Doing Discourse Research in Social Sciences:
A Perspective from the Sociology of Knowledge

Discourse can be defined in various ways or, in accordance with the theoretical, methodological and disciplinary background (linguistics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, etc.). Contemporary discourse theory and discourse analysis in social sciences, despite the differences, have the strong basis in the research of linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, etc. but is also developed within sociology, psychology and philosophy of language – because language use and meaning-making are complex individual and social processes. Generally, discourse research in social sciences is about the analysis of speech, text and anything that is “outside” the language and sentence (whether spoken or unspoken), but in relation with meaning. Sociological approach to discourse and particularly the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD) focuses on the discursive practices as social practices of meaning-making. In this lecture, I will present the short genealogy of discourse analysis in sociology and focus particularly on the approach in the sociology of knowledge. After delineating the distinctive criteria for the discourse research, I shall present the subject and the results of my research at the University of Freiburg. That is, the SKAD analysis of the Swiss on-line media reports about the strangeness and the ongoing migrant/refugee crisis. My particular aim is to identify the risk discourses that appear in those reports with an interest in discursive strategies and the types of risk that are usually articulated in the media reports on this crisis.

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