

Political discourse in the Romance speaking countries: new perspectives at the crossroads of linguistics and social sciences

In collaboration with fellow researchers in linguistics, history and political science of our new department of Romance and Classical Studies at the University of Stockholm and the Department of Economic History, we organize a workshop on the theme “**Political discourse in the Romance speaking countries: new perspectives at the crossroads of linguistics and social sciences**”. The workshop will be held at the University of Stockholm, in the conference hall Aula Magna, between 9th and 11th of October. The conference languages are French, Spanish, Portuguese and English, without giving priority to any of them. In order to reach many researchers on political speech we wrote the description of this work shop in English. You will find this description below.

Organization and scientific committee:

María-Luisa Bartolomei , Maria Bernal, Thomas Johnen, Andrés Rivarola, Malin Roitman, Françoise Sullet-Nylander, Fredrik Uggla (Romance Studies and Classics, University of Stockholm), Paulina de los Reyes (Department of Economic History, University of Stockholm)

Important dates

Deadline for abstract submission: July, 15th 2014

Notification of Acceptance: August, 5th 2014

Conference date: October 9th – 11th, 2014

Description of the conference

Political discourse is omnipresent in our societies since we have access to a never-ending stream of political messages through media, messages about how the outside world is governed or should be governed. Politics is basically about ideas, ideologies, visions, and arguments, conveyed by language, with which it is closely connected. It is difficult to study one aspect without taking the other into account. In other words, the different approaches (linguistics, discourse analysis, history, political and social sciences) are complementary to each other, as the starting point of analysis is different. Whereas linguistic and discourse analytical approaches have as starting point concrete textual elements and discourse practices (micro-level analyses), the political and social science approach often takes as its starting point society at a macro-structural level. Thus, while the latter gives a picture of general tendencies, the former highlights the practices of individual politicians and political parties.

The idea of the conference is to focus on political election debates in different Romance speaking countries. This target is justified by the fact that election debates are particularly important in the study of political discourses. As social phenomena, they are very important since they are public, they are large media phenomena, and they reflect the ideological polarization of our societies. As a linguistic activity, the political debates are interesting study objects, especially within rhetorical, argumentative and interactive studies. Many election debates have influenced different countries' ideological choices, national identities, and they have also left their stamp on the languages. The plenary lectures will thus deal with political debates broadly within discourse analysis perspective that is, from textual analysis of linguistic units in a social context to studies of debates – not as language activities, but as cultural, social and historical phenomena creating meaning in relation to the outside world. The common denominator, the closely related languages and cultures as well as common points in the discursive and rhetorical traditions of the Romance countries despite of the existing diversity, turns an

interdisciplinary, comparative study into an especially interesting subject with a high relevance for larger questions concerning, for instance, the European and the Mercosur integration processes and the necessity to shape a public opinion and political discourse across the national borders.

An interdisciplinary approach: objectives:

Every political leader in a functioning democracy should aspire to communicate with his/her electors, and for this purpose adapt his/her discourse to them. It is therefore of crucial importance for our conference to compare political debates within and across national borders, focusing on, for example, terms of address, politeness strategies, discursive ethos (self-presentation), themes, cultural or religious allusions, gender – in the light of socio-cultural factors, such as level of education, language, religion, ethnic groups, political systems, the communicative situation, and other socio-pragmatic factors, such as variation within interaction norms. The conference will thus search answers to questions such as how linguistic means and communicative strategies contribute to the discursive ethos of the candidates and how the ethos relates to other discourses in the society as well as how the macro political constellation is reflected *in concreto* in the debates.

There will mainly be a focus on different types of political election debates, on the national level. Here are some questions, which will be treated:

- **Are there/What are the cultural differences between the Romance language speaking countries? With which linguistic and social parameters can these differences be described and may be explained?**
- **Are there any differences between more recently (i.e. during the last 40 years) re-established democracies in comparison to countries with a longer democratic tradition like for instance France?**
- **What differences do we find between Romance speaking countries in Europe and those on the American continent?**
- **Another central question for the conference will be the distinctive marks of the political debates as a genre and which role and status debates (as social activities) have in different societies. Which extra-linguistic expressions (as gestures, pause, scenography, image, etc.) are relevant for each culture?**
- **What place holds the debates in the media and how does this influence the debates' character and the participants' actions?**
- **With these intercultural perspectives the conference will focus on notions as argumentation, rhetoric, ethos, register, sociolinguistic variation, politeness, face-work, interaction and gender.**

The workshop wish to include various aspects of the political discourse: linguistic, social, cultural and historical and it aims to establish a closer collaboration within discourse analysis and political discourse in the Romance speaking countries.

The conference's concept is, to sum up, based on the assumption that knowledge and understanding of political discourse is best achieved through collaboration between the disciplines of linguistics and social sciences. Social, historical as well as linguistic perspectives will hopefully involve scholars from both the humanities and the social sciences.

Invited plenary speakers

- 1) Patrick Charaudeau, professor emeritus at Université Paris XIII. One of the internationally most recognized French researchers on discourse analysis. He has an important focus on media political discourse. His regional scope includes France and Latin America. His publications are on French, Spanish and Portuguese. Many of his works has been translated to Spanish and Portuguese.
- 2) Catalina Fuentes Rodríguez, professor at Universidad de Sevilla. One of the most important researchers on Pragmatics in Spain. She has done important research on argumentation in Andalusia's parliamentary discourse.
- 3) Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, professor emeritus at Université Lumière Lyon 2. One of the internationally most recognized French researchers on Pragmatics with important research on political discourse and French election debates.
- 4) Maria Aldina Bessa Ferreira Rodrigues Marques, professor at Universidade do Minho, Braga, Portugal. One of the most important researchers on political discourse in Portugal.
- 5) Kristina Boréus, Södertörns högskola, professor of political science at Stockholm University and currently visiting professor at Södertörn University. She is the author of several studies on electoral discourse, and also on the methods of discourse and text analysis. Her recent research has focused on comparative analysis of electoral discourse in Sweden, Denmark and Austria.