



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Sara Camussi

Title: Constructing Indigenous Identity: Critical Discourse Analysis of the “Yes” and “No” Campaigns in the 2023 “The Voice” Referendum in Australia

Programme/year: International Relations, 2024

Author of Evaluation (supervisor/second reader): Mgr. Jan Dostál, second reader

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	25
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	35
<i>Total</i>		80	68
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	9
	Style	5	4
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	18
TOTAL		100	86



Evaluation

Major criteria:

From the beginning, I should openly state, that I am not an expert neither in the topic of the thesis (indigenous rights), nor in the method (critical discourse analysis) or anything related to post-colonial theory. Therefore, my assessment is done as an outsider perspective and thus should be taken with a grain of salt.

I consider this thesis as a above standard work, I especially highly value the focus of the thesis, the referendum on the indigenous rights in Australia in 2023, which is a very current and important topic, not covered by the existing research. The research questions, hypothesis and goals of the thesis are clearly stated, and it is shown how they are answered. I think the author has done a good job in terms of analysing the topic, the method of analysis is employed (in my view) properly, so the thesis delivers in terms of answering the research question.

However, there are several more or less critical comments. I still see as the main shortcoming of the thesis the fact that it focuses only on one document, namely the referendum booklet, although its main aim is to analyse the discourse of the entire “Yes” and “No” campaign. The author provides justification for this: the research aims to be in-depth analysis of the language, strategies, public discourse and rhetorical strategies employed in the discourse, of which the booklet is in the author’s view an adequate representation. Moreover, the focused selection is “practical and manageable,” but mainly the material itself “is detailed and comprehensive in terms of covering the major perspectives and official information related to the referendum.” Nevertheless, I would still argue that for the correct identification of the themes present in the discourse and especially its significance it is needed to analyse more than just one official material, despite its relevance – the author is correct in choosing this source, I am just still not entirely convinced that the analysis of the referendum booklet is representative enough for the entire discourse of both campaigns. I think that the author should have included more sources for the analysis, as the discourse is in my opinion including not only the official material. The author should during the defence provide her opinion on what other sources may reveal about the strategies, objectives and devices used in the discourse of both campaigns and if and how they can differ from the official booklet.

The second major reservation I have regarding the thesis is mainly to the theoretical background used. More specifically, I would say that the thesis introduces quite a lot of theories, besides the Foucauldian discourse, it also uses the post-colonial and critical race theory, in the methodology section it then develops besides the critical discourse analysis also the discourse-historical approach. To myself (once again as an outsider) it was not entirely clear, how the author applies all these theories to the specific example of indigenous rights in Australia, especially in the case of the critical race theory. I think that the author could have focused the analysis on just the discourse and post-colonialism, but during the defence, the author could explain the usefulness of these theoretical frameworks (especially critical race theory) and their relevance in the discourse.



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In addition, I think that especially in the interpretative methods it is also important to address the question of the author's own bias in the research (which is not done in the thesis, or I missed it). In my opinion, I would advise that the author should acknowledge her own position more openly and recognize possible bias she might have in unpacking the existing narratives, as the personal stance still can have an effect on the analysis itself. I would also advise the committee to ask the author for a reflection on the possible influence of the bias of the researcher in interpretation of the discourse.

Nevertheless, I have to say that the author has demonstrated a good knowledge of the method and the topic overall, this diploma thesis is of a very high quality, the linkage to existing theories is very strong and the results are very relevant to current discussions and thus could be very well used beyond this thesis. Therefore, I evaluate this thesis very positively and recommend the analysis to be used and maybe expanded in following research.

Minor criteria:

The author is using in the entire thesis references in a coherent manner, bibliography is included, the data for replication purposes are also provided. The style and formal criteria meet all the necessary requirements for a diploma thesis. Sometimes, the author does not provide references for claims used – e.g. on p. 34 the author states that “it has been proven” without a source to back up the following information (the role of police force within indigenous communities). In some instances, the author uses normative language in the thesis, which does not in my view really fit the standard of academic texts – especially if the author does not acknowledge her own position. But these are only minor concerns that does not influence the positive evaluation of the thesis.

Assessment of plagiarism:

The only major critical remark regarding the formal criteria is the relatively high percentage of not original text (25 % similarity with other sources in Turnitin). However, the thesis does not show any signs of plagiarism, the high similarity is caused mainly by high usage of direct quotations from multiple sources – mainly from the booklet as the primary source for the analysis, but other direct quotes are used, which the author in my view could have limited. We can still say that there is not a plagiarism concern, the thesis is an original piece of work and brings new findings to the field, that have not been published anywhere else.

Overall evaluation: 86

Suggested grade: B

Signature: