

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Herber Rebecca Theresa

Thesis title: Climate Justice Discourse in German Quality Newspapers Along the Political Spectrum: A Critical Discourse Analysis of taz, Süddeutsche Zeitung, FAZ and Die Welt

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Dimitrov Michal

Affiliation: Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism, external lecturer

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THESIS (mark one box for each row)

		Conforms to approved research proposal	Changes are well explained and appropriate	Changes are explained but are inappropriate	Changes are not explained and are inappropriate	Does not conform to approved research proposal
1.1	Research objective(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Methodology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	Thesis structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific): Research objectives, methodology and structure of the presented thesis are in line with the original thesis proposal, proving the deep interest of the author in the topic and her ability to formulate a solid thesis proposal right at the beginning of the research.

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
2.1	Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework	A
2.2	Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature	A
2.3	Quality and soundness of the empirical research	B
2.4	Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly	A
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	B
2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	B

COMMENTARY (description of thesis content and the main problems): Rebecca Theresa Herber presented a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of selected articles from four different leading German quality newspapers (Leitmedien) representing moderate political mainstream in Germany (taz, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Die Welt). The declared aim of the thesis was "to contribute to a further understanding of the discourse that is formed by German media around climate justice". (p. 19). In a more normative sense, the author declares that "there is a need to understand today how the discourse around climate justice is shaped to be able to deduce future implications for the practice in newsrooms and for journalists in Germany and other comparable countries in the Global North". (p. 5). Herber proves to understand both the strengths and weaknesses of CDA "as a deeply moralistic method" with explicit judgements (Graham, 2018), embedding her analysis in a suitable theoretical framework and being able to build a solid ground for her empirical research based on the application of an appropriate method despite some limits when categorizing her findings (see below). Inspired by Sharifi et al. (2017), the author covers both textual and contextual part of the explored discourse to see how access and participation play into the media discourse (p. 56).

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3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
3.1	Quality of the structure	A
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	B
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	A
3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	A
3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	A
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	A
3.6	Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices	B

(*) in case the text contains quotations without references, the grade is F; in case the text contains plagiarised parts, do not recommend the thesis for defence and suggest disciplinary action against the author instead.

<p>COMMENTARY (description of thesis form and the main problems):</p> <p>The thesis has a logical structure, a very high level of argumentation, using appropriate academic terminology and conforming to quotation standards. Rebecca Theresa Herber presented a very good thesis regarding stylistics of her academic writing style. The number of typos is marginal and not disturbing. The quality of the textual lay-outing is fine and appendices are sufficient (even though exact date of publication - not just year and month - of the sampled articles would be welcomed). Given the fact that the author had to translate excerpts of the sample material from German to English and was challenged by meanings/implications that could be lost in translation (above all when translating verb form of German subjunctive), it would be both more comfortable and transparent for the purpose of verification of her findings if at least some of the analyzed textual parts were quoted in original (German).</p>

4. OVERALL EVALUATION (provide a summarizing list of the thesis’s strengths and weaknesses):

<p>Rebecca Theresa Herber proved her deep interest in the topic of climate change/justice and profound knowledge of German media system. She selected an appropriate approach to her qualitative empirical research, applying critical discourse analysis (CDA), while being well aware of the limitations of this method including the subjectivity of the researcher (p. 38). Based on analysis of 32 samples from 4 German leading media with different political affiliation, the author identifies 4 central discourses around climate justice in selected German quality newspapers (1. Imbalance between the Global South and the Global North, 2. Call for a Holistic Consideration of Climate Justice, 3. Climate Justice as Part of Activists’ Agenda, 4. Need for a Focus on Intranational Socio-economic Injustice). However the discourses are well categorized and explained, their designation seems to be a little clumsy. Quite interesting is the identification of "no proper discourse" (p. 65) for a big number of articles covering the topic of climate justice. This should be addressed further at the defence of the thesis. The same applies for the conclusion where Rebecca Theresa Herber shows her competence in understanding how (German) media work; she goes even further beyond "understanding the discourse" when she - in the sense of normative critique - formulates pieces of advice to (German) journalists, how they should address the topic of climate justice (answering part of the research question 1: how might the articles contribute to the public discourse). This is no doubt a subject to an interesting discussion at the defence of the thesis as well.</p>
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5. QUESTIONS OR TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE:

5.1	"I am not able to fully free myself from personal views and predispositions influencing the findings and wider implications," writes the author on page 38. How does the subjectivity affects the validity of the findings of CDA? What did the author do for the highest possible scientific validity of her research?
5.2	The author seems to have struggled with finding a proper names/designations for the identified discourses. (1. Imbalance between the Global South and the Global North, 2. Call for a Holistic Consideration of Climate Justice, 3. Climate Justice as Part of Activists’ Agenda, 4. Need for a Focus on Intranational Socio-economic Injustice). Could she explain the designations of the discourses in more detail?
5.3	The author comes to an interesting conclusion about "no proper discourse". She points out, that the analyzed newspapers use the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" as a "buzzword, potentially to demonstrate the participation in the growing public discourse and to meet growing public interest in the topic". However, does this mechanism of using buzzwords mean that there is no semantic meaning in it, that it

	cannot constitute/or be part of a specific discourse on its own, for a example a discourse of ignorance to climate justice or doubting its purpose?
5.4	As a suggestion for a further research, the author promotes conducting a similar analysis on alternative, digital-born media such as Krautreporter, Riffreporter or Perspective Daily. What would the analysis (and comparison to the results of her own research on legacy media) bring?

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

The reviewer is familiar with the thesis' score in plagiarism analysis in SIS.

If the score is above 5%, please evaluate and indicate problems:

6.1	-
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7. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F

If the mark is an "F", please provide your reasons for not recommending the thesis for defence:

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Date: 4. 9. 2023

Signature:

A finalised review should be printed, signed and submitted in two copies to the secretary of the Department of Media Studies. The electronic version of the review should be converted into a PDF and uploaded to SIS, or sent to the Department of Media Studies secretary who will upload it to SIS on the reviewer's behalf.

Do not upload PDFs with a scanned signature, the review uploaded to SIS must be without signature.