La Sapienza

Revisione esterna dottorandi 34° ciclo

MAURIZI ESTER

Evaluation form for PhD dissertation

Evaluation form

Title of the thesis

Critical Discourse Analysis and Identity Construction in the U.S. Magazine Good Housekeeping
From the 1920s to the 1940s.

Affiliation of the reviewer

GIUSEPPE BALIRANO University of Naples l'Orientale - Dept. of Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies

Report

Review with minor revisions

Presentation and clarity

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [X] Average   [ ] Good   [ ] Excellent

The reviewer should be able to read the text without difficulty. This implies that the dissertation is clear and 'user friendly', without duplications or repetitions.

Evaluation file (optional)

Integration and coherence

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [ ] Average   [X] Good   [ ] Excellent

The manuscript should present logical and rational links between different parts of the thesis.

)

Introduction to scientific background

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [ ] Average   [X] Good   [ ] Excellent

The text should contain a satisfactory introduction to the scientific background which is relevant to the research, preparing the reader to the exposition of the problem.

Review of relevant literature

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [X] Average   [ ] Good   [ ] Excellent

The candidate must have a detailed knowledge of original sources, have a thorough knowledge of the field, and understand the main theoretical and methodological issues.

Statement of research problem

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [ ] Average   [ ] Good   [X] Excellent

A clear statement of the research problem should be made, together with specific hypotheses, predictions, or questions which the research is designed to address.

Originality

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [ ] Average   [ ] Good   [X] Excellent

The research must be the candidate's own work. The degree of independence may vary according to the research topic.

Contribution to knowledge and scientific relevance

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [ ] Average   [ ] Good   [X] Excellent

The dissertation should be substantial enough to be able to form the basis of two articles on refereed journal, a book or research monograph.

Mastery of the English language'

[ ] None   [ ] Poor   [X] Average   [ ] Good   [ ] Excellent

The candidate must be proficient in written English and show mastery of appropriate scientific/technical language.

A major goal of the review process is to evaluate if the present version of the thesis is:

1) adequate as is

2) require minor revision

3) require major revision

for admission of the candidate to the defense of the work in front of a national evaluation board.

)

[ ] Accept as is   [**X**] Minor revision   [ ] Major revision

To whom it may concern:

The study presented in Ester Maurizi's doctoral dissertation, *Critical Discourse Analysis and Identity Construction in the U.S. Magazine Good Housekeeping From the 1920s to the 1940s,* adopts a critical corpus-based approach to the analysis of the journalistic discursive practices enacted in the American magazine *Good Housekeeping* in a 20-year timespan. The theoretical and methodological framework of analysis combines the insights coming from Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics in order to investigate issues linked to gender and national identity construction used in the magazine and their potential and, sometimes, intended effects on the development of gender and national identity, with a specific focus on the (re)production of ideologies in target readers. Therefore, the study mainly examines the processes of discourse construction and construal of ideologies in a specific media context.

The dissertation takes into consideration an interesting and peculiar case study, filling an important gap in the literature. As the author underlines, when it comes to in-depth investigations of the linguistic elements and peculiarities of magazines belonging to the first half of the 20th century, these are scarce and sometimes they merely focus on the so-called social practice dimension of such media products, thus disregarding the textual and discourse practice dimensions. Additionally, the study carried out highlights step by step the linguistic innovations or peculiarities of the corpus taken into consideration, starting with the insights linked to the systematic adoption of synthetic personalization in the magazine over the years, mimicking a more personal relationship between the text producer and the readers; and moving on to questions linked to the representation of the nation once the corpus nears the years of WW2. The investigation, however, does not limit itself to only these aspects: it becomes a comprehensive study of the language and discursive practices of the magazine *Good Housekeeping* in the 1920s–1940s. The PhD dissertation written by Ester Maurizi is therefore an excellent example of critical systematic analysis of discursive phenomena in specialized contexts, it aptly demonstrates how it is possible to critically investigate and problematize issues linked to discursive identity construction and construal in media contexts.

However, some aspects of the dissertation should be reviewed before a successful defense. In particular, the language of the thesis should be thoroughly revised. Some minor mistakes are indeed evident throughout the dissertation. Here are some examples:

- "Looking at data, however, it became evident that beside a synchronic comparison, a diachronic comparison, too, would be fruitful when looking for National Identity Construction strategies." (p. 47 -> should be 'besides');

- "The Corpus, dating from 1920 to 1949, has therefore been divided in other two groups" (p. 47 -> should be 'into other two...')

- "However, a motivational language which almost sounds like the one usually addressing the soldiers" (p. 51 -> incorrect use of determiners: 'motivational language', 'addressing soldiers')

These are just some examples but, overall, the language used should be revised, paying also particular attention to the use of punctuation (e.g.: "In some issues of the magazine almost every advertisement..." -> a comma is missing: "In some issues of the magazine, almost every advertisement..."). Another language aspect that should be carefully checked is the language variety used. The author should consistently use BrE or AmE.

Most importantly, the whole work should be revised from the point of view of the organization of the dissertation chapters. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult for a reader to navigate the work carried out since, for instance, after the Introduction, there is right away the Methodology section that, however, includes CDA, which is a theoretical framework of analysis rather than a methodology per se. References to state of the art situation should of course to be met beforehand.

The author should also update their references and also extend them (major works are indeed missing, e.g.: Ruth Wodak's work, which is clearly essential to the discussion, is never mentioned). In addition, the label Critical Discourse Analysis is the preferred phrase while, in the recent literature of reference, most scholars prefer the more encompassing label phrase 'Critical Discourse Studies' (CDS: Wodak & Meyer 2016) to indicate that there is no dominant theory behind CDS but rather a series of 'eclectic' approaches to the study of discourse. No mention is made to Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA; Baxter 2007; 2008). Indeed, the study carried out could be seen as more appropriately belonging to this type of approach in CDS.

As for Corpus Linguistics, the author links it directly to specific software used in this methodological approach and no complete overview of the delicate relationship between qualitative and quantitative methods is offered (no mention is made, for instance, to the recent books and edited volumes that cover these aspects; see Taylor & Marchi 2018; Egbert & Baker 2020). The notion of triangulation is not discussed clearly (and when the author mentions this concept, it is unclear if it has been completely understood).

Therefore, since these approaches inform the analysis that has been carried out, they should be clearly presented, described and the opportunities and pitfalls of them should be discussed.

Overall, Ester Maurizi's doctoral work is a clear example of the academic maturity that the author has reached so far and, therefore, I congratulate her on the interesting study she carried out hoping she will successfully defend her thesis.