

Research paper

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Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden™



**“Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden”
The official motto of the World Championships 2006 in Germany
A critical discourse analysis**

1. Introduction	p. 2
2. Theoretical background	p. 3-4
2.1. Analysis on the basis of the theoretical approach of Teun A. van Dijk	p. 5-7
2.2. Analysis of the official slogan of the World Championships 2006	p. 8-9
3. Conclusion	p. 10-11

1. Introduction

The World Championships 2006 (WCs 06) have been one of the biggest events in Germany within the last years. People from all over the world were looking at the Germans and their country, thousands of visitors travelled to Germany to see the matches live in one of the stadia and to experience the special feeling in the host country itself. It goes without saying that such an event requires an enormous expenditure of organisational and logistical work to ensure that it can pass off smoothly. Also the marketing concept for the World Championships was a well thought-out concept and planned with big effort. A great number of companies and institutions were involved. The World Championships 2006 offered Germany the opportunity to present itself as an open and friendly country, happy to welcome guests from all over the world.

“Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” (‘the world as a guest at friends’) is the official motto of the WCS 06 and was created by the Viennese artist André Heller. It was integrated into the “Nationale Service- und Freundlichkeitskampagne” (‘National service- and friendliness campaign’) which was initiated by the Organising Team FIFA WCS (OK FIFA WM) and the German Head office for Tourism and was financed by the German ministry of the economy and technology and the interior ministry. The campaign was part of the so-called “Gastgeberkonzept” (‘Host concept’) of the German federal government (and was sponsored by ADAC, Deutsche Bahn, federation of the German tourist industry, German hotel- and catering trade, touristic marketing organisations of the federal states, and the united German airports.)

(For further information see: www.deutschland-tourismus.de/DE/kultur_und_erlebnis/fifa_service_3192.htm)

2. Theoretical background

Teun A. van Dijk

Principles of critical discourse analysis (1993)

Opinions and Ideologies in the Press (1998)

Teun A. van Dijk's work over the last years has centred on the role of discourse in the reproduction of power and dominance in society. He analysed the structures and processes of news in the press and focuses on the production of ethnic prejudice and racism in discourse and communication. He published several books in these domains and founded the journals *TEXT* and *Discourse & Society*. At present, Teun A. van Dijk is professor at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona.

His theory proceeds on the basic assumption that our understanding of the world is influenced by our own individual features from inside as well as by socially formed practices we internalize from outside. *Social representations* we share, *ideologies* we live in come into being from *personal mental models* and from *socially shared practices, values, norms, attitudes*. Van Dijk calls this an "integrated sociocognitive approach" (van Dijk 1998: 22). Only with using this approach, he says, it is possible to explain the dialectical relationship between individual behaviour and social norms; to explain how social ideologies "monitor" the practices of social actors and, equally, how their interaction and discourse form ideologies (compare: *ibid* 1998: p. 23).

While other linguists understand discourse as a process that has been historically shaped and influenced by many different factors, van Dijk treats it mainly as "text and talk" (*ibid* 1998: 27) of a person, merely as 'language'. I can understand that many of his colleagues criticize this view of van Dijk for being too simple and too less process orientated. However, I think that critical linguists such as James Paul Gee for example who claim for a complete knowledge of the context of every utterance also run a risk, which is not to fulfil their own demands. And with underlining the importance of the individual cognition, the mental models of every person, van Dijk definitely wants every critical linguist to observe the personal context of the individuals involved in the discourse. Again, many of his fellow workers criticize him here because they do not think that these individual mental models exist. In their opinion, everything is socially formed and influenced. I will certainly not be able to answer the question to which extent individuals are mainly products of their

surrounding. But I think that Teun van Dijk found his own way within the two groups of realists on the one hand and the social constructionists on the other.

Moreover, I think that his approach can be used very well to investigate the power relations, the *reproduction of dominance* to speak with van Dijk, that hide within the whole presentation of the World Championships 06 in Berlin and the social power exercised by the phrase “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden”, the official slogan of the WCS 06.

In the following research, I will present the critical analysis of the World Championships Slogan “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” based on the theoretical approach of Teun van Dijk. I would like to underline that my findings in this research should be seen as just ONE version of possible interpretations. I am as well aware – and so should you during reading this research – that my understanding of the whole event is surely influenced by my personal context (being a 24 year old student from Germany). There are of course many other views on the World Championships and every single one is right and important. Maybe my research gets a few more people to reflect in a critical way the effects the international event of the World Championships 2006 had on our life.

2.1. Analysis on the basis of the theoretical approach of Teun van Dijk

The aim of critical discourse analysis (CDA), according to van Dijk, is to get more insight into the crucial role of discourse in the reproduction of dominance and inequality (compare: van Dijk 1993: 254). My aim in this research is to investigate the effects the phrase “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” and its presentation can have on different social groups and to show that it could have been used wilfully by certain institutions to enact control and reproduce social power.

There are many social groups involved here whose relationships need to be investigated. The most important groups of the WCs 06 seem to be the Organising Team FIFA WCS (OK FIFA WM), the German Head office for Tourism and their sponsors, the German federal government, the German Hotel and Catering trade, and the watching public of the WCs 06. Those groups enact social power over each other. According to van Dijk, social power is based “on privileged access to socially valued resources, such as wealth, (...), position, (...) or knowledge”. In my opinion, the most important power resource within the power relation I analyse is “the special access to various genres, forms or contexts of discourse and communication” (compare: *ibid* 1993: 254). As the slogan “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” had been declared to be the official motto of the WCs 06 by various institutions (e.g. the FIFA), its message was presented as being the statement of every single person within the group of the watching public. If you regard yourself as belonging to this group, would you have formulated the phrase like it is? Would you have described yourself as being ‘a friend’ that invites ‘the world’ to be the ‘guest’? With declaring the slogan “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” to be the official motto of the WCs 06, the FIFA (as being the holder of the trademark right of the slogan) exercised social power over the German public and therefore managed their *social representations*.

Social power also involves control. “Such control may pertain to *action* and *cognition* (...)” says van Dijk (*ibid* 1993: 245) and it is probably the cognitive power that plays an important role here. By using cognitive power, the members of the one group influence the minds of members of the other group, more specifically, they “*change the mind of others in one’s own interests.*” Van Dijk calls this the “modern’ and often more effective power” (compare: *ibid* 1993: 254). I think that with introducing the so called ‘National Service- and friendliness campaign’, the German federal government made use of exactly this kind of power. By addressing the

campaign to the group of the German Hotel and Catering trade and the watching public, the politicians could have aimed to change the mind of the members of these groups to a friendly, positive and hospitable attitude towards their guests and visitors. Knowing that an open and friendly service leads to happy and satisfied customers, their basic interest of strengthening the tourism in Germany is clearly pursued. The main interest of the ministry of the economy and technology and the interior ministry could be a stimulation of the German economy and an optimization of the location. More tourists would certainly also help to fulfil these demands. As van Dijk writes, influencing the mind of others “is not always bluntly manipulative” (ibid 1993: 254) and most of the politicians would probably argue that they act in public interest; however, I think that dominance and control had been enacted here through discourse in order to pursue certain interests.

Within the power relations described here, it seems to be obvious that there are groups that are dominant and powerful and others that are subordinated. Van Dijk calls this the “*hierarchy of power*”, in which “power elites” make decisions and control the relations (compare: ibid 1993:255). As already described above, groups such as the Fifa, the politicians and the big institutions involved in the organisation of the WCs 06 were not only free in the use of the text of the official slogan but they also had the exclusive access to the whole discourse related to the ‘Service and friendliness campaign’. They were the “power elite”. Consequently, the group of the watching public experienced “lack of power” due to “lack of active or controlled access to discourse” (ibid 1993: 256).

Within this “*hierarchy of power*” also the media has its crucial role. Van Dijk classifies the journalists as belonging to a group that has “more or less active or passive access to communicative events” (ibid 1993: 256). I would assign them a role that is much more clear and unambiguous. Being the communicative transmitter, they have the possibility to modify the messages of the “power elites”. They therefore can actively influence the minds of the public. The ‘Neue Züricher Zeitung’, a daily newspaper in Switzerland for example, put the WCs slogan into a completely different context. In its online issue of Sunday, the 28 of May, it headlined: “Die erschrockene Welt zu Gast bei deutschen Freunden” (‘the shocked world as a guest at German friends’). The slogan is clearly visible in this title; however, with adding the two adjectives, the sense has completely changed. In the article, the author Christoph Plate describes in a critical way the attitude the East Germans have

towards foreigners. In his opinion, dark skinned persons should avoid to visit East Germany as they would meet aggressive, violent, racist people there (compare: 'NZZ online', www.nzz.ch/2006/05/28/al/articleE5QPQ.print.html). Although this article is an extreme example, it shows how powerful journalists are. Our interpretation of an event such as the World Championships 06 is in all probability influenced by the reports we hear, see or read about it. Van Dijk calls this the "control of knowledge" (ibid 1993: 258). According to him, text production and interpretation are based on "models", shaped by "existing knowledge" and influenced by "shared general attitudes and ideologies" (compare: ibid 1993: 258). When writing the newspaper article "Die erschrockene Welt zu Gast bei deutschen Freunden", the author Christoph Plate was surely influenced by journalistic models of the event of the WCs 06, and these models "may in turn have been constructed during the interpretation of many source texts, e.g. of other media, key witnesses, or (...) press conferences (...)" (ibid 1993: 258). At the same time, these models are shaped by his "existing knowledge". Being an expert of Africa, Plate is probably interested in the situation of the foreigners in Germany. Being German, he is as well influenced by "shared general attitude and ideologies" such as the problematic and difficult processing of the past the Germans are confronted with due to the incomprehensible events that happened in National Socialism.

Unlike social representations, models are personal, subjective and context-bound. According to van Dijk, we continually 'monitor' all our social practices in terms of mental models. Therefore they can be seen as "an interface between social representations, including ideologies, on the one hand, and social practices and discourse on the other hand" (ibid 1998: 27). The conclusion can be drawn that also the Viennese artist Andre Heller has been influenced by certain models, by his knowledge and by ideologies when creating the sentence "Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden". As well as I am certainly influenced by these three phenomena when analysing the sentence.

2.2 Analysis of the official slogan of the World Championships 2006:

“Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden”

An open slogan for an open country?



Being the official motto of the World Championships 2006, „Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden“ (‘the world as a guest at friends’) appeared within diverse contexts and on various occasions. Not only had the media, also members of the big institutions such as the FIFA and the German Head office for Tourism and of other organizations used the slogan incessantly. Astonishingly, it can be noticed that in every recontextualisation, the slogan gets a new meaning: The chairwoman of the German Head office for Tourism Petra Hedorfer for example explained that the main function of the sentence for her is to present Germany as a perfect host. This “positive image of Germany as a holiday destination (...) should be used for an increase of the future Incoming” (compare: www.deutschland-tourismus.de/DE/kultur_und_erlebnis/fifa_service_3192.htm). Whereas Sabine Schwind von Egelstein, Image designer of the German Knigge-Rat, advises in a press release of the publishing house of the Deutsche Wirtschaft AG: “Treat the guest as you would like to be treated yourself- with tolerance, politeness, the will to help and respect.” The focus in this context seems to lay on the good reputation of the Germans and their manners towards their guests. “On every business card there should be found words like ‘thank you’, ‘please’ and ‘excuse-me’; in times of the World Championship if possible also in different languages”, says von Egelstein. (compare: www.vnr.de/vnr/pressemeldungen/presse_29010_druck.html).

This means that the sentence “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” is used as an open slogan: every time someone employs it, it means something differently. This might proceed from the fact that the word “Gast” (‘guest’) can be seen as a ‘floating signifier’ (see: Laclan and Mouffe). Although there can be find an explanation in the

dictionary, there is no one single fixed meaning for it. "Gast" can be understood from different perspectives. Seen from the perspective of a foreigner travelling to Germany, the term "Gast" could be understood as a request to be polite and reserved. Being a guest mostly implies the adaptation to the rules of social behaviour that exist within the host country. Guests do not become obtrusive, they are prepared to be confronted with cultural differences and ready to accept them. The term "Gast" seems to create a courteous distance between host and guest, between the people from Germany and their visitors.

However, the term "Gast" can also be seen from the perspective of the population in Germany. Regarding the visitors as guests means treating them in a respectful and friendly way. Again, welcoming guests means being ready to meet cultural differences. However, being a guest also means only staying for a certain time. The character of a reserved relationship between the host and the guest, the people in Germany and the visitors is even more underlined here.

Whereas 'being a guest' seems to be connected to both the host and the visitor, the terms "Welt" ('world') and "Freunde" ('friends') seem to be clearly allocated: "Welt" stands for the whole group of visitors that come to Germany from all over the world and "Freunde" means the people in Germany, the hosts. There is an ingroup and an outgroup created here. Whereas "Welt" is a very general term, "Freunde" has a very positive connotation. Coming to friends means coming to cordial and close people and being a friend goes along with a personal and warm attitude. This creates an image of a harmonious unified entity that is able to offer something to the guests. Germany is therefore also presented as being generous and kindly disposed towards its guests, its good properties are emphasised. The fact that the word "Germany" is not mentioned here but replaced by 'friends' could lead to the assumption that mentioning "Germany" in connection to its generosity and magnificence somehow leaves a bitter aftertaste due to the history of the Germans. This becomes even clearer when one compares the German motto to the African motto, where the World Championships will take place in 2010. "In Afrika mit Afrika gewinnen" ('to win in Africa with Africa') says their slogan and it is obvious that the Africans do not have any problem to mention their country.

3. Conclusion

During the World Championships 2006, we were literally surrounded by the sentence “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden”. Posters with the slogan were spread over 20.000 surfaces in Germany’s underground, main roads and public places. TV spots were shown, there was a great number of web sites using the slogan and the newspapers mentioned it very frequently. It is therefore very likely that even those people that would not call themselves football fans were somehow effected by the official slogan of the WCs 06. The big institutions involved in the event of the WCs 06 were probably well aware of this and they might have used the slogan to pursue their own interests and to reproduce their dominance. Therefore, the WCs 06 had not only the effect of being fun, excitement and goals, we also were continually exposed to the interests of Angela Merkel, the FIFA and all the other big institutions involved in the marketing campaign.

With declaring “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” to be the official motto of the WCs 06, the FIFA put words in our mouth that we might never have said. Germany’s social representation was therefore managed from outside and a picture of friendly, polite, and generous German that is part of a harmonious entity was created.



If we do not identify with this kind of picture then we probably feel offended and not understood. This might explain the reaction of different young people me and my research group asked to write down their first impressions after seeing the slogan. Most of them felt that the campaign could have been done *for children* and that it seemed *absolutely ridiculous and exaggerated*. They did not feel represented at all. This control of social representation is only possible because of a “*hierarchy of power*” that, in my opinion, exists here.

At first sight, the slogan “Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden” seems to express hospitality and openness of the Germans towards the foreign visitors. However, after analysing the slogan within the specific situations it has been used and shown, it can be said that it can also communicate a request or demand or even a provocation. It transports many different messages. Being an open slogan its meaning changes with the context in which it is used. I think that the official motto of the World

Championships 2006 mainly had the function of being a tool that everybody could use to pursue his or her interests. It was used by the “power elite” to reproduce power and to push itself to the fore, to be the centre of attention during the world wide event of the World Championships 2006 in Germany.

Sources:

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(inquiry: 2006-07-12)

Images:

Google image search

Reflection

All in all I can say that it was a lot of fun writing this paper as it gave me the opportunity to discuss the topic with so many people. To be honest, I was amazed how much can be said about one sentence. On the other hand, this is exactly what I feel insecure with. I am not sure whether I have been drifting away from the analysis of the original sentence by collecting more and more additional material such as the position of the Fifa, other journalists and so on.

Furthermore, I don't know whether I felt too free in changing the given orders of standard format. But after a while, I just thought that I could not have done it in a different way. It seems more fruitful (and also not that boring) to me to connect a part of the theory with the analysis.

I also had some 'starting-problems' due to the decision which theoretical approach I should follow, or if I try to mix different approaches. In the end, I found it easier to concentrate on ONE theory. I still tried to reflect everything with other theories in order to avoid one-sidedness in my analysis.

Working with the group has been fine, I think that the team work could have done better; however, I know that it was simply not possible, as we all started to work at our papers at different times. But it was nice to know that I always had the possibility to send emails to everybody whenever I felt I had to ask something.

