Language and Ideology

**LANGUAGE**

**tells us a great deal about the IDEOLOGY of those who use it - politicians - but also those who report on the work of politicians.**

Language and Power

Norman Fairclough: *Language and Power*, 1989

**LANGUAGE contributes to the DOMINATION of some people by others.**

Language is a primary medium of social control and power.

We can't afford to ignore language!

Norman Fairclough: *Language and Power*, 1989

**Language is part of society**
- Language is a social process
- Language is socially conditioned (conditioned by other parts of society)
- Linguistic phenomena are social phenomena
- Social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena

**Process of Production**

- Spoken (generally) a written transcription of what is said

**Process of Interpretation**

- Discourse
The problem of truth (1)

1) Politicians often complain about bias in the media and about witch-hunts
   - bias: biases, prejudices, preconceptions, preferences or inclinations;
   - witch-hunts: a hunt against opponents, searching out and harassing dissenters;

2) “media do not report the truth, but present a distorted picture which serves their own interests”

The problem of truth (2)

3) the complaints often concern the presentation of a story including the language used to tell it
4) Is there an absolute truth? Is there a neutral language? Is there an unbiased report?
   - unbiased: impartial, fair, non-partisan

Truth

There’s no such thing as “absolute truth”.

Truth is both relative and subjective.

The idea of truth is very problematic especially when reporting a political story: you can report the same story in many different ways.

The power of metaphor

When a word or phrase is used to establish a comparison between one idea and another, substitution of one thing for another in order to suggest comparison or resemblance.

A figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity.

Although some metaphors are easy to detect, some others are embedded/enfolded in the language.

Inactive metaphors: metaphors which have become lexicalised, defined in dictionaries with their new meaning.
Metaphors

What spheres of life are metaphors drawn from?

- everyday life
- nature
- religion
- sport
- war
- animal behaviour
- technology
- disaster
- body and disease

The role of metaphors

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Goatly (1997) investigated the role of metaphors in everyday speech.

METAPHOR OF THE JOURNEY

MATCHING:

1. step by step
2. go round in circles
3. go off in the wrong direction
4. arrive at a conclusion
5. be lost
6. be stuck

a) keep going back to the same subject
b) be confused
c) gradually, in stages, little by little
d) be confused, puzzled, lost
e) reach a conclusion, decide on an issue
f) going on the wrong track

Journey & path

- women have to lead the way
- there is a lot ahead of us
- how far this country has come
- the pioneers who began charting the path that we ourselves walk today
- willingness to make this march together with us
- we will take those steps together
- we will keep moving toward a destination
- women and men around the world are stepping forward
- consolidate our gains and to keep momentum moving forward

Journey & path (2)
SPORT AND WAR

Two common sources of metaphors in politics are SPORT and WAR: both involve physical contest.

Boxing metaphors: convey a sense of toughness and aggression in electoral campaigns when elections are seen as a fight.

Baseball metaphors: especially in the USA? The UK?

Cricket metaphors: especially in the USA? The UK?

BOXING METAPHORS

MATCHING
1. the gloves are off
2. bare-knuckle fight
3. throw in the towel
   a) give up, admit defeat
   b) without boxing gloves
   c) it is going to be a serious dispute

BASEBALL METAPHORS

MATCHING
1. a new ball game
2. a ball park figure
3. spin
4. to play ball
5. back at first base
   a) to go back to the initial stage
   b) to rotate quickly
   c) to agree to do something together
   d) a rough or approximate number
   e) a particular situation radically different from the preceding one

CRICKET METAPHORS

1. to keep your eye on the ball
2. batting on a sticky wicket
3. to be stumped by a question
4. to play a straight bat to a question
   a) to remain alert
   b) to be confused or puzzled by a question
   c) to avoid answering someone’s question
   d) to find yourself in difficulty because of your position on an issue
WAR METAPHORS

MATCHING
1. hit the ground running
2. damage control
3. campaign
4. leads are surrendered
5. collateral damage
6. ethnic cleansing
7. fighting a last-ditch

a) something done as a final recourse to prevent a crisis or disaster
b) incidental destruction of things (not the intended target)
c) eliminating unwanted ethnic or religious groups
d) effort to minimize damage or loss
e) military operations; activities to achieve a goal
f) running straight into action; start very energetically
g) give in

Work in pairs. What is the meaning of these metaphors in your language?

- acceptable losses
- acceptable risk
- acting a part
- adding value
- all the world’s a stage
- at stake
- balancing the books
- be a machine
- bombarded by insults
- cost-benefit analysis

Do you know what source they come from (politics, sports, religion, history, economics, family life, health and medicine...)?

Melting pot or salad bowl?

Work in pairs. What is the meaning of these metaphors in your language?

- diamond in the rough
- difficult to swallow
- food for thought
- launching an attack
- melting pot
- my life is an open book
- no pain, no gain
- play hide and seek
- play to win
- puppet government
- salad bowl

Work in pairs. What is the meaning of these metaphors in your language?

- sowing the seeds of progress
- the best defense is a good offense
- to sing the same old song
- to strike a familiar chord
- to be on the offensive
- take flak
- target
- time bomb
- to have faith
- witch-hunt

Pronoun reference

Pronoun reference is very important in political persuasion.

you / your
- the reader is being addressed personally
- you is not just the single reader but also everyone in the country

we / our
- politicians are trying to persuade us to a point of view
- we already agree with them
- we gives a sense of collectivity, of us being all together
**Degree of adjectives and adverbials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Comparative</th>
<th>Superlative</th>
<th>Adverbial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>heavy</td>
<td>heavier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>honest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrast of comparison in adjectives and adverbials is called degree.

---

**Cohesion and anaphoric reference**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohesion</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical cohesion</td>
<td>words which are repeated in the text (repetition or iteration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammaral cohesion</td>
<td>conjunction creates cohesion (temporal: after, before; formal: first, second, third, contentorous: coordinating and; adverbial: however, additive: further, what's more)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse markers</td>
<td>demonstratives: this, that, these, they point back at something that has already been mentioned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The power of metonymy**

Replacing the name of something with something which is connected to it, or is a part of it, without being the whole thing.

---

**Work in pairs. Try to explain these examples of metonymy.**

- He bought a Ford.
- It’s a big question mark to me.
- He’s got a Picasso.
- Let’s not let Iraq become another Viet Nam.
- Napoleon lost at Waterloo.
- The bases are on strike.
- The boss is in waiting for his check.
- The Times hasn’t arrived at the Press Conference yet.
- The White House isn’t saying anything.
- Wall Street is in a panic.
- Watergate changed our politics.
- 9/11
- Affirm won the soccer match.
- The pen is a powerful weapon.

---

**Synecdoche**

- Part of something refers to whole.
- It is sometimes considered a subclass of metonymy.
- A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, the whole for a part, the specific for the general, the general for the specific, or the material for the thing made from it.
- It is a **synecdoche** if A is part of B, or vice versa.
- It is a **metonymy** if A is commonly associated to B but it is not necessarily a part of it.
Work in pairs. Discuss on the meaning of the following examples of synecdoche.

She's just a pretty face.
There are a lot of faces out there in the audience.
We need some new faces around here.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Hands
Mouths to feed
The press
Oh, this hurts my heart!
There are lots of ears in next room.

Intertextuality

One text uses reference to another.
- *gate* = scandal
What is Watergate?
Watergate, sexygate, Camillagate, fornigate, Dianagate, zipergate, Monicagate, Lewinskygate, Rubygate (Billgate? Silviogate? NO!)
- *poli* from the Greek *polis*
baraccopoli, tendopoli, tangentopoli, concorsopoli, vallettopoli

The power of analogy

- **Metaphor, metonymy** and **synecdoche**: word or phrase level. They establish comparison between words and phrases, between one idea with another.
- **Analogy**: comparing two objects of different types; but these two objects have certain elements in common. Objects of the first kind have a certain characteristic: it is not known if objects of the second kind have it or not, but by analogy we conclude that since objects of the two kinds have certain things in common, they may have other things in common as well.
- **Analogy**: comparison between one thing and another, in an attempt to explain or clarify a certain situation.

Household debt analogy

- Margaret Thatcher used analogy comparing the **economy of the nation** with the **economy of an individual household**: as it is dangerous for a family to have debts (to accumulate debts), so it is dangerous for a country to do the same.

Household debt analogy

government budget = family budget

The art of spin

*spin*: (baseball) putting spin on a ball is a pitcher's technique used to fool or deceive an opponent
*doctor*: a "healer", someone who resolves a problem, a crisis

**SPIN**

- **SPIN**
  - **S**omeone **P**erson **I**n **N**o **E**ther
  - **P**resenting a false picture to suit the politician
  - person who is employed to publish favourable commentary on the opinions and actions of a famous person (usually a politician) in order to prevent negative publicity
  - porteavoce incaricato di fornire interpretazioni di fatti e informazioni che favoriscono un particolare partito o una personalità politica
Spin: active or passive voice

Foregrounding or backgrounding participants:

1) Chancellor announces tax cuts (active voice—Chancellor given prominence)
2) Tax cuts announced by Chancellor (passive voice—less prominence given to Chancellor)
3) Tax cuts announced (passive voice, actor not included—no reference to Chancellor)

Opinion polls (1)

- Inquiries into public opinion conducted by interviewing a random sample of people.
- Opinion polls are used by the media to assess public perception on political issues.
- They are used during electoral campaigns to see how people are likely to vote.
- They are also used during the lifetime of a government to see how the public views the government’s performance.

Opinion polls (2)

- Exit polls are taken on voting day.
- The pollsters interview people about their views on various issues.
- Sometimes the findings depend on how the questions are asked.
- Findings are often interpreted by journalists and by political parties in different ways in order to make them seem more favourable.
- Both journalists and political parties apply their own particular SPIN.
Questions Unit 2 - 6 cfu exam (1)

1. Why is the ‘problem’ of truth particularly relevant in the language used by politicians and those who report political news in the press?

2. Give definitions of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and analogy, with simple examples.

3. Give examples of journey, sports (cricket, baseball, boxing) and war metaphors.

4. Metonymy is a powerful tool because it ‘gives a more sympathetic picture ... and a favourable view’, or removes direct responsibility for an action. Find examples.

Questions Unit 2 - 6 cfu exam (2)

5. Intertextuality is when a text refers to another text that is associated with it in some way. This is why it is often difficult for non-English people to understand English newspapers and magazines (and for non-Italians to understand Italian news stories and articles). But ‘intertextuality’ can operate across national boundaries. Can you think of any examples?

6. Where does the term spin-doctor come from? What is the job of a spindoctor?

7. What are opinion polls? What is the relation between opinion polls and spin?