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Doing Discourse Research in Chinese Studies: Methodological Reflections on the Basis of Studying Green Consumption and Population Policy

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Summary

As Chinese Studies and other Area Studies have become increasingly sophisticated in the methodologies they use, more in-depth discussions on researchers' discourse-analytic practices seem desirable. This article is thus a methodological reflection, coming as part of the authors' own ongoing research projects. It describes some of the characteristic ways in which discourse fields in the Chinese context are structured, as well as the underlying rules at work. Specifically, discourses in China are politically constrained through "soft steering under the shadow of hierarchy," structured in a top-down manner through the "follow the leader imperative," and bloated due to a bandwagon effect. It is argued that these specificities of the Chinese discourse context pose a challenge for researchers doing discourse research on the country. The article therefore offers examples from two research projects on green consumption and eco-motivated diets and on population policy in China so as to present the strategies that the authors have applied in their own research to deal with such challenges.

Keywords: discourse analysis; discourse research; sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis (SKAD); Chinese Studies; green consumption; food consumption; population policy

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