



Book Review

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Perspectives in Politics and Discourse. Okulski, U., & Cap, P. (Eds.). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamin Publishing Co., 2010, 416 pages. (Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society and Culture, ISSN1569-9463; V.36). ISBN 9789027206275

Overview

The various works contained within the *Perspectives in Politics and Discourse*, edited by Okulski & Cap (2010a), are a collection of chapters, although are diverse and heterogeneous, are focused on political linguistics. Political linguistics is broadly focused on “studies of language in mainly (but not exclusively) political settings... complimented by research on power positions and social perceptions of language as means of struggle for cultural/communal superiority and dominance” (Okulski & Cap, 2010a, p. 3). Political linguistics has a tendency to be informed by those fields which are in close proximity, such as pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and social psychology.

As such, the myriad of research and topics which it encompasses has, within this volume been organised to be a volume of Analysis of Political Discourse (APD). This is to consider not only political studies, but also “studies on violence and war, or social identity construction, on migration, racism, and nationalism” (Okulski & Cap, 2010a, p. 4). It contains a wide selection of topics and fields, which includes political rhetoric, metaphors and ideology; media or mediated discourse; the language of politics; and the politics of language such as inhibiting the linguistic human rights of individuals within institutions. Beyond this, it provides insight into the use of language to impose social ideas, power, dominance and inequality within political and institutional contexts.

Within the volume, Critical Discourse Analysis, System Functional Linguistics and Critical linguistics are used to analyse the contemporary and historical empirical data while proposing empowerment and changes. This is complemented by the use of various other theoretical tools and methods to analyse political and institutional discourse, language and text. As such, the aims of the book are to not to subscribe to any one method of analysis, but rather, to test and develop the characteristics of political linguistics and APD, while revealing gaps and proposing further research within the field.

The volume contains twenty chapters, which outlines and provides commentary on a multiplicity of political discourse and highlights innovative perspectives for any potential and present linguistic scholar.

Chapter synopsis

Part I – Introduction

The introduction of the volume provides insight into background to Political Linguistics and Analysis of Political Discourse and how it is and may be used to analyse complex political language, dialogue and text. Within the opening remarks, the editors (Okulski & Cap, 2010a) outline the aims of the book while indicating the central features of comprehensiveness, structural vigor and economy of argument. This is followed by an overview of the chapters and the final remark that language is the vehicle used to usurp political and power, but it is also the vehicle to expose and prevent such power.

Part II – Classification and naming of in political rhetoric

This section of the volume begins with the origins, development and evolution regarding the metaphor of the body politic and the notion that the 'body' and 'illness' have been metaphorically used to understand, effect and validate politics from the 15th to the 20th century. In addition, it highlights contemporary expressions "demonstrate that the human body still serves as a highly 'productive' source domain in the perception and conceptualisation of socio-political reality" (Musolff, 2010, p. 24). To illustrate these metaphoric traditions, obscured by time, the metaphor of the body politic traditions used by John of Salisbury, Christine de Pizan, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbs, Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss were used to demonstrate the historical origins of such imagery and semantic factors which can endure within and have an effect on contemporary societies.

Musolff, Skinner & Squillacote (2010) further discuss the body as a metaphor, has its own metaphors, where the body is viewed and described as a machine. In their chapter, they discuss the use of such metaphors in the 21st century and suggest the need to "abandon the 'body' metaphor altogether and attempt to see the world anew" (Skinner & Squillacote, 2010, p. 43). This proposal is in light of how metaphors of the body, such as health and illness or cleanliness and uncleanliness have so much control and are used to stimulate and endorse 'political struggles' such as the US War on Terror. This discussion is concluded by indicating the need to move beyond the dualistic view of health and illness where illness must be rooted out with antagonism and violence. The authors propose the metaphoric body can be healthy, while concurrently being ill and that a nation which disagrees with another is not inherently ill, a rogue state, nor does it need to be eliminated if it becomes formidable.

Conversely, as part two moves away from the metaphor of the body politic, it discusses the power and influence which political rhetoric and imagery of the media can have on politicians and also a country. The example of Jacques Chirac is used when he was negatively labeled, a common English used animalistic metaphor to describe the French, *Le Worm*. This was due to French opposition to the US led intervention of the 2003 Iraq war. Subsequently many negative descriptions and negative sensory and dehumanising connotations were later used by the media when discussing the then French president. In addition, other labels such as *axis of weasels* were used for those, including France who blocked UN sanctions for war.

As such, these labeling, discursive practices and national stereotyping legitimised and gave authority to view the French (and Germany) as not playing fair and were 'outsiders', thus delegitimising or dehumanising for their non-participation. Chovanec (2010) highlights the use of political language, stereotyping and value laden text within in the media can be used to marginalize 'us' and 'them' in terms the action of war while dehumanising, animalising and denigrating those who oppose such interventions. In addition, such discourse can also act as a powerful way to legitimise the actions of the 'in-group' and bolster those actions within the wider community.

The final chapter of part two focusses more generally on the use and misuse of labels within political discourse conducted in mass media and monitored through a number of web-based media sources. Molek-Kozakowska (2010), discusses the media as an entity which delivers misleading, over simplified, manipulative and an erosion of political discourse. So too, supplying dramatized political coverage as entertainment or at least 'infotainment', in an attempt to maintain its consumers, market share of advertising and a competitive advantage over other media outlets. The author then highlights how the internet has provided a means for independent media monitors and the community to examine, scrutinize and expose the generated politics of "mass-mediated hyper-reality" (El-Hussari, 2010, p. 85). The chapter then analyses, discusses and demonstrates through a number illustrations "how labels can effectively mask offensive meanings with euphemisms, legitimise official policies by simplifying complex and equivocal issues, and function as insults discrediting political opponents" (Okulska & Cap, 2010a, p. 12).

Part III – Critical insights into political communication

Within part three of the volume, the focus moves beyond metaphor, political rhetoric, imagery and the use of labels, down to the 'grass-roots' of language usage which brings about tangible, influential and calculating properties of political institutional communication. As such, the first two chapters focus on the manipulative use of text and language at the time of political calamity. It uses a Critical discourse Analysis (CDA) approach for an address made in 2007 by President George W. Bush's regarding US policy in Iraq as an illustration.

Initially, El-Hussari (2010) introduces to his readers how the use of language and text can create advantage, power, popularity and shape the consent of the populace, while eliminating political responsibility. Nevertheless, El-Hussari (2010, p. 99) uses CDA to debunk and decipher the underlying purposes and use of language by dominant individuals, which is seek public support by “construct[ing] versions of reality that favour [sic] their often hidden agendas”.

The examination of the political address breaks the speech down into the underlying use of key words and phrases with repetition, rhetoric and omission as apparatus to bring about changes in policy, while highlighting the use of emotion and past events to shape future realities both nationally and globally. Overall, the chapter is superlative for those who seek to understand the use of CDA in political discourse, but also to understand the discourse regarding the war on ‘terror’ and how the underlying motives for entering Iraq was promulgated.

However, the subsequent chapter is an examination of the movement of discourse from material ‘evidence’ for the Iraq war, in the form of weapons of mass destruction, to the use of rhetoric and the rationalization of ideology (Cap, 2010). This is achieved as the speaker uses ‘proximization’ in which the speaker uses language which gives the listener or addressee the understanding that certain events have a direct and negative impact on them personally. Thus, legitimizing the speakers need for certain interventions, such as the Iraq war, to occur. The addressees then comply with this language and message which is provided by the speaker.

Cap (2010), then outlines and discusses the proximization model and in what manner language and discourse regarding the physical presence and threat of weapons of mass destruction is the altered to become a moral or ideological foundation for ongoing Iraq intervention. The chapter is comprehensive and complex, however provides profound insights in to the spatial, temporal and axiological features of proximization (Magistro, 2010).

The two initial chapter’s leads on to the section provided by Bastow (2010), who analyses, examines and discusses a number of US Department of Defense speeches using the integrated methods associated with ‘quantitative’ Corpus Linguistics (CL) and ‘qualitative’ CDA. The analysis focusses on the use and recurrent use of binomial phrases and word cluster, such as *men and women* in addition to *friends and allies* and *the cold war*, to bring about easily understandable, more concrete and acceptable ideas, which are seen as an institutions values and beliefs. These can cause blurring of distinctions which can be politically useful when delivering speeches on Defence matters. As such, Bastow (2010, p. 154) indicates these lexical ‘tricks of the trade’ “may indeed be ‘talking us over’ to a particular point of view”.

The final two chapters shift focus to critically examine contemporary and historic institutional communication. Magistro (2010) examines institutional communication which is becoming increasingly informal to appear more trustworthy by consumers and potential customers so as to gain competitive edge. This is particularly evident as private organisations increasingly mimic public organisations which are marketed for the ever increasing consumer culture. However, within the public sector, the discourse exposes a more profound process of commodification, where public organisations become products and beneficiaries of these products are now customers (Magistro, 2010).

To highlight these changes, and hybridization of public sector discourse through greater ‘infomralization’, the discourse of European Union policy documents are examined. As such, Magistro (2010) within the analysis of a number of these documents, goes further to suggest these changes in communication and discourse, will provide the platform for social and identity change amongst Europe and its constituents.

Conversely, the final chapter examines the development of the political and social construction of the world through the use of letter and letter writing in the 15th-17th century England. It is within this analysis that Okulska (2010), reveals the process of how social relationship and networks were developed and built within early political England. It provides insight into the linguistic patterns of discourse which are culturally rooted codes of behaviour, while demonstrating the use of language in letter writing which directs, motivates, persuades and shapes its readers and the social practices of those around them.

Part IV – Voices of mediatized politics

Although a number of chapters have highlighted and discussed the role media play in politics, part four of the volume dedicates its time to underline and scrutinize the processes undertaken by the media, in

its various formats. It highlights how political discourse is constructed through and impacted by the interactions with the media. For example, chapter eleven is devoted to the 2007 press conference, where President Bush used 'hedging' within his discourse and speech. Hedging is a weakening of the full value of a statement or what is being said.

Fraser (2010) provides many examples for the reader to make sense of this less well researched linguistic device, such as "*I think I must ask you... [and]... he kind of missed the point*" (Fraser, 2010, p. 202). Fraser (2010) goes on to discuss and highlight how the use of hedging within the 2007 press conference was used and provides insight to greater understand less formal speech and when politicians and individuals attempt to answer difficult questions and the processes at which questions can and are evaded.

This chapter is then followed by a section which is devoted to the topic of politicians building self-images and political discourse of the ever increasingly powerful political blog. The chapter discusses in greater detail the impact and the effect e-politics has on communicating with the electorate, spreading political information, messages of propaganda and as a tool for political campaigning. Janoschka (2010), outlines the positive influence the internet, particularly blogging, has been by changed how politicians interact with the public and how these interaction has shifted from a unidirectional format, to one where the interaction with the public is a two-way processes.

The internet has become a medium, where access to political figures has become closer and more immediate. However, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to some of the challenges which this new immediate and intimate interaction brings, which includes the discourse, language, text and linguistic weapons used within blogs. The chapter provides an insightful discussion regarding mediated political discourse which is ever increasing electronically.

Conversely, Moir (2010), views and examines the mediated discourse of public opinion, rather than politicians instigating and stimulating communication and discourse. In his chapter, he argues the discourse of public opinion through the media can often be a blemished and be a reduced or an abridged version of opinionated reality, which has a propensity to influence how the public react to political problems, to politicians and voting behaviour. Moir (2010), highlights the well-established social psychology of voting is outlined and discussed. However, the discussion also moves to a discussion of how voters are more fluid in their voting behaviours, where leader, party image, current issues, performance and emotion are what motivates voter choice.

A more contemporary view of voter choice and behaviour is through the ideology of 'opinionation', where one has opinion on any number of matters and there is a desire to know the opinion of others. Within the context of voting behaviour, 'opinion' polls have the propensity to influence how other voters behave and act when voting. As an insight into voter behaviour and opinionation, Moir (2010), uses the example of British voters and Tony Blair time in office to highlight the issues, challenges and to give the reader an encompassing understanding of this ideology and the media dominated issues.

The final two chapters of part four focus on cross-cultural translation of political events in the media and how it has a propensity to alter the dialogue which can then meet the need of media outlets to maximize sellable news for an international audience (Schäffner, 2010). In addition, these chapters also focus on how media can transform news events to adjust "its scenarios to the expectations of the media recipients" (Okulski & Cap, 2010a, p. 14). Kovalyova (2010), highlights this by discussing the Western coverage of pre-election events occurring in the Ukraine in 2004 where reality was modified from political unrest to be a more newsworthy and palatable political revolution.

Part V – Politicizing 'linguistic human rights'

The remaining volume of work in part five focusses the violation of 'linguistic human rights'. The various authors devote their energies on multilingualism and the policies which surround and discriminate against the use of minority languages and cultures in education. In addition it also focusses on reinforcing social prejudice through the use of language. As such, the initial chapter in this section focuses on the attitudes towards the use of minority languages and how students' multicultural identities and language is negotiated in English *complimentary* schools, such as Bengali schools in Birmingham, England.

Blackledge (2010), highlights the breadth and depth of the various languages which are used in England while indicating society, educational institution and government ideology remains detached from the reality of multilingual societies and continues to prescribe to the hegemonic notion of monolingual-



ism. As an advocate to multilingualism, Blackledge (2010), further highlights and illustrates the challenges of people who use 'minority' languages in England. He suggests social change is beyond accepting linguistic and cultural differences and is about political and public discourse being accepting of difference while recognising conformity to the 'state' sanctioned language does not qualify as state loyalty.

Within the ethnographic study, Blackledge (2010) outlines the issues, challenges, attitudes and beliefs about languages within the English educational system. Despite the reluctance and opposition, multilingualism within the educational system has been shown to positively improve outcomes for those who speak 'minority' languages. He also highlights the need for greater minority language rights and to have "the right to be multilingual in a world dominated by monolingual ideology" (Blackledge, 2010, p. 322).

Likewise, Pfaff (2010) demonstrated similar challenges in Germany, where speaking German, the official language is required for ongoing residency and citizenship, yet there is a growing acceptance and recognition in Education for those who continue to speak 'minority' languages. Johnson-Beykont & Beykont (2010), also discuss the need for greater multi or bilingual acceptance in the US to ensure greater cognitive and social development occurs in within the classroom. The authors of three chapters have emphasized the need to move 'linguistic' policy beyond the current monolingual norm. They advocate for greater multilingualism, which will both enhance and ensure children are able meet the challenges which they encounter in education and wider community (Okulska & Cap, 2010a).

The final chapter focuses on violating linguistic human rights through discrimination practices and discourse itself. Bilewicz & Bocheńska (2010) highlight and illustrate this through Polish-French bilingual groups, where emotion rather than beliefs are used within discoursing practices. It was felt, as this process becomes better understood, it will reduce and circumvent discrimination in future social situations.

Part VI – Conclusion

The concluding chapter is provided by editors to highlight the importance of the volume and as a closing commentary on Political Linguistics, the language of politics and the politics of language. They go on further highlight the universality of Analysis of Political Discourse, which can analyse political discourse within policy documents, political speeches, inter country discourse, online forums and political discourse of the media, which both shape and enact power. In summary, they engage the readers to consider many of the processes, structure and content of the overall volume and to implement and generate Political Linguistics further, such as mediated political discourse (Okulska & Cap, 2010b).

Discussion

The various works within the *Perspectives in Politics and Discourse* are diverse and heterogeneous, however are focused on political linguistics and the use of Analysis of Political Discourse as a method of analysis. As a volume, it contains a wide selection of topics and fields, which discusses the use of language to impose social ideas, power, dominance and inequality within political and institutional contexts. As such, it discussed political rhetoric, metaphors and ideology; media or mediated discourse; the language of politics; and the politics of language such as inhibiting the linguistic human rights of individuals.

Overall the book is a complex, multifaceted and yet an insightful thought provoking work which entices its readers to examine more critically the discourse of policy, polity, and politics. It is highly recommended for those whose study foci are within the realm of political, organisational and institutional discourse which potentially may use a heterogeneous analytical approach within their own scholarly work to examine the language of politics and the politics of language. The collective works are a text, source and a reference for future study and scholarship.

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