

## **2022 DGA Young Scholars Group Methods Workshop**

Würzburg, March 4–6, 2022

### **Report by Franca Balster, Jonas Lindner, and Lena Wassermann**

The biennial DGA Young Scholars Group (YSG) method workshop took place from the 4th to the 6th of March 2022 in Würzburg. Young academics with a background in Asian Studies came together to learn about and discuss qualitative and quantitative methods that are relevant for doing research in times of the pandemic.

The workshop was opened on Friday evening by the current YSG representatives Philipp Immel, Helen Hess, Hannes Gohli, Wiegand Körber, and Dissa Paputungan. After the participants got to know each other, Prof Dr Björn Alpermann, Chair of Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Würzburg, gave the keynote lecture on the topic of “Ethics in Research”.

Prof Alpermann identified three dimensions of ethics that are relevant to research: professional, personal, and political. Using this lens, Alpermann discussed the practicability of highly formalised recommendations by ethics commissions, such as the principle of “informed consent” in the field. Drawing on a wide range of academic sources and his own rich experience of conducting fieldwork in China, he advocated for research ethics that are informed by the individual circumstances of the research environment and the researcher, instead of blindly following prescribed checklists of supposedly ethical research.

On Saturday, the three workshops on the topics of “Discourse Analysis”, “Quantitative Text Analysis”, and “Online Interviews” took place.

The workshop on discourse analysis was led by Dimitry Okropiridze. The morning session established a general understanding of the three approaches to discourse analysis: (1) the linguistic approach; (2) the sociological approach, and (3) the philosophical approach. In the afternoon, the course discussed relevant literature on the topic of “sociology of knowledge approach to discourse analysis” in more detail. Afterwards, the participants had the opportunity to present their own projects to the class and receive feedback from the other participants and Mr Okropiridze.

The workshop moderated by Du Keli focused on “Quantitative Text Analysis”. In the morning, the participants were provided with the theoretical background of “Authorship Attribution” with the Delta method, followed by a hands-on session, where learnt material was tested on a real-life dataset. In the afternoon, “Topic Modelling” with Latent Dirichlet Allocation was introduced as a second method for quantitative text analysis. In a later hands-on exercise, the participants could experiment with a provided dataset to see the method work in reality. The course ended with the discussion of remaining questions and advice on how to familiarise oneself further with methods of computational science.

The third workshop group, led by Anna-Katharina Schaper and Theresa Krause, dealt intensively with the topic of “Online Interviews”. Throughout the day, the workshop was characterised by exchange in small groups and the active discussions among the groups. Initially, the participants dealt with the challenges of digital research and online interviews and, finally, how and with which tools these could best be overcome. Afterwards, the participants were asked to create an exemplary guide for a fictitious online interview, which was then tested in a simulated interview. Above all, the workshop offered the opportunity to exchange experiences between the leaders and participants, to share new helpful tools and to obtain inspiration for one’s own research project.

On Sunday, the groups reconvened to reflect on what they had learnt in their respective workshops. Then, the participants presented and discussed their findings in the plenum. Afterwards the workshop was closed by the current YSG representatives.

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