

Language in Court: Ideology, Power and Cognition

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Abstract : Undoubtedly, the power of language is hardly a new topic; indeed, the persuasive power of language accompanied by ideology has long been recognized in different aspects of life. The two and a half thousand-year-old Bisitun inscriptions in Iran, proclaiming the victories of the Persian King, Darius, are considered by some historians to have been an early example of the use of propaganda. Added to this, the modern age is the true cradle of fully-fledged ideologies and the ongoing process of centrifugal ideologization. The most visible work on ideology today within the field of linguistics is “Critical Discourse Analysis” (CDA). The focus of CDA is on “uncovering injustice, inequality, taking sides with the powerless and suppressed” and making “mechanisms of manipulation, discrimination, demagoguery, and propaganda explicit and transparent.” possible way of relating language to ideology is to propose that ideology and language are inextricably intertwined. From this perspective, language is always ideological, and ideology depends on the language. All language use involves ideology, and so ideology is ubiquitous - in our everyday encounters, as much as in the business of the struggle for power within and between the nation-states and social statuses. At the same time, ideology requires language. Its key characteristics - its power and pervasiveness, its mechanisms for continuity and for change - all come out of the inner organization of language. The two phenomena are homologous: they share the same evolutionary trajectory. To get a more robust portrait of the power and ideology, we need to examine its potential place in the structure, and consider how such structures pattern in terms of the functional elements which organize meanings in the clause. This is based on the belief that all grammatical, including syntactic, knowledge is stored mentally as constructions have become immensely popular. When the structure of the clause is taken into account, the power and ideology have a preference for Complement over Subject and Adjunct. The subject is a central interpersonal element in discourse: it is one of two elements that form the central interactive nub of a proposition. Conceptually, there are countless ways of construing a given event and linguistically, a variety of grammatical devices that are usually available as alternate means of coding a given conception, such as political crime and corruption. In the theory of construal, then, which, like transitivity in Halliday, makes options available, Cognitive Linguistics can offer a cognitive account of ideology in language, where ideology is made possible by the choices a language allows for representing the same material situation in different ways. The possibility of promoting alternative construals of the same reality means that any particular choice in representation is always ideologically constrained or motivated and indicates the perspective and interests of the text-producer.

Keywords : power, ideology, court, discourse

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