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Sounds of Democracy: The Interview as an Instrument of Heuristic Attention to Discursive Voices

Abstract: Against the backdrop of general considerations of the interview as a genre, the paper discusses under which theoretical conditions interviews are suitable instruments for discourse analysis. With a special interest in questions of the linguistic constitution of shared knowledge in discourse, the authors outline the discourse-linguistic status of interviews in a systematic way. Based on a discourse-analytical characterization of the genre of the interview, the preliminary assumptions of the present paper are tested through a pilot study which deals with the question of the contemporary state of democracy. This explorative European interview project documents and demonstrates the possibilities of a computer-assisted interpretation of the discursivity of interviews. The paper thus makes a fundamental contribution to the further exploration of discourse-linguistic methods, to discussions about the current state of democracy, as well as to reflections on the interview as a complex research genre in its interdisciplinary dimensions, including digital-humanities methods.

Keywords: discourse linguistics, digital humanities, corpus pragmatics, experience

1 Democracy through the Looking Glass of the Interview

Interviews are equally prevalent in popular and high culture, they are also widely used as a method for generating data in scholarship, and they are an instrument for tapping into and staging experience. As a genre of multilogical communication, the interview is situated at the interface of a variety of fields. Celebrities get interviewed as well as randomly selected people from everyday life; political decisions and trivial personal experiences can become the content of interviews. In light of this, it is not surprising that the interview itself has repeatedly become an object of scholarly interest, for example in studies on qualitative interviews (Misoch) and especially in qualitative social research (Mayer; Nohl). Works in

political science (Mosley) and general survey handbooks in interview research (Gubrium et al.) are also worth mentioning here. It is also not uncommon to see interviews as important supplements to other methods of knowledge acquisition, such as studies of publications in a given field (Mosley 3). In addition to the scholarly interest in the interview, journalistic works on the interview are also a relevant object of research, especially in the interface area of knowledge development, knowledge transfer, and entertainment; we refer here, for example, to Müller-Dofel (v), who considers the interview to be central to everyday journalistic life.

Our paper adds a linguistic perspective to the areas of interest listed above that focus on the interview. The interview is an important and widespread procedure of linguistic field studies, especially in sociolinguistics (Meyerhoff et al.). In linguistics, interviews are considered an appropriate way to gain insights into social practices; they can be used as data sources (Dannerer). While Briggs already dedicates a detailed handbook chapter to sociolinguistic interviews, the author—apart from expressing a fascination for the research genre—clearly identifies a desideratum: “Interviewing constitutes one of the most fascinating and most poorly investigated realms of sociolinguistic inquiry” (1052). He sees one reason for the sociolinguistic relevance of the interview in “its widespread use as a means of obtaining information” (1052). Another linguistic field that has dealt with the interview in depth is interactional linguistics. We refer here to a paper by Deppermann, to which we will return. Last but not least, questions of a standardized transcription of interview data are relevant in the context of the digital provision of research data, and this is not only a relevant aspect for linguistics. We here refer to the *CLARIN Hands-on Tutorial on Transcribing Interview Data* (Heuvel and Draxler).

Despite the broad range of elaborated theories and their subject-specific methodological operationalizations, not least in linguistics, it should be pointed out once again, however, that the interview is always also a genre of everyday life and non-scientific communication practice. It is the everyday nature of the interview that presumably makes the interview so successful for research because informants do not encounter an unfamiliar scholarly world when being interviewed, but rather a genre that is also familiar outside of scholarship. The interview offers a low threshold and allows direct contact between a scholarly and non-scholarly sphere. We also use this characteristic in an explorative study delineated in this article.

We are particularly interested in the interview as a heuristic with which to access voices in discourse. On the one hand, this is a matter of individual positions, but on the other, this also concerns their social, discursively formed, and

discourse-shaping signature. We discuss this aspect in more detail in part 1.3. The focus of our paper lies on perceptions of contemporary democracies from a European perspective. We will also explain this in more detail. But beforehand, let us consider further the interview as a genre and note two characteristics that are relevant to its discourse-analytical use.

First, interviews as products share a functional commonality that bears consideration: the perception of statements in an interview should always be understood as an effect of recontextualization. This can already be seen in the fact that journalistic interviews usually require authorization because they work with interview material, they select passages and assemble them. Although the scholarly interview cannot handle its data this freely, the transformation of what is said into the status of data always already results from a recontextualization that deviates from the original context of speech. One example is the highly extensive US interview project *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project* of the years 1936 to 1938, which is accessible today on the website of the Library of Congress. This, like any scholarly generation of interview data and its interpretive perception—which, moreover, is anything but stable over decades given shifting research paradigms—fundamentally dislocates the supposed immediacy of what is said in the interviews to a level of (the ongoing possibility of) recontextualization. In addition, *Born in Slavery* is also complemented by 500 black-and-white photographs. Compared to the situation of a direct conversation, one soon realizes how remote the interview as a published or medially processed genre is; the multimodal design of interviews as a product shows this well, especially also in the context of popular culture. In this regard, it does not matter whether a published interview is based on transcripts or audio-visual material. There is the moment of speech in an interview situation and there is the interview as a product, which is in itself characterized by a shift in context. For our own research interest, this means approaching any idea of the immediacy of the interview—independently of questions concerning the observer paradox—with utmost restraint. It is evident that the aspect of recontextualization also requires special ethical attention.

Second, interviews share a general characteristic that should be pointed out: the focus in an interview lies on someone's pre-existing knowledge and previous experience, on decisions interviewees already made, something known to them, or anything about them which is not yet known but can be marketed as capital in economies of attention. By making an interviewee the informant of an authority of inquiry, the interview can or aims to elicit information and, in the best case, gains insight into a subject matter that is always considered publicly relevant, interesting, or even merely entertaining. In this respect, the interview, qua genre,

asserts the relevance of its contents and, as reconstructed context, does not shy away from assigning general meaning to individual knowledge.

These two aspects—the fact of recontextualization and the public interest in what should be or already is individually known—should not be overlooked. For a reflective scholarly use of the interview, this results in the necessity for disclosing forms and degrees of recontextualization and reflecting the question of why one aims to know what others know or think, feel, and carry with them. If we understand the interview as process, as a deliberate and disclosable intervention in the integrity of individual knowledge and experience, and if we understand the interview as product, as a genre of the recontextualization of knowledge, of experience, etc., then we have also captured two fundamental starting points for a discourse-analytical interest in the interview: the interview operates at the intersection of the individual and the social. This applies to both the practice of interviewing and the resulting product, and it is what makes the interview so interesting as a method and object of discourse analysis. Within a discourse-linguistic context, it is therefore surprising that not many more interviews are conducted to focus on the subject-society interface. We propose to do exactly that.

Third, our interest in the interview in discourse points to yet another characteristic of the genre: to experience as a discourse-analytical object. Focusing on this specific aspect of the interview implies that expectations of authenticity can or should be deconstructed. At first glance, the promise of the interview to document, make accessible, or sell individual experiences seems to stand in the way of considering the interview in the purview of discourse analysis. While Roth already argues for a consideration of interpersonal realizations of discourse, the vast majority of linguistic work in discourse analysis is a-personal, which means it is interested in collective mediatizations of language. Discourse analysis itself is precisely not geared toward the analysis of individual phenomena but is interested in social rules and products of what can be said and what is said. For discourse analysis, then, what is the role of the interview as a genre that anticipates and enacts the personal? The answer results from a deconstruction of the concept of experience.

When interviews are related to experience, this precisely does not mean that individual informants or interviewees provide insight into their personalities. On the contrary, the genre of the interview socializes experience. We could also say the form discursivizes it. And this is not only the case through the recontextualization it always represents, but through the focus on experience itself. This may seem paradoxical at first glance, but only as long as we conceptualize experience outside or beyond discourse. However, this is not an adequate approach. This is a position we also take with reference to Joan W. Scott, who in her text “The

Evidence of Experience” fundamentally questions the personal origin of experience. The starting point of Scott’s reflections is autobiographical writing as an approach to experiences otherwise little considered in normative history, “dimensions of human life and activity usually deemed unworthy of mention in convention”; individual stories “have provided evidence for a world of alternative values and practices whose existence gives the lie to hegemonic constructions of social worlds” (776). Scott’s starting point is the assumption that such a historiography “of difference” is considered unquestionable when it refers to individual experience (773). This is about something that is also central to any interview, which motivates it, and seems to justify it: “documenting the experience of others” (776). After all, interviews, not least in scholarly varieties, are always based on an assumption of the truth of individual experience: “what could be truer, after all, than a subject’s own account of what he or she has lived through?” (777). But those who argue this way take “as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus naturalize their difference” (777). This is exactly where Scott intervenes and fundamentally questions the evidence of experience as the source of a position or statement. This involves “[q]uestions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one’s vision is structured—about language (or discourse) and history” (777). For Scott, experience is “a linguistic event (it doesn’t happen outside established meanings)”; and it is precisely here that the interface between the concept of experience and discourse becomes apparent: “Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual” (793). In other words, experience is as much a discursively-linguistically produced state of affairs, and thus social, as it is supposedly individually anchored. This is the very reason why interviews, with their reference to experience, are discourse-analytically challenging and interesting. They are located at interfaces, in the transitional area between the individual and the social. They are experiential, and experience is anything but prior evidence. Junker also points out, with reference to Scott, that the point must be to consider lived experience in the context of discursive structures (155). Coming back to the interview, it is precisely the seemingly individual reference to experience that arouses discourse-analytical interest. This is all the more pertinent because the interview re-contextualizes discursive voices into wider discourses.

This brings us to the expectation that interviews provide authentic insights into the evidence of individual experience. The promise of authenticity has to do with the assumption, already grounded etymologically, that the interview presupposes the situation of an encounter (Misoch 13). Interviews seem to bring scholarly work in particular into an encounter with its objects. However, just as

experience itself does not stand outside of discourses, the assumption of an immediacy of authenticity (Schwidlinski) and the associated expectation of authenticity from the interview, while obvious and above all genre-justifying, is misleading. Both the interview situation as such and the interview as a product are only authentic in a performative way.

Thus, the interview is a genre that is as familiar to everyday life as it is thought-provoking from a discourse-analytical point of view. However, we do not want to merely continue to survey the interview here in terms of discourse analysis, but to actually use it as a research tool. Our research question is initially quite independent of the genre of the interview: what does democracy sound like? But why is this very question at the center of our considerations? We will go into this in more detail, but already point out here that we have a scholarly interest in what Shalini Randeria titles *Democracy in Question* in her internationally acclaimed podcast: an internationally apparent crisis of democracy and the corresponding democratic self-image of societies (Hoppmann). In this context, numerous opportunities arise to gather important insights into citizens' attitudes toward democracy. Interviews are one tool in this process. It is our intention to document attitudes that European citizens have about the condition of democracy through the looking glass of the interview. As stated, our paper is no more than an exploratory study, but we see it as a pilot project. We do not ask directly about attitudes toward democracy but take a detour in order to question from the outset the quasi-documentary character of the interview as a product: we do not ask about attitudes but about the Sounds of Democracy (Randeria, *Sounds of Democracy*).

Against the backdrop of our previous considerations, this means making a clearly recognizable recontextualization methodologically transparent through a methodical move, because the sound of democracy is not an immediate experience but a metaphorical translation which we examine in interview products. We are indeed interested in what is individually known, believed, or considered to be correct. What is central to our investigation, however, is the patterned, discursive trace in the interview data as well as the deconstruction of authenticity, which we intend to implement via the detour of a metaphorical translation. In a broader framework of democracy research, we want to call this research a heuristic attention to discursive voices.

Let us now consider in more detail how democracy, but also sound, is talked about and what status the interview has in discourse linguistics. We then present the methods of our survey and our data as well as document and discuss the results of the pilot study.

1.1 Speaking about Democracy

Democracy is based on values like equal participation, representation, and accountability. Therefore, language and communication are fundamental aspects of a democratic public, as they shape the way we express ourselves, interact with others, negotiate meaning, and thus construct the social and political world around us. Democratic modes of governing rely on the language-bound capability to utter dissensus, negotiate common grounds, and generally make oneself heard. Speaking up for one's own interests, representing groups, electing spokespersons—all these important democratic micro-practices shape the political culture in democracies. It is arguably no coincidence that many democratic institutions are metaphorically framed with labels from the source domain of speaking:¹ the word parliament for instance derives from the French verb *parler* (to speak) and denotes an indispensable cornerstone of modern democratic governing. Speaking in public forums, exchanging arguments, and investing words with meaning—these inherently political linguistic practices are institutionalized in democracies and shape public discourse.

The concept of *voice* is another case in point. As Laura Kunreuther remarks: “Democracy is commonly associated with various forms of voicing” including “shouting protesters,” “political speeches,” or even “heated debates in teashops” (1). Originating from the capacity to speak and thus marking a commonly shared human competence, voice can also be regarded as an implicit claim: every individual voice shall be heard, picked up by the elected representatives, and taken into account. Liberal democracy pays tribute to this idea by inscribing equal political rights into the principle of constitutional liberalism: regardless of individual properties like gender, race, class, or faith, every citizen has one vote, the right to protest and freely express their opinion. Voice is therefore not confined to elections and “never synonymous with simply *opposing power*,” as Ivan Krastev remarks, drawing on Albert O. Hirschman's famous text on exit, voice, and loyalty (23). Hirschman understands *voice* as the opposite of *exit* which would mean dismissing the organization or institution in question altogether, leaving it to itself. Therefore, “voice-led activism is constructive by its very

¹ “The two domains that participate in conceptual metaphors have special names. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. [...] The target domain is the domain we try to understand through the use of the source domain” (Kovecses 4).

nature” as it “assumes a readiness to take responsibility for what one suggests”. In other words, “it assumes the responsibility to be the power” (Krastev 23).²

Voice is also an integral concept of political science preoccupied with democracy; Marlies Glasius for instance attributes great value to the concept. In her theoretical framework of authoritarian practices, she sees sabotaging voice as an intentional restriction of democracy—an authoritarian practice aimed at confining accountability by the elected representative to the democratic forum (517). Beyond deliberate restrictions of accountability, democracy has been thought of as an ideal to be striven for and never fully achieved, an “unrealized dream” as Wendy Brown puts it in an interview with the Institute for New Economic Thinking (5:34–5:38). It is produced in the many polyphonic struggles about its very meaning—as soon as one single idea of the *true* meaning of democracy gains hegemony, the democratic prerequisites of an open (i.e., democratic) discourse are no longer given. From a Foucauldian point of view, democracy could be conceptualized as a specific set of rules implemented in the discursive order of a given society—a guiding principle or *rule of the game* concerning the ways in which the “production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed” (Foucault 52). Speaking about democracy, we argue, shapes the possible concepts of democracy and is therefore an integral part of democratic governing.

Also from this perspective, we are interested in the metaphorical conceptualization of recent democracies across Europe. What do they tell us about the current state of democracy, about the way we conceptualize it, and what we take for granted or consider debatable? Which imaginations of democracy are available and ready for uptake at our current point in time and how does this shape the way we (are) govern(ed)? Let us now specify the metaphor of sound as the starting point of our interviews about the state of democracy in different places in Europe.

1.2 Speaking about Sound

The word *sound* is used to describe a variety of phenomena. In the most common sense of ordinary language use it can be defined as “something that is heard” (Encyclopædia Britannica), “something that you can hear or that can be heard”

² Although Krastev’s point in *Democracy Disrupted* is that contemporary protests offer no solution to neoliberal there-is-no-alternative-politics and can therefore not be seen as inherently constructive anymore, he nevertheless concedes that they remain “powerful manifestations of resistance to the subordination of politics to the market” (75).

(Cambridge Dictionary; also Oxford English Dictionary, OED Online).³ Thus, in general terms of acoustics it may refer to any sonic facet within the whole spectrum of *sounds* and *noises*, whether they be unsettling or pleasant, sharp or atmospheric. Linguistically, when speaking about sound, we use numerous adjectives like *faint*, *sweet*, *soft*, *joyful*, *muffled*, *sharp*, *pleasant*, *shrill*, *harsh*, *complex*, *gentle*, *harmonious*, *orchestral*, *cheerful* and others (e.g. BNC Consortium) as attributes to describe its specific acoustic or phenomenological qualities. We talk about sound as much in musical terms of timbre and nuances as we think of it in relation to the acoustic ecology—the “sonic environment” (Schafer)—in general, e.g. the calming of a campfire or the noisy background of an urban soundscape.

It is therefore not surprising that sound is commonly intertwined with *experience*, *meaning*, and *atmosphere* conveyed by or being expressive of the acoustic shape of a sound or a soundscape. “The expression *sound of silence* may give an example of how sound is fundamentally associated with meaningfulness or symbolism, shaping even the absence of sound” (Bär et al.; Warnke et al., *Sounds of Democracy*). Still, the phenomenological (and ontological) specificity of sound/s is elusive, being physically invasive, material and amorphous, spatial and ephemeral at once (Bayreuther).⁴ Hence, within the anthropology of sound, the specific historical, cultural, social, and political context, sound/s may be equally regarded phenomenologically as sonic, semiotic, and functional phenomena—investigating “sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world” (Feld 226). In other words, “[s]ound [...] provides a place in which embodied social and cultural traces can be carried, often without the awareness of their bearers” (Barber paragraph 18), referring to Schafer as well as Bull and Back. Within the cultural anthropologist paradigm of Sound Studies (Schulze; Bull and Back 1–18), reflecting on sound enables us to reevaluate our social experiences with regard to their meaning and significance, our relationship to society, how we relate both to

3 In linguistics, *sound* is first related to the field of phonetics or phonology, primarily with regard to the distinguishing function of sounds as phones or phonemes in the segmentation of speech. Furthermore, the word *sound* is used to refer to the so-called *tone of a voice* in discursive speech, which gives rise to interpreting a speaker’s intention, a possible undertone, or the emotive content of a speech act. More generally, the word *sound* may be used (as a metaphor) to capture the typicality of the “linguistic style” that dominates verbal practices of a discourse (Bär, *Musikdiskurse; Urbanes Place-Making*).

4 From a philosophical perspective reflecting the ontological status of ‘sound/s,’ it is obviously tempting to ask if there really are acoustic structures that constitute, e.g., “a ‘thunderous sound’ as such and distinguish it from a ‘booming sound’?” Or is it, in fact, “rather the result of linguistic conventions that gave nominal status to a more or less accidentally intended [sound] property” (Bayreuther 129; translated by the authors)?

others and ourselves within the spatial environments we live in. Van Leeuwen therefore rightly points to the “common ground between speech, music and other sounds” (1) as interrelated “semiotic resources” (10). Moreover, in response to sound we also reevaluate our relationship to power and authority (Bull and Back 4). We refer here to Machin, who considers (musical) “sound as discourse” (426) (see also Machin and Richardson).

Following on from that, especially urban soundscapes or sonic environments should also be reflected as discursive variables to the extent that they significantly influence the social and political constitution of the public sphere as much as the ambient texture of urban spaces, hence the discursive constitution of “place[s] endowed with meaning [...], which [are] constantly negotiated and contested” (B. Busse, *Practices* 620).⁵ In this sense, it is also the sound that converts “space to place” (Barber paragraph 44).

What is particularly important to us here, is that sound is also employed as a metaphoric source “to describe the complexity of social, cultural, and political spaces or dynamics” (Bär et al.; Warnke et al., *Sounds of Democracy*). As stated, this is closely related to the notions of *discourse* and *political voice*, yet “[p]olitical metaphors of voice are often disembodied, rarely invoked with reference to the materiality or texture of embodied voices or other actual sounds that make up democratic practice” (Kunreuther 2).

In many philosophical discussions of democracy, metaphors of political voice almost always refer to discursive speech, analytic or reasoned discourse. They rarely conjure other forms for political utterance, sound, or even noise—voices shouting, collective chanting, the production of noise for political effect, or, significantly, the active performance of silence—that make up the many practices of participatory democracy. (2)

Hence, to pursue the question of “what democracy sounds like today,” we refer to *sounds of democracy* on two interrelated semantic levels: first, as a “metaphoric figure of thought” (Bär et al.), and second as being related to the empirical and phenomenological dimension of democratic utterances, whereas “the

5 Following Warnke (*Making Place* 160) with reference to Lefebvre: “[i]n principle, cities may not only be considered as pre-existing constellations of space; rather, they are produced in interdependent discursive processes,” whereas “the production of [urban] space is constituted through the interaction of [...] three dimensions,” namely “spatial practice, representations of space, representational space” (Lefebvre 40, qtd. in Warnke, *Making Place* 160), constituting also “three modes of urbanity: a) dimension, b) action, and c) representation” (160). Hence, “[t]he city becomes urban space through the interdependence of dimension, action, and representation” (161). See also B. Busse & Warnke, *Urban Linguistics*; B. Busse et al.; B. Busse, *Patterns*; Cresswell; Warnke, *Raum*.

metaphor of sound is a bridge in conversations about democracy today” (Bär et al.; Warnke et al., *Entering*). Furthermore, we assume that both dimensions are reflected linguistically (discourse linguistically) and epistemologically in discourse practices, semantics, and patterns in language use. We consider speaking about sound in the context of democracy as a communicational pivot to address discursive aspects of democratic dynamics starting from individual and subjective verbalizations of experiences.

1.3 The Interview in the Context of Discourse Linguistics

Apart from linguistics, the interview has been discussed in many contexts within discourse studies (see Hammersley 8–15; Abell and Myers 145–161; Misoch 97–109). When we use the term *discourse linguistics* on the following pages, we mean the German-speaking field in the tradition of D. Busse and Teubert as well as the more international tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) associated with authors such as Norman Fairclough, Siegfried Jäger, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, and Martin Reisigl. Even though both fields differ to some degree in their research interests (see Spitzmüller and Warnke 78–118 for a detailed overview), they both have employed the use of interviews and analyzed them by using linguistic methods.

Thus, it should be emphasized that discourse linguistics’ employment of the interview (although there are similarities) differs in comparison to other fields such as anthropology or sociology. The reason for this is that the ways researchers make use of interviews often differ in their methodological and epistemological presumptions depending on the prevailing paradigm of a specific field (Roulston 51–73; Silverman 168–86; Deppermann). This is also one of the main reasons for the enormous amount of literature as well as the multiplicity of different interview techniques developed by researchers coming from different disciplines (for an overview see Helfferich 35–37).

To understand the interview in the context of discourse linguistics in the German tradition of historical semantics, one has to be aware of its rather text-focused origins. Starting off from conceptualizing discourse as a virtual corpus (D. Busse and Teubert), discourse linguistics in the understanding of many began as an expansion of text linguistics and only later on opened up to interdisciplinary perspectives and methods from qualitative social research (Dreesen 266–68). In order to illustrate how this tendency affected the way researchers in discourse linguistics conceptualize interviews, it is useful to differentiate three perspectives: (i) the interview as a genre of text, (ii) the interview as a method, and (iii) the interview as social interaction. We want to reconstruct each of them briefly.

The text-linguistic perspective in discourse linguistics mentioned above is characterized by considering the interview as a textual genre rather than a method for collecting data. For example, Krüger, in her analysis of discourses on aging, uses journalistic typology in order to describe the different textual genres her corpus consists of (102–13). In this context, she considers the interview to be a textual genre which serves the purpose of providing information as well as opinions and which differs from other textual genres regarding its dialogicity (110). Spieß, in her analysis of the discourse on bioethics, highlights the fact that the interview as an oral text has a special status within mass media, although due to transcription and editing it cannot be considered to be oral on a conceptual level (268, 273–74). Likewise, Mattfeldt argues that in the course of the editorial process most of the paraverbal and dialogue-controlling elements of the interview are lost, which is why one should be aware that journalistic interviews differ very much from linguistic transcriptions (25). Further discussion of the interview as a textual genre can be found in Stenschke (20–26) and Römer (138–40). It should be mentioned that the work on language in the context of journalism by Lüger is a common reference for this topic.

Analyzing corpora in discourse linguistics usually employs quantitative methods such as keyword or cooccurrence analysis as well as qualitative methods like hermeneutic text analysis. Discussing interviews as a textual genre can be methodologically useful in order to reflect on the heterogeneity as well as the polyphony of textual data (Zhang and Hongbing), since without any manual annotation or qualitative analysis it is not possible to correlate corpus results with authorship and voice. Furthermore, it can be important in order to reflect on what kind of language use (oral or written, monologue or dialogue) the results are representative of.

In this sense, the second group is very different, since they do not use interviews taken from mass media and instead conduct interviews according to their research question themselves. Thus, this area of discourse linguistics is less influenced by text linguistics and more by qualitative social research. Unlike the rather text-linguistic tradition of historical semantics, CDA has a much stronger affinity for the interview as a method of qualitative and ethnographic research. An important example here is a study by Berger and Wodak, in which they interview forty returnees of communist and/or Jewish parents born between 1939 and 1953 who came back to their homeland from exile countries and concentration camps. Further examples of the use of interviews in the context of CDA are a study on Austrian national identities by De Cillia et al. and an ethnographic study of communicative behavior by Wodak. Moreover, Rheindorf demonstrates how a corpus-analytical approach as well as a qualitative approach to interviews as

discursive data can be combined (255–79). One of the most prominent discourse-linguistic works not coming from the field of CDA is a study by Fix and Barth in which the authors use narrative discursive interviews in order to research everyday communication within the context of the GDR. Thus, they conceptualize interviews as a means of insight into the history of language use, which can be interpreted as a shift in the order of discourse (21–29). It should also be mentioned that empirical examples of discourse-linguistic analysis making use of interviews can be found in the study of language ideologies, for example in Arendt's study of discourses on Low German, in which she analyzes language attitudes (148–55), as well as Trochemowitz's research on the Austrian and German *Identitäre Bewegung*, for which he interviewed a former member in order to gain insight into how the group communicates internally (25–29).

Regarding methodological discussions within discourse linguistics, the interview is mentioned in the context of ethnographic fieldwork as well as Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM). Dreesen, for example, argues that opposed to textual analysis, ethnographic approaches have the benefit that they can get a better grasp on how discourse affects everyday life due to the many kinds of data being collected (field notes, photography, video, interview, etc.) (279). Likewise, Bock suggests using interviews in order to reconstruct orders of knowledge by integrating them into research strategies of GTM (313). Papen gets more specific in this context and argues that interviews can help determine semiotic choices of speakers in the construction of texts (*Discourse Analysis* 286). Moreover, interviews can help to analyze how people perceive signs, which she exemplifies by referring to her own research on urban protest communication within linguistic landscapes showing how it affects the special perception of local residents (295–300; *Signs in Cities*). Similarly, Trochemowitz argues that interviews in ethnographic research contexts can help to contextualize discursive practices and how they are affected by power relations (“Linguistische Diskursethnographie”).

Although perspectives (i) and (ii) differ in whether they treat the interview as data or as a method, they both share an interest in content and semantics rather than in the situational and contextual factors of how meaning is created through interaction in the interview. Thus, the interview is reduced to a textual product of discourse rather than a context-specific social practice which follows its own set of rules in which it produces discursive knowledge. Therefore, in order to conceptualize how the experiences of participants are discursively formed in the context of interviews, we need to take a third perspective into account, which comes from the field of interactional linguistics and suggests that the interview is best

considered not as a transcript or text but as an interactional social practice (Depermann; Abell and Myers 145–46; Myers and Lampropoulou 78–80).

Implementing interactional approaches into discourse linguistics and thus analyzing microsocial dimensions of discourse neglected before must be considered a great achievement by Roth. Roth's approach distinguishes itself from textual analysis in the sense that it is not interested in the quantitative analysis of trans-textual patterns but instead focuses on how discourse and interaction affect one another within specific social contexts. A key concept here is the idea of interpersonal manifestations of discourse ("Interpersonale Diskursrealisationen") which he later called participant-oriented manifestations of discourse ("teilnahmeorientierte Realisationen des Diskurses"). In order to grasp the role of the interview in this context, one has to understand a basic problem of collecting data for the purpose of analyzing interaction from the lens of discourse linguistics. The problem, as Roth puts it, is that everyday-life communication is not available in mass media corpora and even oral corpora often do not include discussions and utterances related to discourse that researchers are interested in (Roth, "Interpersonale Diskursrealisationen" 326). Thus, the focus on topic-related oral speech makes it very difficult to gather data. Therefore, most often it is necessary to collect data for which, as Roth argues, the interview can be one method. However, he highlights that, although the interview may be useful to elicit discourse related interaction, the artificial setup of the interview situation is far from being an everyday-life situation. Roth suggest that researchers may employ strategies to make situations appear more natural, however he does not give any examples for this (Roth, "Interpersonale Diskursrealisationen" 331). Against this background, one might argue that the interview, at least if it is not conducted spontaneously, is more or less a compromise to collect data, which is one of the reasons why Roth uses experimental methods instead of interviews (Roth, *Diskursrealisationen* 174–77). A good example of how interviews can be used within a discourse-analytic research design focused on interaction is a study by Stojiljković, who analyzes social positioning practices in interviews with Serbian philologists.

Roth's methodological discussion of the interview as a method of conducting discursive interaction creates an interesting starting point for conceptualizing the interview as a context-specific discursive practice, yet he only addresses the issue on a methodological level rather than asking how this can be an object of discourse-linguistic analysis on its own. In other words, while Roth considers the way in which interviews create artificial contexts to be a methodological flaw for discourse-linguistic inquiry, we want to argue that this supposed lack of

authenticity is a social construction itself and an essential part of the interview as a discursive genre which makes it worth investigating for its own sake.

According to these three perspectives, our approach can best be described as an explorative combination of all of them. Although we use qualitative as well as quantitative procedures of text analysis, the fact that the interviews were conducted by us enables us to critically reflect on the interview as an interactive means of linguistically co-constructing experience. The link between the three different perspectives is the idea that interviews can be conceptualized as an everyday-life as well as a discursive genre that influences the way in which we as researchers as well as the participants engage with one another and interactively produce textual data. Genres, in this sense, can be understood as conceptual frameworks that actors use to evaluate and interpret communicative practices and to connect them with context and social roles (Briggs and Baumann 141). Furthermore, Spitzmüller argues that genres are a part of discourse knowledge and thus an object of metapragmatic negotiation within discourse (245). Metapragmatics with reference to Silverstein and Spitzmüller can best be understood as language use which refers to other language use and thus categorizes and conceptualizes it. Metapragmatics as a sociolinguistic discipline is primarily interested in reconstructing how knowledge about language is socially stratified and how speakers position themselves to language in accordance with language ideologies. In relation to the topic of our paper, we ask if partaking in an interview about politics can be considered taking a stance within the sound of democracy. Although our approach cannot be considered an analysis of interaction in the sense of Roth and Deppermann, the self-reflection of the interview opens up the opportunity for participants to reflect on how they interact with one another.

In the following part we discuss the framework and preliminary results within our project *Sounds of Democracy*—an interview study intending to “stimulate a dialogue about contemporary democracies” (Warnke et al., *Entering*).

2 Methodology & Data

As pointed out earlier (see 1) the project *Sound of Democracy* is centered around the research question *What does democracy sound like today?* (Warnke et al., *Entering*). To this end, we conducted a non-representative sample interview study on how democracy sounds in different European countries between February and April 2022. The resulting interview corpus includes individual as well as group interviews.

2.1 How the Interviews Were Conducted

The target group for the study were master students across different European countries with whom we got in touch via contact persons from different universities. We focused on Europe because we wanted to discuss if the sound of democracy could be thought of on a transnational level. With each student we conducted an individual interview that gave us the basis for another group-discussion (Schäffer and Bohnsack; Kühn and Koschel) for which we matched two to three participants. Two of the participants came from Austria, one from Poland, one from Germany, one from Spain, one from Italy, and one from Sweden.

In terms of qualitative social research our conversations can best be described as semi-structured guided interviews (Misoch 65–71). Since it would have been quite costly and time-consuming for interviewers as well as participants to travel across Europe, the interviews were conducted online. The individual interviews started off by playing four 30-second audio samples for which the participants were asked to write down their associations while hearing them.

- [AUDIO 1] Ludwig van Beethoven (1822–1824), *Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125, 4th mov.*, so-called *Ode to Joy* (Anthem of Europe)
- [AUDIO 2] Måneskin (2021), *Zitti e Buoni* (Winner of ESC, Eurovision Song Contest 2021)
- [AUDIO 3] The White Stripes (2003), *Seven Nation Army* (Chant)
- [AUDIO 4] Soundscape of a Demonstration

For the first question the interviewer asked the participants about their associations and if any of the sounds evoked a thought or feeling of democracy. Based on their answers, the participants were asked if they had any examples for the sound of democracy themselves. Further questions were dedicated to whether the participants considered themselves to be participants or recipients of the sound of democracy, if the sound of democracy was real or just a metaphor, in what kind of media it appeared, what language had to do with it, and if there was a European sound of democracy. The Interview closed off by asking if there were any discrepancies in how the sound of democracy was in its current state and how it ought to be. The cumulative length of the seven interviews amounts to 190 minutes, averaging approximately 27.14 minutes, or roughly 30 minutes per individual interview.

By analyzing the interviews' common topics, differences as well as similarities were detected, which were the basis for the interview guides in the second phase of our study. For this part, the following constellations for the group interviews were assembled:

- Group Interview A (A0) Austria I (A1), Poland (A2) (ca. 25 min.)
- Group Interview B (B0) Austria II (B1), Italy (B2) (ca. 28 min.)
- Group Interview C (C0) Spain (C1), Sweden (C2), Germany (C3), (ca. 53 min.)

For reasons of time management, the way in which the participants were matched was more a matter of availability rather than the interview's content. Regarding how the interviews were conducted, the interviewer tried to employ the techniques suggested by Kühn and Koschel (164–72). In this context, it was important that, although the interviewer was participating in the conversation by asking questions, he tried to step back as much as possible in order to give the participants room for discussion. All group interviews ended with bringing the interview to the aforementioned metapragmatic level by asking if the participants considered the conversation itself to be a sound of democracy.

2.2 The Interviews as Discursive Data

After addressing how we conducted the interviews, this passage recapitulates the status of the interview as discursive und textual data. Our main assumption is that interviews can serve as an intermediary between individuals and discourse and thus be a useful heuristic approach to explore voices in discursive fields. In this respect, we are interested in both individual perspectives and discursive factors that shape them. In this study we are specifically interested in how interviews (being discursive practices themselves) can shed light on the perceptions of contemporary democracies, encompassing the diverse experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that people in Europe hold about 'democracy' (e.g. democratic ideas and values) in the present day. Thus, we consider the interview itself a discursive practice. In this respect, the metaphor of sound is seen as a bridge between individual and discursive aspects. Discussing sound in the context of democracy may help us to address the discursive elements of democratic dynamics, beginning with individual experiences and subjective narratives (see 1). When interpreting the answers that were given in the interviews to the question of *what democracies sound like today*, we centered on the following interrelated research questions:

- RQ1: When speaking about ‘sounds of democracy,’ are there typical lexical structures, keywords, or linguistic patterns emerging that can be identified across the interviews? (see 3.1)
- RQ2: How do participants resolve the metaphor of sound when speaking about democracy, linguistically and epistemically, to conceptualize democracy? (see 3.2)
- RQ3: Which concrete instances do the participants refer to? (see 3.3)

Additionally, we asked:

- RQ4: What are metapragmatic reflections on the interview situation or about the relation of individual and discourse? (see 3.4)

With all four questions, we take up our previous reflections and focus them on a specific analysis of contemporary debates about democracy.

2.2.1 The Interviews as a Text Corpus

As described at the beginning of this section, the data consists of seven transcribed guideline interviews building three groups of two or three individual interviews each, and three subsequent discussions within the respective groups (Group A, Group B, Group C). Interviews A1 (“Austria I”), A2 (“Poland”), B2 (“Austria II”), and C4 (“Germany”), as much as the follow-up discussion in Group A were originally conducted in German. The remaining interviews and group discussions were conducted in English (see Table 1).

For the heuristic discourse-linguistic analysis, both quantitative and hermeneutic approaches were considered. For the preliminary quantitative data analysis, a linguistic corpus was built—operationalizing ‘discourse’ as a structured corpus (see 1.3)—, including all interview transcriptions as a collection of textual data. Each interview transcription was regarded as one textual unit (see Table 1) and stored as a plain text file, whereas each conversational turn (SP = speaker) was stored and displayed as one line.

- 1 SP1 Once again thanks for being here and participating in this group ...
- 2 SP1 Yeah, interesting. We did not talk about economics in our interviews ...
- 3 SP1 Mhm, interesting. Speaking of examples, we got to this topic because ...
- 4 SP2 I think that, thinking about economics, it's not about, not only ...
- 5 SP1 What do you think about that?
- 6 SP3 Sorry, not used to Zoom meetings. I think, sorry, I just I kinda ...
- 7 SP1 That's an interesting example. Religious sound in the public sphere. ...
- 8 SP4 Sorry.
- 9 SP1 Yeah, go ahead.
- 10 SP4 Like, for some reason I was just thinking about, like, actually what ...
- 11 SP1 That made me think of one very interesting example T. gave me, he ...
- 12 SP4 My first thought was the [...] I think it's very [...] It's, like, ...
- 13 SP1 Mhm, yeah. What are your thoughts on that?
- 14 SP3 I completely agree with what L. is saying, and I think that's a very ...
- 15 SP2 Well, I think I don't have too much to add. I will try. I think the ...

(1) Excerpt of the interview data (group interview C0), KWIC = *sound of democracy*

For technical reasons, the corpus was provisionally divided into two monolingual corpora. In order to provide a consistent linguistic basis for the automated textual analysis, the English language data were machine-translated into German (using the online translation service *DeepL*) and manually revised. However, the following table provides an overview of the overall frequencies of the primary data in the original language regarding the occurrence of words (tokens), lemmas (types of words reduced to the dictionary form of a word),⁶ and sentences per interview.

Using the software Sketch Engine (Kilgariff et al.), the corpus was linguistically preprocessed (tokenization, lemmatization, part-of-speech-tagging) by applying the RFTagger 4.2 for German based on the STTS tagset (Schmid and Laws) and the Tree Tagger for English based on the Penn Treebank tagset English 3.3 (Santorini).

⁶ See McEnery and Hardie, among others, for an introduction to approaches used in corpus linguistics. To become familiar with corpus-linguistic concepts and methodologies, see also McEnery and Wilson; Tognini-Bonelli; Perkuhn et al. Furthermore, see Baker; Bubenhofer, “Diskurslinguistik”; McEnery and Baker; Teubert for an account of the connections between corpus linguistics and discourse analysis.

Table 1: Overview of the textual data (transcribed interviews and group discussions)

No.	group	textual interview data	original language	words	lemmas	sentences
	Group A					
1		A0 group interview (A1, A2)	German	1,657	394	97
2		A1 Austria I	German	1,946	434	198
3		A2 Poland	German	3,165	525	233
	Group B					
4		B0 group interview (B1, B2)	English	3,328	528	186
5		B1 Italy	German	2,765	472	169
6		B2 Austria II	English	2,693	581	139
	Group C					
7		C0 group interview (C1, C2, C3)	English	6,978	779	326
8		C1 Spain	English	2,902	510	180
9		C2 Sweden	English	4,234	585	298
10		C3 Germany	German	4,202	685	221
				<u>30,574</u>	<u>2,881</u>	<u>2,047</u>

2.2.2 Corpus Pragmatics and Hermeneutics

In the social sciences as much as in discourse studies, strong efforts have been made to integrate computer-assisted workflows into interdisciplinary research approaches that aim to combine quantitative and qualitative or hermeneutic methods technically and epistemologically (e.g. Bubenhofer, *Quantitativ*; Duchastel and Laberge; Scholz; Rheindorf; Lemke and Wiedemann; Wiedemann). Rheindorf, for example, discusses the intersections between corpus linguistics (CL) and critical discourse studies (CDS) in detail in the context of critical discourse analysis: “The integration of CL methods into CDS can be traced back to the 1990s” (33):

Indeed, I would argue that the way in which we approach co-text (concordance lines, extended concordances or entire texts retrieved by CL tools) around specific lexical patterns identified by CL tools should be a key point of interest in the debate on ‘combining’ or ‘integrating’ quantitative and qualitative methods in CDS. (33)

Also, in linguistic discourse analysis, quantitative (corpus-assisted) approaches have become increasingly important (Bubenhofer, *Sprachgebrauchsmuster*;

Felder et al.; Müller). Informed by corpus linguistics, the most comprehensive methods in the context of digital discourse linguistics can be covered by the term *lexicometry*, which we adapt here as a quantitative heuristic approach to discourse analysis (Dzudzek et al.; Glasze; see also Scholz).

While in content analysis, the initial stages of interpretation typically involve categorizing text sections, in lexicometry, the primary focus is on establishing relationships among lexical elements within a specific text corpus. As a result, the hermeneutic interpretation is postponed until later in the research process. However, this shift primarily pertains to the emphasis placed on interpretation, as the formulation of research questions, compilation, and the delimitation of closed corpora as discursive data is also based on interpretative decisions (see Dzudzek et al. 234). Regarding the interview as a ‘discursive genre’ (see 1.3), we are also intrigued by the particularities of lexical structures and linguistic patterns within the context of our study, given the following:

Common to concepts of discourse used in the social sciences [and discourse studies] is that they refer to some kind of social practice as [sic!] regards language use or the use of other sign systems in particular social contexts. Social practices are ways in which humans do things: patterns of action, habits and conventions that follow more or less explicit rules. (Boréus and Bergström 6)

In this regard, automated lexicometric methods are particularly valuable for comparing the linguistic surface across our interviews and for exploring the possible variations in meaning within the conceptual frame of ‘sounds of democracy.’

In contrast to the narrower research perspective often taken by quantitative corpus linguistics focusing on the study of language patterns and structures intrinsically, that is, not taking into account the contextual, social, or cultural factors in which actual discursive and interactive language use is embedded,⁷ quantitative approaches in discourse studies that borrow from corpus linguistics specifically emphasize the role of extra-linguistic (e.g. epistemic, social, societal etc.) parameters based on the language use within discursive fields and practices. Hence, quantitative results need to be interpreted respectively, taking a special interest in the question of how *meaning* is constructed, constituted, or assigned linguistically by means of social, cultural, and political dimensions of discourse

⁷ Although, as Müller points out, corpus linguistics is actually “based on the idea of the linguistic series in context, inasmuch as it understands language as expression complexes situated in usage, serialized, and culturally contextualized,” this is by no means common research practice (20).

(see Wodak and Krzyżanowski). “This type of research was [sic] summarized under the label *corpus pragmatics* [...]” (Felder et al. 4, qtd. in Müller 20):

We take corpus pragmatics to mean a linguistic research approach which examines the reciprocal relationship between linguistic means on the one hand and context factors on the other hand in digitally prepared corpora, and whose goal it is to establish a typology of form-function correlations. [...] Notably, the analysis makes use of a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. (20)

Hence, in addition to exploratory quantitative analysis, we opted for a complementary hermeneutic approach based on the theoretical framework of discourse-linguistic hermeneutics (Hermanns, *Linguistische Hermeneutik*; see also D. Busse, *Diskursanalyse* 78–84)—“considering hermeneutics as a technique and method of linguistic analysis” (Dang-Anh and Scholl 103).

3 Data Analysis

3.1 Lexicometric Exploration

To investigate our corpus—the ‘interview-as-text data’—linguistically, we combined the following lexicometric methods with descriptive and exploratory purposes.

- Frequency analysis of words (tokens / lemmas), nouns; adjectives and verbs (excluded here)
- Analysis of co-occurrences / n-grams (example)
- Keyword analysis (example)
- KWIC / concordances

Lexical analysis was conducted at all levels of the corpus infrastructure, i.e. each interview was focused individually as much as the corpus was analyzed from an overall perspective, since we were also interested in the main topics of the entire dataset as a discourse fragment.



Figure 1: Illustration of the most frequent nouns within all interviews (visualization Ch. B.)

The following table summarizes the most frequent lemmatized nouns (n=50; N=1017) within the corpus, i.e., the utterances of both the interviewer and the interviewee or the participants in the group interviews (see Table 1). Each column represents one interview. The occurrences vary within the range between F=0 (blank), F=1 (grey), and F=104 (yellow).

Table 2: Contrastive overall frequency analysis of the word occurrences (nouns) in all interviews (1–10)

noun	F	A0	A1	A2	B0	B1	B2	C0	C1	C2	C3
democracy	434	23	24	27	43	36	19	104	46	54	58
sound	328	9	15	27	26	26	14	62	24	33	35
example	162	4	2	12	12	20	20	27	18	30	17
question	106	3	6	4	5	15	4	19	6	23	21
human	100	5	1	3	22	9		15	10	11	24
Europe	56		1	13	9	5	2	12	4	7	3
people	52	3	1	5	11	7	8	8	2	7	
music	51		5	6	1	4	9	1	7	11	7
voice	50	5	7	5	10	3	5	6	8		1
country	48	6		10	8	3		10	1	4	6
sense	42			2	1	4	1	19	8	3	4

thought	41	1	2	3	1	2	2	5	1	4	20	
language	40		10	6		1	1	1		16	5	
feeling	37	3		1	9	1		6	2	7	8	
case	36	2	6	1	1		8	2	2	5	9	
idea	36			1	1		1	10		12	11	
solidarity	36							31		5		
group	35		2	5	2	3	2	12	4	2	3	
perspective	35	2			1	3		20	4	1	4	
song	33			3	5	9	4		8	3	1	
demonstration	29		1	3						20	5	
point	28			1	3	1	2	14	2	1	4	
discussion	27	1			1	1	1	20		3		
problem	27				5	4		18				
reference	26		2	2		2		12	5	2	1	
plane	25		5		4	1		2		6	7	
thing	23		2	1	2	2		2	11	2	1	
discourse	23	1	1		2		1	9	3	4	2	
opinion	23	2		3	4	1	3	7	3			
ideal	22				2	1	2	4	2	2	9	
law	22		1	3				1	16	1		
topic	22	1	3	4	1	1	4	6		2		
part	21			1	2	6	1	7		3	1	
interview	20	6	1	4	3	1	2	2		1		
mask	20	17		3								
song	20		2	2	1	2	3	2	2	5	1	
state	20						5	10	2	1	2	
time	18		2	1	2	4		5	1	1	2	
association	17		1	3	1	2	3		3	2	2	
thing	17			2	2		2	3	5	2	1	
aspect	16				1	1		4		1	9	
discrepancy	16		1	1	1	4	5		1	1	2	
woman	16	2		4		4	1	1	4			
instrument	16	5		4		1	2	2		2		
beginning	15		3	5		2	1		2	1	1	
experience	15	2		1	3	2			5	1	1	
society	15						1	9		1	4	
market	15							4	11			
metaphor	15	3	1		5	1	2	1		1	1	
difference	15				2			13				
		4763	205	242	389	482	422	357	1028	487	596	555

Min. Freq. = 1; M = 100; max. Freq. = 104

Considering the results of the overall frequency analysis as a discourse-linguistic exploration, the lexical occurrences, both in the upper and lower frequency ranges, may serve as indicators of specific semantic fields that reflect the ‘conceptual landscape’ based on the vocabulary used to describe and discuss ‘sounds of democracy’ in the context of our interviews. While frequent occurrences often indicate discursive keywords (see Table 3), a large proportion of occurrences in the lower frequency range can be semantically grouped and hyponymically assigned to one of these terms, although the statistical keyword analysis may differ.⁸ In this sense, the lexical field of ‘democracy’ encompasses a wide range of words, terms, and expressions associated with the concept of democracy. It includes nominal terms directly related to democracy, such as *democracy* (434), *parliament* (10), *representation* (10), *civil society* (5), *elections* (4), *freedom* (3), *rights* (12); *human rights* (4), *participation* (4), *constitution*. It may also include phrases like *civil society* (5), *electoral system* (3), *freedom of speech* (3), *principle of representation* (2) and collocations that are used when referring to ‘democracy’ (e.g. *democratic sound/s* (10), *democratic discourse* (5), *democratic country* (4), *democratic society* (3), *democratic discussion* (2), *democratic language* (2), *democratic principles* (2), *democratic state* (2), *democratic system* (2), *democratic ideals* (1), *democratic interest* (1), *democratic organization* (1), *democratic value* (1) and others (see also part 3.3)).⁹ The following examples show the most prominent lexical fields based on the wordlist of nouns related to ‘sounds of democracy,’ which may be regarded as discursive topics, including only utterances by the interviewees:

8 The notion ‘statistical keyword’ (or ‘key term’ for multiword units) refers to lexical items that significantly stand out in a given focus corpus in relation to a predefined reference corpus (see part 2.1) based on inductive statistical measures.

9 It is important to consider that verbs and other parts of speech equally contribute to the constitution of lexical fields in this context (e.g. the infinite verbs *represent* (25), *participate* (24), *debate* (10), *discuss* (9), *protest* (8), *vote* (8), *elect* (7), *empower* (1), or adjectives like *democratic* (10), *civil* (9 tokens), *liberal* (10), *anti-democratic* (1), *undemocratic* (1), *non-democratic* (1)). However, the focus of these examples is primarily on nouns as ‘discursive nodes’ as minimal discursive condensations of discourse (Linke 40).

- POLITICS & SOCIETY: *democracy* (434), *law* (26), *state* (20), *society* (15), *politician* (10), *parliament* (10), *nation* (8), *nationalism* (6), *politics* (5), *system* (5), *participation* (4), *election* (4), *public* (4) ...; *demonstration* (38), *protest* (3) ...
- SOUND / MUSIC: *sound* (328), *music* (51), *voice** (50), *instrument* (16), *silence* (14), *choir* (13), *dissonance* (13), *harmony* (8), *drum* (7), *noise* (7), *cacophony* (6), *orchestra* (5), *jam session* (3), *polyphony* (2) ...
- COLLECTIVITY: *people* (52), *country** (48), *solidarity* (36), *group* (35), *society** (15), *nation** (8), *civil society* (5), *public** (4), *community* (3), *citizen* (2), *neighborhood* (2) ...
- DISCOURSE: *discussion* (27), *discourse* (23), *opinion* (23), *conversation* (20), *metaphor* (15), *debate* (6) *interaction* (4), *parliamentary debate* (4) ...
- CONCEPTS: *diversity* (14), *difference* (6), *hope* (6), *majority* (7), *equality* (5), *peace* (5), *humanity* (4), *freedom* (2) ...
- TENSION / CONFLICT: *problem* (27), *discrepancy* (16), *contradiction* (7), *conflict* (5), *disagreement* (4), *tension* (6), *violence* (4), *war* (3), *oppression* (2), *discrimination* (5), *paradox* (2) ...

Another way to identify lexical relations is to statistically examine the corpus by using a corpus-driven approach to create a lexical network based on the similarities between words that occur in comparable linguistic contexts, its statistical cooccurrence profile. Within the framework Sketch Engine, the so-called Similarity Score (see Table 3), which acts as an indicator for similarity, represents the basis for the lexical compilation of the thesaurus (Jakubíček and Rychlý; Kilgariff et al.). The graphically translated result of this calculation visualizes a percentage of the overlaps of the word profile of the source term with those of the other words. In addition, the results can be clustered defining the threshold of a minimum similarity score (Kocincová et al.). The following example shows the results of the analysis for *sound* (left) and *democracy* (right) as input terms using a minimum similarity score of 0.15 (see Table 3). Graphically, the size of the displayed words corresponds to its frequency, the relative proximity to the center corresponds to the determined similarity score (see Figure 2 as an example for *sound*).

Table 3: Thesaurus *sound* (left) and *democracy* (right)

<i>sound</i>	Cluster	Score	F	<i>democracy</i>	Cluster	Score	F
democracy		0,26	296	sound	sound	0,26	240
	solidarity	0,18	42	solidarity	solidarity	0,22	42
	people	0,11	114		everyone	0,22	24
					discussion	0,18	35
kind		0,25	61		state	0,17	17
	voice	0,16	29		song	0,14	39
	lot	0,12	54		question	0,12	65
					thing	0,11	42
discussion		0,18	35	people	people	0,20	114
	question	0,13	65	lot	lot	0,14	54
	thing	0,12	42		voice	0,09	29
	song	0,11	39		kind	0,08	61
	idea	0,09	28		something	0,08	131
	demon- stration	0,08	22	economics	economics	0,13	12
	state	0,08	17		demonstration	0,11	22
	everyone	0,07	24		right	0,10	18
perspective		0,14	31	difference	difference	0,11	20
	country	0,13	21		idea	0,10	28
problem		0,09	23		thought	0,05	18
	way	0,08	72		part	0,05	21
feeling		0,09	12		problem	0,05	23
	right	0,07	18	example	example	0,08	101
example		0,07	101	Europe	Europe	0,06	38
group		0,07	38	feeling		0,05	12

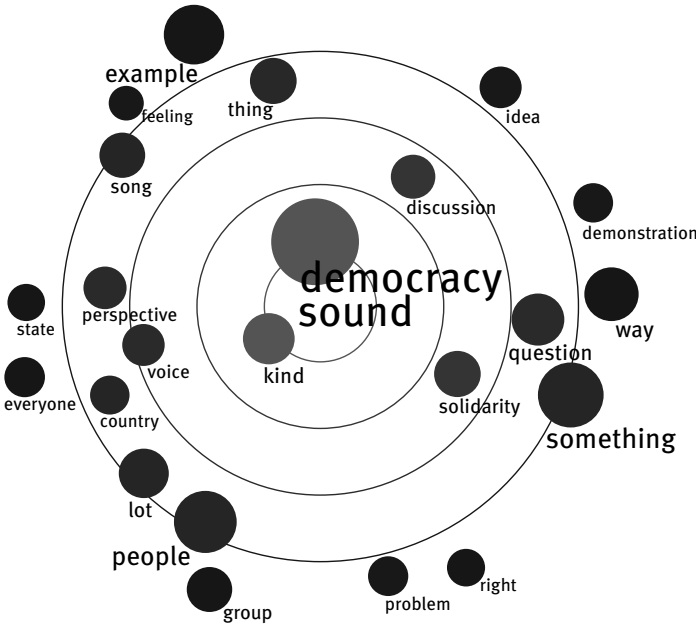


Figure 2: Thesaurus of *sound* (visualization Sketch Engine, Kocincová et al., modified by Ch. B.)

Furthermore, it must be taken into account that the results of this lexical analysis are linguistically decontextualized. A large proportion of the occurrences are embedded in multi-word units of different lexical status. In Table 2, those nouns that obviously indicate names i.e., proper names consisting of more than one lexical item like *Eurovision**, *contest**, *song** (*‘Eurovision Song Contest’*), *ode**, and *joy** [*‘Ode to Joy’*], *union** [*‘European Union’*] were filtered and removed. However, to ensure the specific word use within the discursive context, these nodes have to be displayed as Keywords in Context (KWIC) or be examined by other procedures such as co-occurrence analysis or n-gram analysis.

Hence, in addition to the lexical analysis based on single-word units, we were also interested in the patterns of language use to specify the respective conceptual frame (e.g. *‘democracy’* → *“less silence between the sounds of **democracy**”*; *‘voice’* → *“their own **voice**”*). The following examples show n-grams (2–6-grams) containing **democracy** (291 tokens), **solidarity** (42 tokens), **voice** (15 tokens), **feeling** (15 tokens), **solidarity** (42 tokens), and **experience** (23 tokens) within the corpus subset of the interviews conducted in English (N=20,207 tokens) (see 2.2.2); the minimum frequency is 2 occurrences.

- *of democracy* (189), [...] *the sound of democracy* (66), *a sound of democracy* (51), *sound of democracy is* (14), *European sound of democracy* (13), *is a sound of democracy* (11), *of the sound of democracy* (11) [...] *sound of democracy is something* (4), *how the sound of democracy* (4), *this is a sound of democracy* (4), *to be a sound of democracy* (4), *ideal sound of democracy* (3), *pan-European sound of democracy* (3), [...] *of how the sound of democracy* (3), *participate in the sound of democracy* (3), *recipient of the sound of democracy* (3), *in regards to democracy* (2), *sounds of democracy are* (2), [...] *democracy is like a* (2), *a discussion about democracy* (2), *sound of democracy should* (2), *of democracy may be* (2), *different sound of democracy* (2), *democracy on a European* (2), *diverse sound of democracy* (2), *think that democracy is* (2), *unitarian sound of democracy* (2), *unitarian vision of democracy* (2), [...] *consider a sound of democracy* (2), *this a sound of democracy* (2), *of democracy on a European* (2), *the sound of democracy on* (2), *the sound of democracy should* (2), *a unitarian vision of democracy* (2), *a unitarian sound of democracy* (2), *European sound of democracy is* (2), *unitary sound of democracy or* (2), *a sound of democracy for* (2), *a different sound of democracy* (2), *silence between the sounds of democracy* [...] (2–6-grams, 182 nested n-grams; 1,092 occurrences).
- *different voices* (7), *voices of* (3), *the voices* (3), *the voices of* (2), *own voice* (3), *their own voice* (3), *the voice* (2), *voice of* (2), *the voice of* (2), *a voice* (2), *have a voice* (2), *about voice* (2), *voice to* (2), *voices that* (2)
- *of solidarity* (12), *solidarity is* (7), *that solidarity* (3), *if solidarity* (3), *about solidarity* (3), *problems of solidarity* (3), *signs of solidarity* (3), *sound of solidarity* (3), *solidarity could* (2), *solidarity and* (2), *solidarity in* (2), *solidarity from* (2), *the solidarity* (2), *think solidarity* (2), *solidarity within* (2), *think solidarity is* (2), *if solidarity is* (2), *solidarity within Europe* (2), *the problems of solidarity* (2), *a sound of solidarity* (2)
- *feeling of* (7), *this feeling* (3), *feeling of belongingness* (3), *this feeling of* (3), *feeling invited* (2), *are feeling* (2), *create this feeling* (2), *we are feeling* (2), *create this feeling of* (2), *can create this feeling* (2), *can create this feeling of* (2)
- *individual experience* (2), *very individual experience* (2), *your experience* (2)

Furthermore, the analyses of key terms conducted on all levels, i.e. in relation to the entire interview corpus (German and English) as well as a comparison of the individual interviews, are revealing. Here, an indication emerges that especially ‘diversity’ / ‘variety’ (or: ‘diversity’ / ‘difference’) come to the fore as categories in relation to democratic values (e.g. *different sound* / *different voices* / *different perspectives* / *different opinions* / *diverse sound* / *diversity of democratic sounds*). Yet

‘diversity’ is often critically contrasted with ‘uniformity’ (e.g. *uniform sound* / *uniform democratic sound* / *uniform opinion* / *unitary sound* / *unitarian sound*) or framed by concepts of ‘community,’ ‘common ground,’ or ‘consensus’ (e.g. *common European sound* / *harmonious sound* / *sense of universality*). Also, key terms including *solidarity* stand out compared to the reference corpus (see 2.2.2), e.g. *sound of solidarity*, *problem of solidarity*, *sign of solidarity*.

3.2 Intensional Concepts of Democracy—Unwrapping ‘Sound’

Linguistically, the word *sound* is used in different ways. On the one hand, it is used in a rather narrow, lexical or literal sense to describe specific soundscapes of situations or events, acoustically associated with prevailing concepts of democracy. For example, the urban soundscape of public demonstrations, the spatial acoustic atmosphere in a soccer stadium, or the sound of political events like the chatter of voices during parliamentary debates.

- (2) A1, pos. 20: [...] for example, demonstration procession, the drums and whistles, something like that.
- (3) C3, pos. 33: [...] the sound of the demonstration really does take on a very central role. It’s about being loud, really being heard in the most literal sense.
- (4) C3, pos. 33: My first thought was actually demonstrations. Because I believe that one of the most important [...] aspects of democratic societies that is most likely to disappear when a society becomes less democratic, is the aspect that people can actually express themselves freely and also demonstrate freely for the things that they think are right [...].

Mostly, statements like *being loud*, *being heard*, or adverbs like *freely* are strongly symbolic, insofar as they reference to *sound* as ‘(political) voice’ (→ VOICE) or ‘protest’ (→ PROTEST) often representing basic democratic principles like ‘equal rights’ and ‘freedom of speech.’

In this context, ‘democracy’ is also often seen in the process of participation or interaction, bringing people together and fostering a sense of community or collectivity. Hence, ‘democracy’ is referred to ‘intensionally’¹⁰ as a social

¹⁰ Here, we heuristically draw on the linguistic distinction between ‘intensional’ and ‘extensional meaning’. Hence, the term ‘intensional concept of democracy’ is primarily used to describe semantic aspects attributed to the concept of ‘democracy.’ In contrast, ‘extensional concept of democracy’ addresses the use of the word *democracy* to refer to specific political instances or

dynamic that involves a collective political engagement, represented by the actual sound of, e.g., collective chanting of slogans at political demonstrations.

- (5) B0, pos. 02: So basically, I feel like the sound of democracy is always about what brings people together as a whole, and what makes them one, what unites them. We talked about [...] music, and drumming, and rhythm for instance at maybe protest marches something like that, and we also talked about concerts and chanting something. And on the flip side we also talked about people maybe purposely trying to disrupt some kind of harmony, some kind of rhythm, which is the exact opposite of what democracy should be about and is trying to achieve.

Furthermore, the word *sound* is closely related to ‘language use’ (→ LANGUAGE) and ‘discourse’ (→ DISCOURSE); to some interviewees, both equally constitute the sounds of democracy. One participant indicates the different styles or varieties of language (*linguistic registers*), insofar as language use within democratic discourse encompasses various contexts, ranging from informal conversations in a pub with casual language to more formal settings such as parliamentary debates or political speeches on TV (A1, pos. 42–47).

Moreover, *sound* is used to frame or contrast notions of non-democratic tendencies in social dynamics or political orders. With this in mind, sound is also critically mapped onto the absence of sound as a political stance. The metaphor of the *silent majority* (German: “*schweigende Mehrheit*”) is also considered to constitute a specific sound of democracy, described by the absence of political participation by the majority of the population. This negative ‘political voice’ is critically characterized as being merely receptive, passive, or uncomplaining by the interview partner. In this case, being asked about his/her personal associations, ‘sound(s) of democracy’ is narrowed down to one word: *silence*.

- (6) A1, pos. 40–42: This might sound a bit strange, but I would actually say silence. [...] And that is because of this metaphor of the silent majority, which is also often used.

societal circumstances by the interviewees. Generally, when talking about democracy and sound in the context of our interviews, both dimensions are usually intertwined.

The core idea in this interview is an implicit criticism of the fact that rather extreme positions of the political fringes are present in the contemporary media discourse, whereas *more reserved voices* do not get a chance to or do not speak out (*making themselves heard*).

- (7) B0, pos. 09: I do think that democracy is when people talk out loud and people are to protest more to, like, yeah, raise their voices together. So, for me, I think silence would be a dissonance.

Generally, both the lexical / literal meaning of *sound* and the rather metaphorical implication of the phrase *sounds of democracy* are closely related, hence semantically intertwined. This stands out in particular, when ‘democracy,’ ‘democratic social dynamics,’ or ‘democratic societies’ are compared to the sound of a choir, to an orchestra, or to a musical jam session constituted by the interplay of collective musical interaction and individual engagement. In these examples, sound is also associated with ‘voice’ (or ‘instrument’), but on a different epistemic level. In this metaphor, it is not so much the individual political voice that stands out in particular, but rather the effect that emerges from the diversity of (individual) voices and instruments in the process of social and musical interaction analogous to the dynamics in discourse and communication. In other words, this is when individual differences are united in a collectivity: on the one hand, in relation to ‘sound,’ ‘democracy’ is often metaphorically reflected as a rather holistic concept of a polyphony being constituted by the inclusion of diverse individuals (“voices and instruments”) participating or interacting (“playing together”). This sheds a harmonious light on the sounds of democracy constituting a unified entity, i.e., a sort of consonance (see ex. 5).

- (8) A0, pos. 04: [...] for me, democracy is several voices, several instruments playing together.

[...] I realized that democracy is actually everything. It’s kind of our culture. Yes, that’s why for me democracy is very diverse and there are a lot of voices that somehow interact.

On the other hand, this multitude of diverse voices is interpreted as a constructive kind of dissonance (“constructive dissonance”), constituted by freedom of speech, allowing people to express their opinions openly without fear of discrimination. Hence, ‘democracy’ is positively conceptualized as a rather inharmonious and noisy matter, where diverse opinions can be voiced and discussed (see ex. 6). In a similar way, this is expressed in (7), where the question is raised

whether democracy should only consist of a unified sound or whether a cacophony of diverse democratic sounds would be acceptable. The interviewee is considering the idea of a guiding sound or harmony that emerges from this cacophony and its relationship to 'democracy.'

- (9) B0, pos. 37: [...] I do believe that there is this constructive kind of dissonance where people are allowed to voice their different opinions and to talk about them out loud without fearing any kind of discrimination.
- (10) C3, pos. 17: Again, that's the question of, can it only be a big sound? Or would it be okay if we could live with a big cacophony of democratic sounds, and how would it be a democratic sound, or how would there be a guide, or a guiding sound, or a harmony that would result [...] which arises from it.

Also, reference is made to specific pieces of music such as the popular Italian partisan song *Bella ciao*. Given its historical dimension of resistance to European fascism, this 'sound' is also seen as an emblematic expression of 'democracy from below,' voicing opposition against manifestations of political oppression, violence, or arbitrariness in general (→ PROTEST / POLITICAL ACTIVISM). At the same time, this continues the idea of a strong community or ingroup solidarity (→ COMMUNITY / SOLIDARITY) which also includes a particular concept of 'democracy' as a consensus-oriented practice of social and political interaction or communication (→ COMMUNICATION).

- (11) B1, pos. 24: [...] for me a sound of democracy is this song "Bella Ciao" [...] because it's the sound of people who really believed in democracy and they were against dictatorship, and they died for that principle, for their beliefs.

Furthermore, the cited examples can be interpreted in terms of their ideological implications, especially statements on political activism or criticism of the close conjunction of liberal democracies with economic ideologies, e.g., the marketing pressure of art (C1, pos. N.A.). Hence, with reference to the methodology of *qualitative analysis of ideas and ideological content* (Lindberg) in the social sciences and discourse analysis (Boréus and Bergström 6), we also consider our approach as a contribution "to a better knowledge of the patterns of ideas and ideologies inherent in the communication and discourse" (Lindberg 88) about democracy.

However, as these *sound*-related metaphors exemplify, in the course of the interviews, different abstract categories can be identified by means of which participants refer to different conceptual aspects of democracy or 'democratic values,' formatted by the specific semantic interpretation of *sound* within the

conversational context. The following table shows a heuristic of the various *conceptual aspects*, which are often intertwined, implied by the metaphor of *sound* as ‘political voice’ (see also 3.1).

Table 4: Conceptual aspects of ‘democracy’ within the metaphor of ‘sound-as-political-voice’

<i>sound</i> → ‘voice’ as:	conceptual aspects related to ‘democracy’
‘participation in society’	→ BASIC DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS → BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS → FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND OPINION
‘diversity of voices’	→ DIVERSITY / PLURALISM
‘civil engagement’	→ COMMUNITY / SOLIDARITY
‘political activism’	→ COMMUNITY / SOLIDARITY / PROTEST
‘legal democratic participation’ (e.g. ‘suffrage’)	→ DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM → BASIC DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS
‘discourse / communication’ (e.g. ‘debate culture’)	→ POLITICAL DISCOURSE → COMMUNICATION → CONSENSUS AS AN IDEAL OF SOCIAL INTERACTION
‘political representation’	→ PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM / POLITICAL JUSTICE
‘presence of marginalized groups’ (e.g. within ‘discourse,’ ‘media,’ or ‘language use’)	→ EQUITY / JUSTICE ⇒ BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS → DIVERSITY / TOLERANCE → AWARENESS

3.3 Extensional Concepts of Democracy

Understanding *sound* as ‘political voice’ and capturing ‘democracy’ as ‘diversity of voices’ often linked to human rights as basic democratic principles is certainly one of the strongest conceptual condensations within the metaphor of sounds of democracy. Yet, another aspect should be mentioned that comes to light in the analysis of the interviews. Specifically, conceptual categories as presented in Table 3 (through the example of ‘sound-as-political-voice’) are to be understood in the respective context of the interviews. Hence, they are intertwined with different types of reference. This means that they embody not only conceptual aspects or values of democracy (‘intensional concept of democracy’), but also involve references to factual democratic instances or entities such as political institutions,

names of politicians, or geopolitical entities ('extensional concept of democracy'). To circumscribe these tendencies, we propose to distinguish two modes of reference, that is, a) *reference to concepts and values related to democracy* (see 3.2) and b) *reference to factuality respectively factual instances related to democracy*, yet both are assimilated in discourse—as specified in the introduction (see 1)—as they equally include narrations of personal experiences and abstract reflections with regard to a rather “ideal image of democracy” (A2, pos. 6). Hence, in terms of actual language use, especially in light of its discursive function, these referential modes are closely related or even inextricably intertwined.

In the following passage, for example, the interviewee refers to the controversial British politician John Simon Bercow, former Speaker of the House of Commons, whose commanding tone of voice calling for discipline by shouting “Order!” during a parliamentary debate became a symbol of the tense situation within the British Brexit debates in 2019: “The soundtrack of Brexit has been delivered by a gray-haired man in a silk gown bellowing “Order! Order!” over crowds of braying lawmakers” (Smith; also Barry).

- (12) C3, pos. 29: John Bercow in the British Parliament who screams “Order!” is for me, [...] a very practical [concrete] sound of democracy [...].

Thereby, the interview partner is referring not only to this ‘event’ and its mediation but, more generally, to the entity of ‘parliament’ as a legal political institution representing parliamentary democracy giving an example of “how parliaments sound” (C3, pos. 29) by specifically naming John Bercow as an exemplary representative of the political atmosphere and debate culture that also constitutes a ‘sound of democracy.’ Subsequently, the interviewee comments on the given example and recalls an intensional concept of democracy that indicates a democratic value, namely “being able to debate openly.”

- (13) C3, pos. 29: [...] just the idea of debating and being able to debate openly [...].

In contrast, the interviewee asks to what extent the parliamentary institution in authoritarian countries is rather a “politicization of democratic elements” in place to normatively uphold a democratic political status without actually exercising a democratic culture. Hence, this raises the question of the authenticity of democratic institutions:

- (14) C3, pos. 29: [...] to what extent are they sounds of democracy that we can then perceive in real terms, to what extent are they then really the sign of a democracy, or to what extent are they the sign of a politicization of a democratic element [...].

Another example that fits a similar pattern is the following, in which reference is made to a “Fridays for Future” demonstration. Here, the Canadian President Justin Trudeau, who joined the demonstration, is named as an example of possible paradoxes within in a ‘sound of democracy.’ This example points out how political representatives may undermine the purpose of democratic participation as an expression of protest.

- (15) C0, pos. 54: [...] the “Fridays for Future” demonstration in Canada, where Trudeau joined [...] the demonstration. And whereas, like the idea is everyone should participate, of course, but it’s also a little silly when the person who can make a change goes out to demonstrate to make a change.

Generally, the interviewee highlights the importance of broad participation in what is understood here as ‘sound of democracy’ but acknowledges the potential limitations or barriers that certain individuals may face. This may also apply when it comes to pointing at the discursive conditions of agency that enable a polyphonic sound of democracy as a central issue of democratic structures.

- (16) B0, pos. 17: But I always have to think like this, also journalism, for example—I don’t know if you know him – but Armin Wolf in Austria is very well known. This is a, ok from OHF [sic!][ORF], a very famous journalist, who is known for his, yes let’s say very active interview tactics, and always really puts the politicians he interviews through their paces, and also doesn’t somehow get distracted by their tactics, but really gets to the point, and that’s just something that I think very much reflects democracy, because, as I said, in an anti-democratic state something like that would be absolutely impossible, where there might even be censorship or whatever, where you can’t say something like that at all.

Furthermore, from a discourse-linguistic standpoint, it is also interesting to mention the use of toponyms. When approaching the transcribed interviews as corpus data, it is particularly noticeable that geographic entities, such as countries and city names, often indicate reference to an example taken from the personal background of the participants considering their national origin. For the most

frequent occurrences—besides the proper names *Europe* (56) and *European Union* (13)—we note the toponyms *Austria* (14), *Poland* (14), *Spain* (13), *Germany* (8), *Italy* (8), whereas city names *Krakow* (1), *Uppsala* (1), *Valencia* (1), and others count only few occurrences. Therefore, the entanglement of intentional and extensional referents within a confined linguistic frame, such as a speaker's turn or statement, mentioned at the beginning also applies to the case of naming national referents indicated by patterns like *in Spain for example* | *in Poland, for example* | *as in Poland, for example*:

(17) Sample of 3–4-grams: *in Austria* – | *in Austria after* | *in Austria is* | *in Austria at least* | *in Germany, | in Germany, as* | , *Germany and* , | *in Germany firmly* | *In Germany we have* | *not represent Germany, | in Poland, a* | *and Poland, but* | *in Poland happens* | *in Poland it happens* | *in Poland for example* | *in Spain. | in Spain possibly* | *in Spain not as* | *Spain has not yet* | *in Spain may be* | *in Spain in general* | *in Sweden with similar* | ...

Generally, under the category 'extensional concept of democracy,' the following 'instances,' often referred to as illustrative examples of democratic concepts or values, stand out in particular:

- state (e.g. government, law, political system, political order, society)
- legal political institutions (e.g. National Constitution, Parliament, Court of Justice)
- legal democratic functions in practice (e.g. elections, political parties, law)
- persons of the political sphere (political representants / politicians, contemporary and historical)
- persons of the public media sphere (e.g. journalists)
- civil engagement / political protest (demonstrations, protest march, history of anti-fascism)
- civil society organizations (e.g. Labor Unions)
- basic democratic rights (e.g. suffrage, freedom of speech)
- discourse and communication (e.g. diversity of opinion, media)

3.4 Metapragmatic Aspects—*If This Is a Sound of Democracy*

As shown in part 1.3, “[s]igns functioning metapragmatically have pragmatic phenomena [...] as their semiotic objects” (Silverstein 33). Hence, the concept of metapragmatics linguistically concentrates on language use that refers to language use itself “and asks how communicative actors themselves reflect and conceptualize communicative acts (their own and that of others) or the circum-

stances of communication” (Spitzmüller 264; translated by the authors). Based on this idea, we also integrated a metapragmatic approach, asking the interviewees to reflect on the given framework within the interviews themselves being a ‘sound of democracy.’ The following excerpts illustrate the importance of a metapragmatic perspective to be taken into account.

First, the interview partners (Interview C0) have concerns about the lack of representativity and inclusivity in the current conversation. They highlight the fact that the conversation is taking place in English, which excludes those who do not speak the language. They question whether this represents an actual ‘sound of democracy’ as it should be, considering its limitations.

(18) C0, pos. 56: I think that if this is a sound of democracy, it's not a quite representative sound of democracy. Because we are, for example, we are talking in English. I mean, I have a lot of friends that are not able to have this type of conversations, because they don't speak English. I mean, I don't speak a great English, but I can understand you, and I can communicate with you. But, I think, well, this is not like a sound of democracy. This is a sound of what could potentially [sic] democracy.

Second, the interview partners acknowledge their own privileged positions as white, European, educated males and recognize that this does not align with their ideal vision of democracy. In this context, they discuss the need for more diversity in terms of gender, sexuality, origin, class, and education to achieve a more inclusive democracy. They also reflect on the challenges of attaining a high level of inclusion within discussions about democracy.

(19) C0, pos. 58: [...] I mean, like, if we just look at us four. We are four white, European, educated, male beings. If this is a sound of democracy, which I mean, honestly [it is] in a way [...] it's not really the sound of democracy I would like to have [...]. Because the level of inclusion we have to get to, it's very hard to grasp? And I think [...] that it's probably less about getting to a specific point, and more about having an ideal that we are pursuing, and to always try to make the sound of people talking about democracy as inclusive, as big, as diverse as possible, without the necessary aim of having [...] every gender represented and every sexuality represented and every origin represented [in a discussion]. [...] It's more about like the process of getting there in a way?

Third, despite the challenges of achieving ‘full inclusivity,’ there is also the belief that every discussion that moves towards democratic values can be considered a democratic discussion. The interview partners highlight that reaching a perfectly inclusive democracy is difficult, but they consider any discussion that promotes democratic principles as a democratic discussion, even if it is not ideal.

(20) C0, pos. 59: And I think the same happens in discussions. While I would love to see a lot more representation, I don't, I think we can never include every aspect in every discussion as L. said. It's gonna be hard to find a discussion where you can have every sexuality, every gender identity, disabilities are included, age, class, and everything, all of that is equal, but we're not gonna get there. So I think every discussion where people together move toward, at least a discussion on democracy is a democratic discussion, and that's a democracy, even if it's not necessarily a very good one.

This awareness of one's own position and privileges indicates a metadiscursive consciousness of the participants (Schlieben-Lange 234). This level of reflexivity shows that experience is nothing that precedes its articulation in discourse but is rather mediated through different levels of discursivization. Yet again, one has to be aware that experience is a matter of being interpreted by the language provided by a particular context, in this case the interview. Nevertheless, as this particular segment of the interview shows, this use of language is not necessarily uncontested but rather negotiated and disused. This may be what makes a meta-pragmatic perspective on the interview as a form of understanding it as a sound democracy so interesting. It blurs the line between the interview considered as an observatory tool for scholarly inquiry and adapted as a genre and thus reinterpreted by participants. Interviews do not merely give insight into experience. They provide a tool for participants to discursivize their experience in a new light:

(21) A0, pos. 4: But actually [...] before the conversation, I thought about democracy, it's purely political. But after the conversation, I thought about it, and I realized that democracy is actually everything. It's also kind of our culture. Yes, that's why for me democracy is very diverse and there are a lot of voices that somehow interact.

Finally, we want to argue that an awareness of this phenomenon can help to understand that interviews as well as the language and speaker roles they provide are nothing beyond discourse. Applying a meta-pragmatic framework to

interviews can be useful to gain insights into the process of intermediation between experience and discourse.

4 Results and Discussion

In this contribution, we propose to establish interviews as a standard heuristic of discourse linguistics and thus to structurally extend traditionally text-bound analytical procedures. Interviews are a suitable method of knowledge production and analysis, especially for discourse analyses related to the present, which always have to deal with the problem that those who analyze do not stand outside the discourses of their research object.

However, this presupposes that interviews are not used naively, i.e., based on the assumption that they provide direct insights into personal experiences. Rather, when conducting interviews and, above all, evaluating them, the voices articulated in them must be understood as voices in discourse. We speak of individual positions in their social, discursively shaped, and discourse-shaping signature. A goal of the discourse-linguistic interview, then, is to make voices in discourse recognizable and analyzable as such. This is about socialized experience as a discourse-analytical object. It should also not be overlooked that the interview must always be seen as recontextualization and that the interview always assumes that prior knowledge will be tapped, while also always generating knowledge in the process.

Our specific interest in this paper is the perception of contemporary democracies from a European perspective. It is the topic of our example and more than that, it ultimately forms the core of our remarks. The results of the data based on the seven transcribed and grouped guided interviews are rich and complex. Distinct patterns emerge that suggest further and broader analysis based on our exploratory study would be useful. *Sounds of democracy* have proven to be an eminently suitable focal point for engaging with discourses about the contemporary constitution of democracy and a doorway to engage in a dense conversation about democracy. The corpus-based analysis not only allows for evidence of the social shaping of individual viewpoints and utterances, but it also unlocks the discursivity of a thematically grouped set of interviews. The metapragmatic reflection of the interviews thereby underlines that the interview as a genre is never only speaking about something, but always also speaking as someone in discourse, as a discourse actor.

Overall, *sounds of democracy* provides a rich and multi-layered conceptual framework for discussing the values, dynamics, and difficulties within

democratic societies in Europe. By reflecting on sounds and soundscapes associated both acoustically and symbolically with the subjective perception of ‘democracy,’ our interview partners refer to a wide range of societal phenomena and values related to democratic aspects. One of the key references that come to the fore is the importance of ‘participation’ and the values of ‘diversity’ and ‘community/collectivity’ considered to be essential components of democratic societies.

In conclusion, we highlight the following issues in particular which are often intertwined and often related to human rights as fundamental democratic principles:

1. **Participation:** ‘Sounds of democracy’ are often associated with the active involvement of citizens in political and social processes, which is seen as a core value of democratic societies. This refers to different levels and areas of participation (e.g. suffrage, civil, social, or political engagement, discourse, or protest).
2. **Freedom of speech and expression:** The right to free speech is seen as a fundamental value of democratic societies. Hence, ‘sounds of democracy’ are often linked to freedom of expression of opinions and viewpoints.
3. **Diversity and discourse:** Democracy is often seen as a space of diversity. ‘Sounds of democracy’ are therefore also associated with diversity of (political) voices within discourse (discursive democratic practice), the possibility of marginalized groups to be represented, in contrast to discursive authoritarianism. Moreover, this diversity of sound is also related to multilingualism in the media and in the public sphere.
4. **Community, collectivity, and communication:** ‘Democracy’ is often seen in the process of bringing people together and fostering a sense of community and collectivity. Hence, ‘sounds of democracy’ are referred to as social dynamics that entail collective political engagement, including the collective chanting of slogans at political demonstrations. Democratic ideals or values such as unity or collectivity are also compared to the effect of musical synchronization when different people sing together in a chorus. This is when individual differences are united in a collectivity.
5. **Political activism, protest, and solidarity:** ‘Sounds of democracy’ are associated with activism, protest, and solidarity, particularly in the context of demonstrations or social movements related to marginalized or oppressed groups. This aspect largely overlaps with the concept of collectivity. The sound of drums and whistles at the procession of a demonstration or the collective chanting of a slogan is linked to the democratic principle of the right to demonstrate or—more generally—to ‘freedom of speech’ and thus to

fundamental *democratic rights*, which are allegorically *and* sonically considered constitutive for *a sound*.

6. **State authority and repression:** The presence of police or other forms of state authority is seen as a potentially oppressive force that stands in contrast to the values of democracy. This can be reflected in the way that interviewees interpret the sound of police sirens or other symbols of state authority.
7. **Economic factors:** A critical aspect appears to be the intertwining of business and politics, power and authority.

Overall, reflecting on *sounds of democracy* also serves as a linguistic approach to contrast democratic and non-democratic tendencies or dynamics within democratic societies. In this context, types of conceptual framing play a major role for semantics and the location of utterances in discursive positions.

To summarize: By demonstrating in an exploratory case study the potential of linguistically studied interviews for the pressing debate about the constitution of contemporary democracies, the interview emerges as a research object relevant to and from the perspective of discourse linguistics. It has far-reaching theoretical, methodological, and heuristic implications for further linguistic and interdisciplinary discussions.

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