on parliamentary context, Du Bois’s (2007)