The language of politics takes place on different semiotic levels. It can thus be analyzed linguistically from various angles and with a plethora of methodical outsets. Frequently applied theoretical concepts and research foci in the field of language and politics are, for instance, ideological terms, rhetorical techniques (speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions, and so forth), argumentative patterns, metaphors, and discourse-semantic figures. Less valued, at least judging by the body of scholarly work, is the system of person-reference, especially third-person reference, although pointing at and referring to interlocutors linguistically must be deemed essential to political communication. The ambition behind Naomi Truan’s monograph “The Politics of Person Reference” therefore is to meet this desideratum.

Structure of the study

Chapter 1, “Introduction”, contextualizes and argues for the relevance of scrutinizing third-person reference in dialogue, both as a pragmatic enterprise of general interest and as a “comprehensive view on how discourse participants are linguistically instantiated” (p. 9) in parliamentary debate. Drawing on well-known concepts from the realm of pragmatics, the author defines person-reference as strategic, argumentative, and dialogical. Importantly, she also makes the case for third-person forms being deployed for referring to the intended recipient of an utterance – contrary to the view held by many other scholars who claim that the third person refers to others. The chapter concludes with defining the scope and outline of the study.

In Chapter 2 some theoretical delimitations are clarified and corpus data presented briefly. Titled “Finding the missed third person”, the chapter argues for third-person forms as being conceived of as non-persons as well as “overlooked in the literature on political discourse” (p. 26). As stated above, the third person has been seen as referring to someone absent, or someone not partaking in a discussion; a bias towards the first and the second person is identified. Crucial to Truan’s understanding of the logics of person reference is a distinction between interlocutors in the real world and speech roles as discourse entities. In sum, chapter 2 is the...
place where the author identifies the research gap and occupies a niche. The focus of the study is cross-linguistic insofar as debates from the national parliaments of the United Kingdom, Germany and France are under scrutiny from a comparative perspective.

Chapter 3, “Speech roles revisited”, develops the theoretical framework of the study further. Distinguishing between the absent ‘audience’ (primarily citizens) and the ‘public’ (parliamentarians who are physically present during debate) is key here. Intertwined with this difference is the distinction between the macro level, i.e. each debate as a speech event and contextual properties pertaining to it, and the micro level in terms of turns and utterances in a linguistic sense. In regard to the public attending a debate, the author also argues for distinguishing between ‘addressees’ and ‘targets’. Combining French so called ‘enunciative linguistics’ (Ducrot) and conversation analysis (Goffman, Levison), Truan concludes that addressees are also prototypically the targets of an utterance, i.e. the interlocutors whom an utterance is aimed at. In other cases, however, “the target is the intended recipient (as opposed to the addressee); the target is the recipient of the illocutionary force” (p. 47). The next step is operationalizing the search for addressees and targets linguistically. Hereby, the author anchors the operationalization in specific linguistic forms. Whereas addressees are connected to the explicit reference with second-person forms, targets are those discourse participants being aimed at by means of third-person forms. Supported by evidence from the corpus, these theoretical maneuvers enable the search for linguistic acts entailing third-person references to discourse participants.

The subsequent chapter 4, “Referring to people in parliamentary interaction”, explains the in-depth architecture of the corpus as well as the methodology. The sub-corpora UK-PARL (United Kingdom), DE-PARL (Germany), and FR-PARL (France), consisting of transcript data from the British House of Commons, the German Bundestag, and the French Assemblée nationale, were all marked up manually into XML. The corpora comprise “one parliamentary debate concerning the European Council per country and per year between 1998 and 2015” (p. 54). Studying dialogue from both the same genre and on the same topic in the three countries allows for a reasonable tertium comparationis. The German corpus is by far the largest one (417,095 number of tokens), followed by the British corpus with 188,913 tokens and, lastly, the French corpus with 137,620 tokens. The research method encompasses, as a first step, a search run by means of the CQP system (Corpus Query Processor) for various kinds of pronouns, determiners, proper names, and nouns. The lemmas manually selected for analysis, as a second step, are solely pronouns, determiners and quantifiers, such as sie, sämtlich- und derjenige (German); he, all and who (English); ils, tous and qui (French), to mention but a few examples. Although the author embarks on a comparative journey, she does not aim to merely compare fre-
quences of lexical units in the three sub-corpora. The focus is rather to “provide an integrated framework for the cross-linguistic investigation of third-person forms in discourse while accounting for genre-based institutional constraints” (p. 79–80). One such important constraint is the rule of procedure in the House of Commons to always address other MPs with third-person forms. Occurrences of this kind are not included in the analysis.

Chapter 5, “Performing democracy. Political discourse as a polyphonic space”, is the first out of five empirical chapters examining corpus data. The possibility of creating a multiplicity of (fictional) voices by using third-person forms is in focus. The author displays, for instance, how the third person, such as the German indefinite pronoun *man* ‘one’, is used to present alternative views on a political topic by indirectly referring to other MPs attending the debate:

“... das kann man wollen, aber man muss wissen, über was man entscheidet...” ‘one can want that, but one must know what one decides’ (p. 88)

In the next chapter (6), “Targeting the opponents. Shaping an image of the other”, the issue of construing others by linguistic means is pivotal. The author discloses how views held by the opponents are assessed as wrong and how third-person forms contribute to such a pragmatic meaning. Another salient function of third-person forms in the context of targeting the opponents is its employment in “acting on the targets” (p. 129), i.e. requesting other MPs to perform certain actions. One important finding substantiated with evidence from the three sub-corpora is the tendency to pluralize the opponents with quantifiers such as *all, every, and alle diejenigen* ‘all those’.

Chapter 7, “Pragmatic meaning & plasticity of third-person forms”, explores the circumstance that certain third-person forms can be used to denote both in-group and out-group members, from the speaker’s point of view. To account for this instance of pragmatic meaning, Truan applies the notion of plasticity. It is shown, for instance, that French *certains* ‘some’ mainly “orientates the argumentation towards negative implications” (p. 146) and, interestingly, that German *manch- und einig- ‘some* function in a similar way.

The most extensive empirical chapter (8), “Pointing at colleagues. Indirectness and politeness revisited”, divulges indirect and non-specific third-person references. The author shows how such forms are often attached to certain discourse participants by means of contextualization. Based on a literature review on indirectness, politeness, vagueness, and other related pragmatic concepts, it is argued that third-person forms do not necessarily convey indirect meaning. Another focal point of this chapter is hints. What can be called the fluidity of reference in the pragmatics of hints allows the speaker to retract from an utterance and “hide away from difficult situations by refusing to take responsibility for the assignation of reference” (p. 220).
In the last empirical chapter (9), “Acknowledging calls in-between. Doing being a Member of Parliament”, a special kind of turns is under scrutiny. In order to account for what other scholars have regarded as interruptions, the author translates the German term Zwischenruf as ‘calls in-between’. Calls in-between are interruptive in the sense that an MP initiates an unauthorized call while another MP is talking. Nevertheless, such calls fulfill other meaningful functions in parliamentary debate. The author displays, for instance, how calls in-between are deployed by “integrating the intervention of unauthorized speakers into the legitimate speech” (p. 244). It is shown that third-person forms are used strategically in the context of calls in-between.

The last chapter (10), “Conclusion. Targeting via the third person”, summarizes the findings of the study and, again, underlines that research into the politics of person reference is an urgent linguistic enterprise. Its very raison d’être is encapsulated in this key remark: “The way speakers talk about one other says a lot about what they have to say to one other” (p. 245; emphasis in original). Also, some differences between the three parliamentary cultures studied are highlighted. One important finding is the notion of German MPs tending to indirectness, although they combine it with salient references possible to retrieve by means of contextualization in analysis. Finally, the author provides an outlook for future research, thereby shortly summarizing some observations made on instances of third-person reference on the social media platform Twitter (nowadays X).

Concluding remarks

Combining theoretical insights and methodological tools from corpus linguistics, conversation analysis, discourse studies, and French enunciative linguistics, this study is, all in all, a convincing and innovative piece of scholarly work, albeit somewhat eclectic in the sense of theoretically disparate. The context-sensitive analyses of utterances from parliamentary dialogue are carried out meticulously, and the theoretical concepts applied fruitfully in the detailed inquiries. The study demonstrates the relevance of combining cross-linguistic data from a solid corpus set-up with a clear theoretical foundation. Another major asset of this monograph is its considerably eloquent and accessible style. It sets out in medias res with an everyday example of third-person reference, thereby arousing the curiosity on part of the reader, and continues in the same manner.

Nonetheless, Truan’s investigation also raises a few questions in methodological as well as theoretical regards. First, the author underlines third-person reference as having thus far been neglected in research; she states that the connection between the third person and the target of an utterance “has never been made until
now” (p. 14). While it is true that third-person reference certainly does not take center stage, there are indeed some scholarly considerations to be found. For instance, Williams (2020, p. 4) has recently made the very same observation. Moreover, already in the 1960s, Downing (1969, p. 571; emphasis in original) put forward by dint of utterances such as Someone close the door! that “there are also imperatives which begin, not with the verb or stressed you, but with third-person forms”. Neither Williams nor Downing is accounted for by Truan. Second, there is a questionable gap in ambition adhering to the corpus-technical efforts and the treatment of quantities in the analyses. The examples put forward to substantiate different pragmatic functions of third-person forms are all well selected, but it remains to be explained to what extent they are significant or salient in relation to other functions that were found and examined. In short, no comprehensive description of the functions is given in relation to the data generated by the corpus searches, except from occasionally reported frequencies of forms. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, Truan has made it fully clear that third-person reference in political discourse is a promising and pertinent subject for future linguistic research.

**Literature**
