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LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL POWER

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics with special reference to the teaching of English.

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ABSTRACT

Unequal social relations and domination by individuals and groupings in a society can be created and maintained by violence. But this generally is inadequate for the legitimation of that situation or for the acquiescence of those less privileged; the maintenance of the inequality is effected by *language*, by devaluing the subjugated's language and by using language to create the impression of the legitimacy of the unequal relations. This study aims to explore some aspects of how language and specifically speech acts are structured to create unequal social relations and link this to discourse practices that maintain this inequality. Language is, however, not an inflexible medium; as it can be used to shape the subjugated's consciousness to regard the inequality as normal, it can also form and reflect a resistance consciousness.

Language and power mesh in many ways. Chapter one will deal generally with issues of language and power relations in society. This dissertation hopes to focus on how ideology and power are present in and structured into utterances. Chapter two will show that the speech act theory can be extended to include ideological force or intent as part of a speech act. This intent is structured in the details of the utterance; and that will be the area of chapter three, which reviews the "critical linguistics" thinking around discourse analysis of manipulative intent; and the last chapter will focus on how language can be a means of resisting social domination and creating true consensus.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dedicated to Nazira

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1.General

Ali Mazrui recounts his experience of having his Swahili tested at gunpoint to prove that he was not a supporter of the deposed Bugandan leader who had marked his resistance to amalgamation into the East African community by insisting that his supporters refuse to learn Swahili:

> A linguistic test was now being used as a way of determining the degree of humiliation to which a captive person was to be subjected. (1975:37)

This incident presents a stark and extreme illustration of the relationship between language and social allegiance, social power and social resistance. The link can range from this unsubtle instance to careful ideological engineering of discourse aimed at persuading a receiver to accept a certain view as valid and normal.

This dissertation is based on the premise that people will often construct unequal power relations in society so that benefit may accrue to the more poweful. It requires violence and fear to create these unequal relations and they may be maintained by the same means. However stark violence is difficult to sustain; those less privileged would need to be persuaded that the inequality is legitimate or beyond their capacity to alter. For this to be accepted by the less powerful, for it to become part of their consciousness, the "message" has to be mediated in symbolic form, by ritual or by language. This study hopes to examine some aspects of how language mediates these ideological messages, and ways of

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diffusing the tensions and inequalities this language nexus creates and maintains. Though Language can be the means of subjugation, it can also be the route to an alternative consciousness that rejects unequal power relations as an unaltering condition of people.

The introductory chapter one, which charts the background of the topic, will first consider the area of language and society, after which there will be a summary of the various processes in which language and power mesh, ways which are not the focus of this dissertation, but are important to consider as the extended field of the topic.

2.The Focus of the Dissertation

Chapter one will note a variety of ways in which social power and language are interrelated. The entire area of study is a wide one and outside the range of this dissertation. Therefore the general field will be covered by the first chapter. The study will then focus on the following aspects, which are the subjects of chapter two and three:

* *.The social effects of speech acts; that is their
   perlocutionary effects which have social significance.
* *.This will be linked to the manipulative aspect of discourse;
   for this critical discourse analysis will be evoked.

Both these demonstrate power and ideology being mediated through language to produce social domination and to maintain inequality among persons and between groups.

Inequality and social asymmetry are not the unquestionable

conditions of people. Language can alter the consciousness because the spread of alternative principles is also effected by language. Through education and cooperation, by the spread of the practice and principles of democracy, a new consciouness can be forged that cherishes consensus and equality through dialogue. That will be the focus of the last chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

There is a connection between language and the social structure which points to the link between the use of language and social power. Chapter one will consider this in a general sense, thus forming the background to the specific study of the same area within speech acts and discourse analysis which will be undertaken in chapters two and three.

1. Language and Society.

This section will discuss the relationship between language and social interaction, and the social construction of meaning.

1.1 *Language and Social Interaction; social purposes through language*

Social relations of power, domination or mutual respect are embedded in interaction between people, and this interaction finds its expression in language. Language reflects the live situation within the structure of social forces in which people take up positions in relation to each other. Unless we begin to view social interaction as a play of forces, we might tend to assume that there is a neutrality in interaction and there are no power relations presented in language, a view fostered by most schooling and socialization processes. But an analysis of the language will indicate power relations being created, accepted or contested, as Roger Fowler writes:

> In real communication people are doing more than transmitting neutral positions...Their language assumes structuration reflecting their personal purposes in communication. (1986:70)

In communication people may wish to persuade, influence or have some effect on someone else, and these purposes and perlocutionary effects are expressed in the linguistic structure they employ.

It may be comparatively easy to perceive a marked and obvious intent if it is displayed overtly. I am arguing that all language has an intent. Even if the style suggests an innocence or neutrality, most language including accounts and descriptions contain what Shapiro (1984:2) calls the "mythic level", that is, they have a social function, a worldview to promote, affirm or deny. It is in the linguistic structure that these purposes can be found, as Shapiro writes:

> Seemingly neutral accounts of activities deliver, by dint of their grammatical and rhetorical structures, implicit political arguments, either legitimations for entrenched authority or polemical critiques which seem to demystify or disestablish existing structures of power and domination. (1984:2)

Even this dissertation has a plot or view it promotes, which is revealed by what is said and by virtue of how it is said, that is by its linguistic structure. Against the much promoted view of the neutrality of language and its objective existence, mediated through a focus on how effective a communication may be, this dissertation promotes the view that the social relations indicated by language are as important a consideration as the communication language may serve, or more to the point, the messages of the

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content can fully be realised only if there is an awareness of the social interaction and power relation between the speaker/writer and the receiver. This is not to deny that there can be referential or descriptive accounts of language, the stress here is on the social aspects and functions of language, especially its ideological purpose.

This does not mean that every speaker or utterance has some devious intent; to believe in this "plot" theory would be to display paranoia or cynicism. The point is that there are positions being promoted, either consciously or unconsciously. In the latter case the language structure has already assumed certain relations to which we have become socialized; we inherit by our upbringing a world view which is not neutral and we inherit a loaded language. Shapiro expresses this:

> Argument is sedimented in language....The flow of statements and meanings in any discursive practice, even the most austere, descriptively orientated ones are part of historically engendered social practices which preceed any speaker/author and, in addition, guide interpretative practices deployed on texts once they are produced.(1984:2)

Expressions of sexism in language are often in this way unconscious, part of the inherited language that mirrors the social world. There are examples of sexist language used in this dissertation, such as quotations employing the male pronoun for all people; this is the language I have inherited. We acquiesce to the ideological implications of the language we have learned and are unconscious of its bias. However we are not trapped in this; a critical reading of our own language forces an awareness of the power relations and

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value laden nature of the language we ourselves deploy. This critical reading or change in awareness is the main focus of my last chapter which looks at social resistance through language.

Under normal circumstances we come to accept not only the bias but also the norms our society has developed about speech. Hudson sums this thus:

> Society controls our speech in two
> ways. Firstly by providing a set of
> norms which we learn to follow
> ..Secondly society provides us with the
> motivation for adhering to these norms.
> (1980:119).

Our motivation for not questioning these norms and values is the desire to fit into society, of being accepted as a member of the in-group or for our social security. In this we agree to the limits our social world imposes on our language and social behaviour. Foucault (1984:109) calls these "powers of exclusion", among which he lists "prohibition", which he defines as:

> We know quite well that we do not have
> the right to say everything, that we
> cannot speak of anything in any
> circumstances whatever, and that not
> everyone has the right to speak
> anything whatever. In the taboo on the
> subject of speech, and the ritual of
> the circumstances of speech, and the
> privileged or exclusive right of the
> speaking subject we have the play of
> three types of prohibition.
> (in Shapiro 1984:109)

1.2. *Language and the social construction of meaning*

J.Wilson wrote:

> Man alone is capable of controlling his
> environment and himself by means of
> language techniques. (1972:1)

We order the world through our language; it categorizes and abstracts what otherwise would be inchoate. In this "construction" of the world, which is the meaning we and our language impose on our environment, not only do we assign significance to objects and persons, but we define ourselves in relation to them. It is in this relation to others that we construct social relations; and if this meaning is disseminated widely enough it permeates a society's consciousness to become our shared reality and agreed categorization pattern. We agree on these conventions. Roger Fowler has argued the role of language as the coding medium of our imposed world view:

> Language plays a major role in establishing the system of ideas or "theories" which we impose on the world...Language is the central part of the social process and is a highly efficient medium in the coding of social categorizations. (1986:18)

However any linguistic form studied in isolation has no set categorization or specificic observable ideology; its significance or meaning emerges in the specific discourse. This argues for a study of language in use to discern an ideological structure, rather than considering isolated examples of language. That can be done for syntactic analysis of the formal sort, but not for the meanings being discussed here. Gunter Kress argues that ideology and discourse are aspects of the same phenomenon and so language has to be analysed for social functioning:

> It is because linguistic forms always appear in a text and in a systematic form as the sign of the system of meaning embodied in a specific discourse that we can attribute ideological significance to them. The defined and delimited set of statements that contribute to a discourse are themselves expressive of and organised

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by a specific ideology.
(in van Dijk 1985:30)

The purposes of the communication and the social setting generate a characteristic meaning set which is coded in a specific structure of a text. To elicit or study this set the language cannot be separated from the social setting and then dissected for its significance; the interrelatedness of meaning and social setting is central to analysis.

The social construction of meaning is not something that is often negotiated democratically in a society. Different sections of society are located in different and unequal positions and they have differing degrees of control over the meanings in the society. It is likely that those in more powerful positions, economically and politically, will be more in a position to influence the set of meanings. Fowler indicates the different meanings:

> Our semantic repetoire and the
> structure of our language are similar
> to the resources of people who have
> similar paths through life and
> significantly different from others.
> (1986:148)

Much of this chapter will look at the procedures by which the powerful in society control the production of meaning, the procedures Foucault talks about:

> In every society the production of
> discourse is at once controlled,
> selected, organised and redistributed
> by a certain number of procedures whose
> role is to ward off its powers and
> dangers, to gain mastery over its
> chance events.
> (in Shapiro 1984:110)

So we note that language is an artificially and consciously organised method of control by use of symbols and conventions in the first place, and an ideological structuring in the second place

to give advantage to those in power in a society.

This view of power domination in language and society of which even those in power are often unconscious suggests a rather deterministic view of society, a lack of agency or contestation. This would be a narrow reading of what has been discussed thus far; there is often a clash of ideologies in a society, a contest reflected in the struggle to control the language, which by its ambiguous nature allows arenas of challenge. To believe otherwise would be to be trapped in a narrow version of the "Sapir-Whorf" hypothesis, a rigid social world insisting on a specifically constructed meaning system. Fowler has this to say about the challenge in the meaning system:

> A language embodies ways, not *one* way, of looking at the world, and in the circumstances it is obvious that speakers are not going to be trapped within one overriding system of beliefs. (1986:149)

Nor is contest the only alternative to a dominant hegemony through language; it is possible for people to act out democracy, to engage in true dialogue on equal footing, and to be rational. As I have argued, to believe otherwise is be cynical and to have no affirmative sense of people. This study will demonstrate both the contest over meanings and power and the possibility of a resolution to that contest by learning democracy through language.

2 Language and power

This dissertation intends to study aspects of speech acts and

discourse analysis to show the ideological underpinning of language in use. The area of language and power is however larger than this narrowed study. To gain some idea of the wider study, for which there can be no space in a dissertation of this length, the other aspects of the relationship of language and power are summarised in the following sections. They constitute important background considerations to the main thrust being presented in this study, the ideological effects of speech acts and discourse.

2.1.Privileging a Language.

A group in power, be they a majority or a minority, will often grant or insist on an official preference to their language in a multilingual society, or into a society into which they have penetrated and gained control. In the colonizing drive native languages were often devalued and they gained the status of being inferior, and as a result became neglected. In this way Irish was displaced by English, though in that country there is now a reversal and Irish is being promoted offically. But there the strength of English cannot now be diminished because it has become the native language of the majority and is the language of access. Besides the economic and cultural dependence of Ireland on England insists on the de facto promotion of English.

Ngugi wa Thiongo (1988) related how under British rule in Kenya Gikuyu speaking children were punished for speaking their mother tongue. This was to promote English, and:

> The domination of a people's language
> by the language of the colonising
> nations was crucial to the domination
> of the mental universe of the
> colonised. (Ngugi 1986:16)

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At present Afrikaans, the language of the white minority racist government in South Africa, is a compulsory official language in that country. The 1976 Soweto school student uprising against the state was triggered by the students' rejection of Afrikaans as the dominant medium of the school. South Africa, in common with many countries, has language selection as a central facet of its strife.

The list of such instances is large and growing. Often they appear idiosyncratic, such as the casting out from Hindi of Urdu derived vocabulary after the partition of India in 1947, but they are related to social issues of power, national pride, rejection of foreigners, forced integration, control of the economy and a host of cultural issues. The point is that power in society can be created and maintained by privileging a language over another. This is also an area of intense contestation, when languages are often kept alive, seemingly against all odds:

> I believe that my writing in Gikuyu, a
> Kenyan language, an African language,
> is part of the anti-imperialist
> struggles of Kenyan and African people.
> (Ngugi 1986:28)

2.2. *Privileging a standard dialect and a pronunciation preference*

In countries where there is a range of dialects and regional pronunciation, that of the dominant group emerges as the standard form and is associated with prestige. Preference in society, for employment into better paid positions, often requires a command of the standard form because the other regional varieties are considered inferior and unschooled. In England television and radio

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promote regional dialects and pronunciation to some extent, but status and education is still attached to those speaking the southern dialect of the middle-class with its "received" pronunciation. Economically prestigious jobs are likely to go to speakers of this form.

Because English is now an international language there are new dialects native to the the colonised regions which have retained English as an official language. Here too, preference for better positions is likely to go to those speaking a form closer to standard English and the received pronunciation. One of the South African students on this M.A. course at Durham, who speaks English with a Black South African Accent, desires her children to acquire a received pronunciation, and for this purpose her children attend a White private school in South Africa. Regional dialects and accents may be seen to be "colourful" or interesting, but they do not gain the status of the standard form.

Again this is a contested area. Scottish people retain a Scottish accent which is seldom seen as inferior to standard English. That is true only of the standard Edinborough^(burgh) accent; the working-class Glasgow accent would be far less socially prestigious.

2.3. Specialised Rhetorical Styles.

The specialised language of the in-group, that is the jargon and technical phraseology of a subject, position or field becomes a gate-keeping mechanism to bar those not familiar or initiated into this rarified style. This close-shop pattern can range from street

gangs to the argot of trade unions, but finds its most powerful

form in academia. Academics who become steeped in a special style

begin to use it as if it were normal discourse, and in this way

become inaccessible to the lay public or their students. Academic

progress by students is often no more than cracking the code of the

specialised area rather than any profundity. Pierre Bourdieu

castigates the discourse of teachers, especially the "magisterial"

discourse of university teachers:

> Of all the distancing techinques with
> which the institution equips its
> officers, magisterial discourse is the
> most effacious..(it) is able to appear
> as an intrinsic quality of the person.
> (1977:109)

Bourdieu sees this not as superior or specialised knowledge, but as

prestige safe-guarding manoeuvres:

> The ultimate protection of the
> traditional professor is the
> professorial use of a professorial
> language. (1977:110)

This specialised language, uttered in a certain manner may impress

those unfamiliar, but it also keeps at bay the rest of society, and

the substance of the field of knowledge fails to communicate or be

intelligible except to those literate in the nuances and the almost

devious use of language:

> (This) language can ultimately cease to
> be an instrument of communication and
> serve instead as an instrument of
> incantation whose principle function is
> to attest and impose the pedagogic
> authority of communication and the
> context communicated. (Bourdieu
> 1977:116)

2.4. Schooling, Language and Inequality.

Because society privileges standard dialects and pronunciation

which are generally the domain of the middle-class, schools try to foster these forms. But for children already socialised into working-class or regional dialects, the pronunciation pattern, dialect and attendant norms of school are an alienating experience; and children of the working-class or non-dominant culture are disadvantaged by the schooling process. It teaches them failure in society at an early age. Basil Bernstein (1972) has argued that not only is there a difference in dialect and pronunciation, but because language articulates experience, the experience of working-class children is different and their language code will be different from that of middle-class homes, less given to detailed descriptions and deploying greater intimacy and tacit understandings. Schools favour detailed verbalizing and explicitness, and this creates a cultural clash for the working-class child. Pierre Bourdieu sums up this alienating experience which ensures that working-class children and those from different cultures seldom succeed in schooling and therefore are prevented from economic and social advantage:

> There is a world of difference between the experience of school that is prepared for by a childhood spent in a family circle where words define the reality of the things, and the experience of unreality given to working-class children by a scholastic acquisition of a language which tends to make unreal the things it speaks of because it makes up their whole reality: the "pure", "correct" - i.e corrected - language of the classroom is opposed to the language the teacher's marginal notes stigmatize as "vulgar" or "common". (1977:119).

Related to the issue of schooling and language is the area of language and knowledge. Knowledge is constructed and transmitted by

a language. The dominant group in a society by controlling language can control knowledge or select that knowledge over which they have mastery and present it as prestigious knowledge. Thus lay knowledge and lay language are not valued as the specialised or selected knowledge and language. Geof Esland has this to say on this issue:

> Language exists both as subjectivity and as objectivity. As subjectivity it structures an individual's intentions and thought processess; as objectivity it preserves and makes public vast systems of knowledge in human societies. (1972:57)

The knowledge mastered by the children of the dominant group, often book knowledge, is made "public" by language till it becomes high status knowledge and marginalises the knowledge of other groups who do not have the power or language monopoly to impose their own knowledge.

2.5.Language, prejudice and stereotypes.

In multicultural and multilingual communities there may be a wrestle over power or domination by one group. The domination and often rejection of other groups is marked linguistically by prejudiced discourse. This prejudice spreads among the in-group or the dominant group, as van Dijk writes:

> We view prejudice as a form or as a result of what we may call "social information process", not at a purely individual or personal level, but rather as a central property of social members of groups, on one hand, and of groups and intergroup relations on the other hand. (1984:3)

We note that this prejudiced language serves communicative and social functions such as persuasion at the interpersonal level,

solidarity within a group, the dissemination of social beliefs and opinions within a group, and for the normalization of attitudes and social precepts for the behaviour towards other groups, often a group of another race or a minority group. This prejudiced language manifests itself as stereotypes, erroneous beliefs, clouded reasoning and biased perception regarding the other group:

> Due to the socially shared representation of outgroups in general, and ethnic minorities in particular, members of the ingroup will tend to perceive the appearance and the actions of minority members as inherently "different", mostly in the negative sense. (van Dijk.1984:17)

This is how hostile or derogatory social images of non-dominant groups are spread through language, be it sexist, racist or other prejudiced discourse.

2.6. Pragmatic Markers of Power and Solidarity.

According to Hudson (1980:125) linguistic signalling of power and solidarity has been researched enough to produce the universal that every language might be expected to display some way of signalling differences in either power or solidarity or both. The key concept in these relations is of "face", a term from Ervine Goffman, that suggests a social status which can be maintained, lost or enhanced. An extreme example is the one Coultard (1985:31) quotes from Albert (1972) of the Burundi peasant farmer employing an "ungrammatical" utterance when addressing a social superior; the peasant makes a "rhetorical fool" (Albert) of himself to save her/his face. And Hudson notes that:

> In Japanese and Korean there is a fairly direct relation between power, solidarity and verb forms (1980:126)

Most languages will permit some such markers, some more pronounced than others.

Brown and Levinson (1978) note that markers of solidarity and power are expressions of politeness, or strategies to prevent breakdown in communication and promote cooperation:

> All (people) choose means that will satisfy their ends.....Given that face consists of wants satisfiable only by the actions of others, it will in general be to the mutual interest of two people to maintain each other's face. (1978:59,60)

What this overlooks is not cooperation but compulsory compliance or acquiescence to strategies which mark one as socially inferior and less powerful. Much of this kind of study in the field of ethnographic linguistics ignores social asymmetry or regards it as the normal social order; it ignores the implicit power relations which need a critical sense to bear on them. Brown and Levinson are interested in the presentation of self and cooperation in social interaction, rather than in social change or in any attempt to relate the social markers and strategies to a critical theory. Theirs is a descriptive/analytical ethnography with no critical edge, as found in Paul Willis (1977).

CHAPTER TWO

ASPECTS OF THE SPEECH ACT THEORY WITH A FOCUS ON PERLOCUTIONARY EFFECTS, ESPECIALLY IDEOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Geoffery Leech in describing his approach to linguistic pragmatics saw the study as answering this problem:

> Given that I want to bring about such-and- such a result in the hearer's consciousness , what is the best way to accomplish this aim by using language? (1983:preface page *x*)

Of interest to this study is the accomplishment of the ideological "result in the hearer's consciousness" and behaviour. For this purpose I shall be looking at the perlocutionary aspects of Austin's work. Leech denies that perlocutionary effects are a proper study possible under the area of pragmatics:

> Perlocutionary effects do not form part of the study of pragmatics, since pragmatic force has to do with goals rather than results. (1983:203)

There is too close a causal link between goals and results for there not to be great influence exerted by one over the other. Students of linguistic pragmatics need to consider results as an integral part of the field. Besides Leech's distinction is glib and he falls into the academic trap of disassociation from the social implications of speech, which was an essential aspect of the early thrust of pragmatics and its rationale. The goal/result dichotomy severs the text from its context, and denies the continuity and intertwining of utterance, goal, result and utterance.

The speech act theory formulated by J.L.Austin (1975) broke the monopoly of the "true/false" description of language; he showed

that an equally valid description of language was *the action of an utterance*, which he called "performative":

> It indicates that the issuing of an utterance is performing an action- it is not normally thought of as just saying something. (1975:6)

I want to extend this concept of "performance" to include ideological performance; that is, the power-creating and maintaining function of language is part of what we perform when we produce language, it is what normal language does. Many of the speech acts such as naming are conventional and easily identifiable. Fowler adds to the conventional list, "requesting, denying, stating, commenting, informing, and so on" (1981:18). But he goes on to conclude:

> Every utterance performs a speech act of some sort, although this may not be obvious from the surface structure of the sentences concerned. (1981:18)

The speech act may be direct, that is hinging onto the literal meaning, or indirect, that is what is implied. Both may be used to convey ideological force and therefore there would be no point in pursuing what difference there may be between them because force or intent is what I am dealing with, not directness or indirectness. They both relate to a context:

> Statements are about something, they suggest something, and to understand them is to understand their relationship to what they are about, i.e. to the world outside the statement. (Mclellan 1986:69)

To demonstrate the speech act theory let us take an example. Suppose person A says to person B in a warning whisper, "Keep away from that man, he smells unwashed," and because of this B does keep her/his distance from the man. A has said the words s/he uttered and by hearing this B has kept a wary distance from the man. A has

performed several different acts, according to Austin,

1. A has said something
2. A has said something to B
3. B has as a result kept away from the man.

Austin will call these three acts a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act respectively; ie the meaning of the words uttered, the intended force of the words and finally their effect on the receiver.

There seems to be no fruitful purpose in distinguishing between locutionary acts and illocutionary acts because saying something is intending what is implied by the words. Searle argues this same conclusion:

> Austin tells us, performing a certain locutionary act; uttering a sentence with a certain force is part of the meaning, where the meaning uniquely determines a particular force, these are not two different acts but two different labels for the same act.
> (in Rosenberg and Travis 1971:263,4)

The "meaning" referred to is interpreted as both literal and indirect meaning or implication. The concern with illocutionary and perlocutionary acts provides us with more information about communication. This study intends to view perlocutionary acts, which are the effects of our speech, and illocutionary intentions in producing the speech as being close, except when there is resistance to the purpose of the utterances. Illocutionary and perlocutionary acts coincide when the desired or structured-in-language effect is achieved by the utterance; the gap widens when between the intent and effect there is a difference:

> We must systematically be prepared to distinguish between "the act of doing x", i.e. acieving x, and "the act of attempting to do x".(Austin 1975:105)

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Some effects may be accidental or a desired effect may fail because of the participant's different degrees of competence in the language being used. Of greater interest is the critical awareness of the receiver when s/he resists the illocutionary intent when that fails to coincide with the receiver being considered as a democratic equal to the producer of the speech. So the ideological structuring of utterances is their illocutionary intent and perlocutionary effect, and for that reason the focus of this chapter will be on perlocutionary causes, which are really illocutionary forces, and perlocutionary effects. That is where ideological intent is achieved or resisted.

Austin defined perlocutionary acts in this way:

> Saying something will often, or even normally, produce consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts or actions of the audience ......and it may be done with the design, intention, or purpose of producing them.......
> We call the performance of an act of this kind the performance of a "perlocutionary" act. (1975:101).

Austin notes that illocutionary acts are related to effects in three ways, "securing an uptake, taking effect, and inviting a response" (1975:118). By "uptake" he meant that the receiver must hear/recieve the words and take them in a certain sense; s/he needs to understand them. Understanding can be at different levels. The ideological content may be understood by the receiver if s/he is critical of what is being said or consciously agrees with the position being promoted. However there may be an unconscious uptake, in the sense that the receiver accepts the ideological

underpinning as natural and not as an area for reflection.

By "taking effect" I understand the utterance must register with the hearer who is then poised for the response. "Taking effect" can in a similar way be conscious or unconscious. The receiver may accept and agree with the ideological intent; may unconsciously agree with the position; may disagree but accept the position; may disagree and reject the position but still cooperate with the desired response; or contend the view being promoted and respond with an active rejection. So we note a closeness between "taking effect" and "inviting a response", and the response itself is the perlocutionary act.

In chapter one and the preceding paragraph we noted that the ideological content is not something a speaker or receiver may be fully aware of. They inherit a language and world view. Austin is unaware of this unconscious intent of our language, but he acknowledges that effects can be unintentional:

> The perlocutionary act always includes some consequences, as when we say "by doing x I was doing y": we do bring in a greater or less stretch of "consequences" always, some of which may be "unintentional".(1975:107)

The necessary condition for the performance of perlocutionary acts is the condition that the perlocutionary act is performed when an utterance produces an effect on the listener's thought, action or feeling. Steven Davis formulates it in this way:

> (i) the speaker's saying something,
> (ii) the occurrence of an effect on the feelings, thoughts or actions of the speaker's audience,

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> (iii) A causal connection between (i)
> and (ii) (Searle et al 1980:38)

And to (ii) above we can add the ideological effect achieved or intended by (i).

Davis also offers an improvement on Austin's three terms. We have seen that illocutionary acts cannot be separated from locutionary acts (Searle in Rosenberg and Travis 1971:263,4). Davis argues that illocutionary acts cannot be separated from perlocutionary aspects. Austin had formulated the distinction in this way:

> We must distinguish the illocutionary from the perlocutionary act: for example we must distinguish "in saying it I was warning him" from "by saying it I convinced him, or surprised him, or got him to stop".(1975:110)

But in saying what was said the speaker intended the receiver to be convinced, surprised or to cease some action. Possible perlocutionary effects are already contained in the force of the utterance and as such the force is a perlocutionary cause. Unintended effects are also built into the words, but the speaker may not be conscious of them. Davis offers this terminology:

> (i)"speaker's saying something" designates a *perlocutionary cause.*
>
> (ii)"hearer's X-ing" designates a *perlocutionary effect.*
>
> (iii)"speaker's causing hearer to X" designates a *perlocutionary act.*
>
> (in Searle et al 1980:39)

These suggest the perlocutionary features of what has been called illocutionary acts.

The effects of saying something operate through the conventions of language:

> saying something produces effects on other persons, or *causes* things..(and

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> this) has to operate through the
> conventions of language and is a matter
> of influence exerted by one person on
> another.(Austin 1975:113 footnote)

Conventions of language are accepted and often inherited agreements, which are accessible by gaining a competence in the language, a competence in the Hymesian rather than the Chomskyan sense. When a person knows how to speak and understand a language there is a range of knowledge or abilities s/he possesses, i.e. the person is competent in that language:

> A speaker knows the rules which govern
> the performance of illocutionary and
> perlocutionary acts. (Davis in Searle
> et al 1980:41)

So for the effecting of a perlocutionary act the words uttered produce a response from the receiver because of her/his competence. I want to argue that this competence includes ideological competence. The producer of the speech uses her/his competence to say something, the receiver's competence is necessary for the production of an effect on her/him, which is already part of the response. For the utterance to produce a power relation or present a self-advancing world-view, the same competencies are required. This competence permits the ideological effects of the utterance which, if it is to be done successfully, needs the cooperation of both the producer and receiver. The same or more critical competence is necessary if there is to be a rebuttle of the ideological design of the utterance. This sharpening of competencies is the thrust of the educational principles of the language educationist Paulo Freire.

Ideological competency and cooperation with ideology, like general acquaintance with the conventions of the language, are not

necessarily conscious or deliberate. Inherited ideological positions are patterned on a language and the user may accept these "messages" because of a longer-than-one-life agreement with the social relations implied in the language. For most people the power and privilege social patterns indicated in the language seem a normal aspect of the language they are using. In the last chapter the work of Paulo Freire will be studied for the insight it sheds on how a critical appraisal can be brought to bear on the language we use, whether that language is ideologically favouring our positions or not.

The influencing of one person by another through speech is the act of producing perlocutionary effects. Much of language contains ideological positions being promoted and this is intended to be accepted by the receiver of the utterance. The ideological positions are promoted through perlocutionary causes and illocutionary force, and realised through perlocutionary effects. The receiver uses her/his competence in being affected by the intention of the utterance; the ideological purpose is effected by a conscious or unconscious collaboration with it. The producer may deliberately structure the utterance for this purpose, or use it knowingly or be unaware that s/he is employing it. The same producer, convinced of the need for consensus and democracy, may deliberately avoid structuring her/his language to gain social power or resist the ideological structure already inherent in the language, as will a critical receiver. We can alter the ideological underpinning of language and remove it altogether because neither ideology nor the language it is encoded in is deterministic to the

extent that we are helpless.

The argument thus far has been that ideology is an intent in the language we use; it is a part of the speech act. Now we need to search through discourse to see how ideology is packaged in language and how it operates there:

> Sentences are used to perform speech acts such as stating, questioning, commanding, ..(etc). The speaker also communicates his attitudes towards the probability, desirability (etc) of the states of affairs mentioned in the propositions. Additionally, the utterance of a sentence contains indicators of the spatial, temporal, and interpersonal orientation of the contents. (Fowler 1986:68)

Chapter three will show how this packaging occurs in discourse.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO UNPACK IDEOLOGICAL CONTENT

1. General

In asymmetrical social relations within societies structured on social inequality power relations are often intended or expressed in communication. As we are socialised into that society we learn and most often acquiesce to the hierarchy and unequal spread of advantages, which aspects are also reflected in the language. To lay bare these aspects, to demystify them we can scrutinize the communication in which they are embedded.

Roger Fowler and Gunter Kress write:

> The structure of a language should generally be seen as having been formed in response to the structure of the society that uses it. (in Fowler et al 1979:188)

And Halliday had suggested three major functions in language: the "ideational" which conveys the contents, i.e. the events and processes; the "interpersonal" which expresses the speaker's attitude to the propositions and the receiver; and the "textual" which is about the presentation of the first two in understandable texts. These three are inextricably intertwined; the interpersonal cannot be separated easily from the ideational; the ideological force would be in the domain of the interpersonal but spills over into the other two. From these Fowler and Kress conclude that:

> The selections which speakers make from the total inventory of forms and processes are principled and systematic; and the relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but that form signifies content. (in Fowler et al 1979:188)

And this brings us to the study of discourse in which social positions and intentions are packaged:

> Let us not, therefore, ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, what is their overall strategy. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of on-going subjugation.
> (Foucault in Lukes 1986:233)

For this we need to engage in the ideological analysis of discourse.

Kress and Hodge (1979), Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew (1979), and the fourth volume of Handbook of Discourse Analysis, subtitled Discourse Analysis in Society, edited by van Dijk (1985), to name some major works, have researched this field. Drawing on Marxist and conflict explanations of the relationship between economic and cultural lives, these analyses home in on the class and interest conflict, exploitation and power relations in society and language, which are seen as part of the cultural world underpinned by the economic and other divisions in society. Features of discourse are scrutinised for social indicators that show how power is being mediated through language, how the interest of the speaker or her/his group is represented in the details of the language. van Dijk sums this thus:

> Ideological analysis will often have a critical dimension in the sense that it intends to reveal underlying class conflicts, power relations, and ideologies through discourse analysis.
> (in van dijk 1985:8)

van Dijk goes on to explain that this sort of analysis is used on public discourse such as the statements of politicians, news bulletins and advertisements. The technique may equally well be applied to interpersonal discourse because it is not only in the

language of propoganda or of big corporations that we see manipulative techniques being deployed; they are also packaged into what may appear to be non-controversial or innocent discourse. True, more spectacular results may be achieved by scrutinising political talk for it is more given to manipulative intent.

The reason for this critical analysis of discourse is that the social meanings are not always apparent in the referential meanings of the statements, we need to interpret that which is implied. This is especially so because our literacy education and socialization have focused on referential meanings and not the social ones. That in itself is a method most societies employ to prevent their members from questioning the implied social relations in the language forged by the group in power. Power is maintained by keeping people in ignorance. It is therefore important for a critical discourse analysis which will demystify the social implications of utterances.

It needs to be repeated at this stage that I am not advocating a "plot" theory in language that suggests that speakers deliberately and constantly aim at mystification, concealment and conspiracy. The selection of linguistic forms indicating power and inequality may not be deliberately chosen by a speaker; often people occupying official positions, by using the institutional language of their professional world, may be uttering implications contrary to their sympathy. School teachers are often caught in this predicament. The discourses they employ are already existing in the repertoire of their social positions, a repertoire they have inherited. This is

not an attempt to exonerate such users, just to offer an explanation of how some people may use a linguistic form without consciously choosing it and in this way reinforce the social asymmetry. The last chapter will indicate that linguistic education of a demystifying kind may grant such unconscious users of a linguistic repertoire an awareness of the social implications of their own language. There may, however, be many instances where the users of a linguistic form may opt for it deliberately because of the social advatage it promises them. Critical discourse analysis aims to show the ideological content of utterances, be that content the speaker's deliberate design or not. Fowler and Kress sum this idea in relation to language:

> Social structure provides the resources,
> individuals mediate their realization.
> (in Fowler et al 1979:196)

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

There is a central ambiguity in language and therefore no critical analysis method can be devised which will provide ready answers at the end of the process. We can impose no analytic grid in any mechanical way and expect results to flow. Nor is there a sequential stage-by-stage method which will reveal the unpacked truth at the end of the process. The point is that we cannot just sit in front of a text and run a programme through it to produce critical results, though quantifiable items may be noted for some social effect. Social meaning and linguistic form do not correlate in some unambiguously predictable manner. Individuals may choose deliberately to cast their utterance in some specific way which grants them or their interests some social advantage or the person

may be employing an inherited repertoire. For a critical analysis we need to consider the social location of the producer of the utterance and the social setting in which it is deployed, and then specific characteristics of her/his discourse which suggest the ideological commitment of the utterance, be it implied or direct. This needs a more qualitative rather than a quantitative approach.

Because there is no ready packaged analysis programme for what we are seeking and because language is ambiguous we may be tempted to despair of gaining any analytic techniques. Language may be ambiguous, but it is not without structure. To scrutinize the structure we can follow the three assumptions presented by Fowler and Kress (in Fowler et al 1979:197), assumptions which can be used to guide critical discourse analysis:

*The first of these is to accept Halliday's three functions of language, the "ideational", the "interpersonal", and the "textual". This means that the analyst has to relate linguistic forms and items to these three functions which are themselves interrelated.

*The second assumption is that the linguistic forms are choices, deliberate or inherited. These are guided by the social purpose of the speaker or of the dominant group. A search for these will indicate some unity of purpose or some ideological positioning. This does not mean that there will always be this unity because language is both ambiguous and slippery and contradictions may appear.

*The last assumption presented is that the syntax suggests meanings, including social meanings. These can be read off from

the utterance.

Fowler and Kress (1979:198) offered an analysis checklist for the critical appraisal of a text to reveal its social signification. Their original five areas were: 1 the grammar of transitivity which indicated events and processes and their associated agencies; 2 the grammar of modality which marked the interpersonal relations between the interlocuters; 3 transformations which showed the linguistic manipulation of linguistic material; 4 the grammar of classification; and 5 the coherence or unity of the discourse. Since then Fowler (in van Dijk 1985:68-74) has reworked the checklist and offered the new one more tentatively as being informal and only a guide. The social investigation of discourse may consider the items on the list in collaboration with each other and with relation to the context of the utterance. The new list contains 1 Lexical processes, 2 transitivity, 3 syntax, 4 modality, 5 speech acts, 6 implicature, 7 turn taking, 8 address, naming, and personal reference and 8 phonology. In discussing these I intend to follow closely the reworked list Fowler offers and introduce new material where necessary.

2.1.Lexical Processes.

The social interest of a person or group is reflected and expressed in the vocabulary of the individual or group. Fowler argues that concepts in the society are related to lexicalization. Concepts in greater currency and of advantage to the group or person will possess a wider range of synonyms. This would be overlexicalization, many words for one concept, such as "individual entrepreneurship", "merit", "endeavour", "pride in work" and the

range of similar expressions in the milieu of the conservative restoration, the period of Thatcherism. These indicate the prominence or promotion of a set of beliefs. In more restricted arenas we call the same proliferation of similar vocabulary items around a promoted concept "technical jargon" or the "slang" of the in-group. In South Africa the present racist regime slips into currency terms such as "evolutionary change", "negotiated settlement", "protection of group rights", and "cultural autonomy" to soften their facist image and retain racial segregation to their economic and social advatage. In writing of this I too am privileging some vocabulary choices such as "racist" and "facist" to promote my understanding of the ruling group in South Africa. Underlexicalization may occur when a system of related concepts is prevented from gaining social currency. Besides these there are groups of words in opposite categories and one set of categories is associated with power, learning and privilege. For example the category of abstract words is associated with privileged groups and advantaging schooling, and the concrete is viewed as rough and inferior. Examples of these would be abstract terms such as "predisposition" and "democracy," and the concrete such words as "spade" and "brick". Interestingly a word such as "democracy" is gaining currency with politically conscious youth in South Africa to the extent that it is a common word with them. General and specific are the next two categories, general terms suggesting a wider categorization ability, and specific seen as being tied to the particular and the narrow. Words borrowed from foreign languages often gather impressions of glamour, intellectual prowess or other advantage to them. Vocabulary choices may suggest complex

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or simple morphology, such as "psychotherapy" and "red", the former suggesting association with learning and power and the second with things simple. So we note that the availabilty and use of certain vocabulary choices is allied to power and prestige in society. But we must note that these associations are not binding; they can slip, as I shall argue in chapter four.

2.2. Transitivity.

The study of transitivity and power looks at the actions and the participants of action in a clause. The predicates (i.e. the verbs, adverbs and adjectives) indicate processes, actions and states; and the roles are performed by the participants (i.e. the nouns). The agents or participants can be assigned the ability of deliberate power or control as in "Mandela met P.W. Botha" which is markedly different from "Mandela was taken to meet P.W. Botha". The second confers an object state rather than an agent state to Mandela. The agent is seen as controlling the process and performance while the object or instrument is seen as undergoing the process. Transitivity indicates a fundamental difference in how people are presented and this relates to issues of who is deemed to be powerful. But reading this off a text is not simple, it needs a context. In the Mandela example the official South African statements, by using the first sentence which normally would indicate an agent status, now suggest that he is a free agent and thus diminish the fact of his continued imprisonment. Fowler makes distinction between agents and objects, and between instruments and experiencers. Instruments are used to effect actions as in "Negotiations will iron out the differences", and experiencers are

shown as experiencing mental states and processes as in "De Klerk listens to the grieviences of the Black people" and "The conservatives are jubilant".

Fowler argues that the effects of transitivity are central to the linguistic construction of reality and contribute to the formation of relations and differentials of power. The first focus is on the roles assigned to participants by the predicates, and the second is on what types of entities are seen as being able to perform certain processes. Fowler's example is widely applicable; a state sympathising newspaper may implicitly blame those demanding reform and portray them as the agents of subversion and disruption and exonerate the excesses of the government and its police. A group in power may disclaim its responsibility by assigning agency to some abstract formulation as in "Conditions in South Africa insist on the continuing state of emergency". Fowler calls this the use of *pseudoagents.* So we note that transitivity and its attribution of agency is marked in the structure of clauses and a critical discourse analysis will indicate how power relations are being mediated through these structures in sentences. While we have been looking only at sentences the attribution of agency can be dispersed through an entire text and is often identifiable only by looking at the patterns in whole text.

2.3.Syntax.

Early transformational-generative grammar indicated that different syntactic choices expressed the same underlying meaning which was retrievable by discovering the *deep structure* of a sentence. I

agree with Fowler when he argues that the visible structure implies social meanings which cannot be found in a paraphrase which alters the essential meaning. This view insists that the social relations embedded in a sentence are part of its essential meaning. Let us take the example from the section on transitivity, "Conditions in South Africa insist on the continuation of the state of emergency". The pseudoagency of *conditions* mystifies the real agents. There has been a deliberate deletion of agents : *insist* has no object and *continuation* has no subject, and *the sate of emergency* is not linked to who is going to impose it and who will be affected by it. We could rephrase the statement "The government of South Africa finds that the conditions created by the resistance to *apartheid* forces it to reimpose a state of emergency", but a government such as South Africa has at present would prefer the nonspecific mystifying syntax.

Fowler maps out three areas of syntax manipulation that indicate relations of power: deletion, sequencing and complexity:

2.3.1. *Deletion*

Normal speech contains many instances of truncations or ellipses which rely on the context for their interpretation. In modern English the more intimate the relationship the more likely the appearance of ellipses, and the more formal the situation the more complete the sentence details. But truncations are also related to other social values such as brusqueness (impatient truncations), emphasis (indicating power or deference) and shared knowledge (a shorthand for those in the know).

Two syntactic constructions that allow deletion and are of importance for the purpose of this study are (a) nominalization and (b) the passive.

Nominalization is when the action of a verb is presented as a noun as in *continuation* in the example used before. Other examples are statements such as "Compliance with the law will guarantee security". Fowler argues that nominalizations are endemic to authoritarian discourse such as police bulletins, official statements and legal jargon. They are used to try to cow the lay public. The ideological results of nominalization are two fold: first they create new nouns which code experience in a specific social manner and this encoding is then disseminated to become the general social reality by propoganda, the media and by education. The new terms are presented as given and no longer innovations or new constructions being foisted upon a public consciousness. The second consequence of nominalization is that it removes agency and modality and this makes distant and mysterious the real agents, their actions and motives. It mystifies their responsibility and culpability. In the example quoted above (Conditions in South Africa insist on the continuation of the state of emergency) the action or agency of the South African government is disguised and their motives mystified.

The **Passive** allows agent-deletion and this permits the omission of the reason or cause of an action, as in "Steve Biko was found dead in prison" or "David Webster was killed outside his house". In both these cases the state or agent responsible is exonerated by omission. Both passives and nominalizations practice the "ideology

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of impersonality" (Fowler 1985:71) which mystifies the power behind the action. This sort of language use is spread in a community by the agents of the state, the school and the media till it is given a status of being superior and objective.

2.3.2. *Sequencing*

This is a prominence granting mechanism in a sentence. The passive may be used to grant this as in "Webster was killed by the state" as opposed to "The state killed Webster". The order in which the information is released to the addressee is intended to focus her/his attention differently and suggest agency differently. Different topicalizations may be used for prominence marking, as in "Insubordination we will not tolerate". The slightly unusual sequencing is used to express the power base of the uttering "authority". Other reorderings could include the use of parenthetical phrases. These deliberate sequencing of words for social effect are rhetorical devices to manipulate the focus of the receiver.

2.3.3. *Complexity*

Basil Bernstein (1972) offered his controversial theory of a code difference between working-class speech and that of the schooled middle-class. While the implication of his formulation is now in doubt, what can be salvaged is that experience is coded differently. Speech associated with power and prestige contains greater explicitness, a wider vocabulary of standard dictionary synonyms and a higher ratio of subordinate clauses indicating more explicit causal relations. The opposite forms that rely on shared

assumptions and greater use of coordinating sentences is associated with being socially naive. Children mastering the socially prestigious forms gain an advantage in school and in society.

2.4.Modality.

The speaker's attitude to her/his proposition and to the addressee can be encoded in the modality of the sentence, in words such as "must" and "will" and so on. According to Fowler the devices of modality fall into certain categories:

*Validity: this is when the speaker expresses her/his confidence or lack of it in the truth of the statement, as in "It may have been there".

*Predictability: This indicates the speaker's degree of sureness about some future event included in her/his statement, as in "It is likely to be over by then".

*Desirability and Obligation:: This indicates the speaker's judgement about some obligation by her/himself or more often by someone else. Expressions of "ought" and censure are included here.

*Permission: This is when the speaker allows someone else to perform some action, as in "You may do so now".

Modality is expressed in linguistic form by 1 modal auxiliary verbs such as "may, shall, must and need", 2 sentence adverbs such as "probably, certainly and regrettably", 3 adjectives such as "certain, unfortunate, necessary" and 4 verbs and nominalizations such as "permit, predict, prove, desirability, and authority". There is also what Fowler calls the modality of deference signalled

by words or phrases indicating subservience, deference, underconfidence, acquiescence and reliance. Expressions such as "I was wondering." and "Doesn't it" indicate deference. Such expressions can be tag-ons and therefore regarded as of modals. These are closely related to the issue of power and solidarity discussed in chapter one.

2.5.Speech Acts and Implicature.

By implicature is meant indirect or implied meanings, and is contained in the illocutionary act. This and speech acts have been covered in chapter two.

2.6.Turn Taking, Naming, Address, and Personal Reference.

The section on power and solidarity in chapter one dealt with these issues.

3. How Deterministic Is The Ideological Force Of Language ?

Graddol et al (1987:205-208) accuse the critical discourse analysis underpinning of being deterministic:

> An important point to note about this kind of analysis is that the theory underlying it is explicitly *deterministic*: it suggests that the language used in a culture affects the way people perceive and interpret events. (207)

Apart from evoking the Whorf hypothesis no more argument to support this claim is presented. True, language can determine consciousness especially when it is acquired and internalised in an unquestioning way, which is the manner most schooling fosters; or the linguistic construction of the world may agree with one's world view and

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interests. But the theorists advocating critical discourse analysis do not claim that there cannot be resistance to this. The act of critical linguistic analysis is itself a powerfully persuasive argument that language structuration can be resisted and a critical attitude fostered.

Graddol et al also express their discomfort at the overt political position admitted by the proposers of critical discourse analysis, and at the same time grant that there can be no value free research or position (1987:208) They argue for degrees of objectivity, their own position being presented as being more objective than that of Fowler and the other theorists who agree with him. This desire to retain "academic" objectivity and yet admit the relative nature of positions is itself a political position increasingly allied with conservative thinking which fosters the ideology of separating academic debate from action on social issues. And this ideological position of Graddol et al is presented in the language they use.

Critical discourse analysis has not attempted some "objective" or "scientific" correlation between social relations and language, a study that may be presented in quantifiable results of tables and statistics. It offers a fact of social organization which calls for enquiry and action. To conclude I would like to review the seven points of recapitulation offered by Kress and Fowler (1979:194)

    1. I agree that forms of social organization influence linguistic structure and linguistic use. By that I mean both the structure and use that acquiesce to the dominant ideology

and that which is a result of oppositional attitudes in a society.

2. The elaboration of the first point undermines the original point two presented: *This influence operates in a deterministic fashion: social structure x demands linguistic variety y.* We can improve on this by adding that structure x may be satisfied by variety *f,* or for opposition variety *z* may be used to undermine structure x. Between the 1979 formulations and Fowler's writing in 1985 this new perception has been noted.

3. I accept that the linguistic influence and choices made by people may not be deliberate or may be difficult to resist.

4. I agree that social structure is indicated in all aspects of language and not merely in the easily identifiable references to interpersonal relations.

5. Different forms of language are not just stylistic varieties of each other, but encode different social concepts and ideologies, and the availability of those concepts is controlled by the language being used.

6. Social inequality and power relations are prominent influences of linguistic structure. This is central to this dissertation.

7. The point is offered: *Language not only encodes power differences but is also instrumental in enforcing them.* To which can be added that language can be a powerful agent for resisting those power differences and for expressing alternative social values. That will be the thrust of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

LANGUAGE AS MEANS TO AN ALTERNATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS; FREEDOM AND CONSENSUS

One of the most persistent attacks on attempts to relate language to social control is the accusation that this is a deterministic line of thought. I am arguing that while language is a potent weapon of social control, it harbours a persistent ambiguity that permits challenge to that social process, a counter control, and the possibility of general demystification which promises egalitarian values and open rational communication. This is no mere theoretical position; the struggle to free language from oppressive control is recognised as a liberatory tool in freedom movements in places like South Africa and in the social assertion of marginalized communities in Britain. In South Africa transformative social change is being sought by democratic organizations who have formulated principles for what is termed "People's English", which is language for shared social power.

People's English intends all learners to:

-understand the evils of apartheid and to think in non-racial, non-sexist and non-elitist ways

-play a creative role in the achievement of a non-racial democratic South Africa

-use English effectively for their own purposes

-express and consider the issues and questions of their time

-transform themselves into full and active members of society

The education implication of the language theories of Paulo Freire which will be discussed in the last section of this chapter has the same force as these aims of People's English.

People are not only the objects of language and its social mechanism; they can also become its subjects, reforming language and its social implications to serve non-oppressive social functions. To present this argument I intend to discuss these aspects:

1. The central ambiguity of language

2. Communication for true consensus

3. Language and liberation

1. The Ambiguity of Language: an area for contest.

Utterances are acts of power because they act on people; either by giving them information and so altering their perceptions in some way, or by defining them and in this way modifying the ways in which they are seen by other people or by themselves. Engaging in communication is altering someone's world. These acts of power may be unilateral in the sense that the will or utterance of only one person may be the altering tool, or they may be a collaboration of wills, even if this collaboration is forced. The third alternative is that the power in an utterance may be resisted by an alternative utterance or encoding of view. This brings us to the contest possible over the power inherent in verbalizations. Language is an alternative to sheer force because we do not have the continual

ability to enforce violence; we use language to shape the same end at far less cost and psychological impairment to us. But a symbolic system, such as language, cannot be a naked and inflexible sword because it is difficult or impossible to construct verbal statements which cannot be refuted or distorted. Language is powerful but it is also an imperfect oppressive tool because it permits answering and opposition.

This "imperfection" in the power enforcing mechanism of language is its ambiguity. A useful piece of work arguing this ambiguity of language and its uses is "Verbalizing a Political Act: Towards a Politics of Speech" by J.G.A. Pocock in Shapiro (1984). Pocock writes about the malleability of language:

> There is a certain refraction and recalcitrance in the medium which ensures that the language which I bend to perform my own acts can be bent back in the performance of another's act against me, without ceasing to be available for my counter-replication.
> (in Shapiro 1984 :31)

So while language grants its user power, that user may try but cannot fully control the ambiguities of language, nor can s/he prevent others from sharing that power of language. Though, through the control of education, the mass-media and other apparatuses, some may try to prevent others from gaining a foothold on the power of language. Essentially in using language the user enters the inevitable recognition of other people's power or potential power, a compromise that Pocock calls entering "a polity of shared power" (1984:31).

One of the reasons for this central ambiguity of language is that

it is not the product of one will, but the inheritance of many acts of power. Language consists of many institutionalized structures formed over time by people no longer known and for exercises of power and intentions no longer remembered. So the words that perform a person's acts are not hers/his alone, but inherited by that person. Besides they are institutionalized in form and defy reduction to the speech act of only one person. Pocock argues that language structures which have been institutionalised are available for use to more than one person, and serving more than one purpose in one situation:

> They (the words) are never free from the ambiguity in the sense that they can never be reduced to the performance of any one person's intentions. (in Shapiro 1984:31)

A person has to borrow, inherit or take from another's words to enact her/his speech act, and the person at the receiving end is in a similar position. The institutionalized nature of language allows the person to or about whom the words are spoken the potential to answer in similar terms. Of course not everyone has the same ability to use the ambiguities language affords them. This is an aspect not recognized by Pocock who assumes all are free or able to perceive and use the ambiguities of language. The wrestle to gain mastery or recognition in the terrain of language struggle has to be conscious or learned. That is what Paulo Freire argues, as I will discuss later.

Pocock writes about our language inheritance:

> Each of us speaks with many voices, like the tribal shaman in whom the ancestor ghosts are talking at once; when we speak, we are not sure who is talking or what is being said, and our acts of power in communication are not

wholly our own. (in Shapiro 1984:29)

This quotation must not be read as a mystification of ideological intent in language; we can be sure of the social location and affiliation of a speaker, and the ideological intentions of her/his speech act. The point being made here is, I think, that we do not create language anew each time we use it; it reaches us in an institutionalized form, or as Pocock says:

> Very complex processes of assumption, mediation, and conventionalization have gone on to bring this language as a structure of givens. (in Shapiro 1984:29)

However we do not use the given language passively; we seek to impose our worlds onto others by means of symbolic communication, which is an act of power. The seeking through language rather than the guarantee of power suggests there are what Pocock (ibid:33) calls "frictions in the medium". Our intentions are mediated through language and we have no choice but to accept the uncertainties and institutionalized nature of the medium which others will also utilise. We have to recognize that other intelligences operate in the communication process and we cannot exclude the power they may bring to the mediation.

So we conclude that language is not wholly manageable to the extent that it is completely within our control; it is difficult to monopolize. We may impose our biases, but others can also impart their own opposing biases. This results in a contest of strategies of language control or we can drop all strategies and be rational and respecting of each other, which stage Pocock after Habermas calls true communication. What neither of them spells out is that

it is necessary for an education or change of heart for people to come to this last realization; it is not an inevitable resolution. Democracy and equality in communication have to be worked at if the ambiguities of language are to be exploited for these values.

The ambiguity of language allows for a "deconstruction" of ideology and fixed meanings, a task undertaken in literature by critics such as Edward Said and Michel Foucault. Said sees "textuality" or critical reading as confronting ideology in language. Ideology assumes a secure hierarchy of meanings, but according to Eagleton:

> Textuality exposes those fissures, slippages and self-mutilations that are inevitable to ideological discourse as to any other (in Said 1980:149)

Shapiro (1984:221) in paying homage to Foucault writes of Foucault's pedagogy which teaches us to "read" power off a text. We begin to understand that in reading a text we can discover how power is packed into the discourse, and when we write how we encode ideology. However we need not inscribe this ideology or power into our languge, we can offer alternative discourses which "deconstruct" the ideological positions around us. Thus we gain an insight into:

> How power resides in the production of discursive entities that become fetishized and parade around us as literal descriptions. (Shapiro 1984:222)

Ambiguity in language sets the scene for the possibility of counter-oppression or for a resolution to the power-imposing game. In the next section I will discuss thinking around how rationality may achieve the latter result.

2.Communication for True Consensus: The Universal Pragmatics

of Habermas.

In this section I will be reviewing the thinking about language of Jurgen Habermas who believes there is an essential rationality in people and language that is disposed towards non-oppressive agreement and dialogue, which he calls "communication". This term is not a loose synonym for language but a precise definition distinguishing from ideologically structured language which is not regarded as communication. Habermas's writing is a very large body and difficult for me to read. So I have restricted myself to a selection of his work, "Hannah Arendt's Communicative Concept of Power" in Lukes (1986) and "A Reply to my Critics" in Thompson and Held (1982), and on the article "Universal Pragmatics" by Thompson in Thompson and Held (1982) and T.Bottomore's book, "The Frankfurt School" (1984).

The dominant school of linguistics was that of formal linguistics inspired by Chomsky. This concentrates on syntax and "linguistic competence". Habermas noted the need to locate this competence in social settings of communication:

> In order to participate in normal
> discourse, the speaker must have - in
> addition to his linguistic competence
> -basic qualifications of speech and of
> symbolic interaction (role-behaviour)
> at his disposal, which we may call
> communicative competence. (quoted by
> Thompson 1982:119)

In his use of the term "communicative competence" Habermas is close to the concept and term as used by Dell Hymes who paid homage to Habermas (Hymes 1985:18). For them a study of language must be

extended beyond any ability to produce well-formed sentences to language in use, or speech acts.

For Habermas there are two starting points to his theory of language. Firstly he follows Austin and Searle in holding that saying something is doing something. The speech act becomes a basic aspect of speech and its forms need to be analysed and categorised. However he goes further to posit his second premise which is that there can be a fundamental rationality underpinning a speech act. This is revealed when the mystifying and distorting influence of ideology is removed by the desire for real human communication. This is idealistic, but Habermas has an affirmative sense of people and a belief in social change towards non-oppressive forms of society and communication.

This idealism is embedded in a critical theory of social change. Language analysis must share this critical edge with critical philosophy and social sciences, if it is to be a valid study of social phenomena. Cultural habits and social relations are institutionalized in language, as is ideology. Language is related to social processes which are outside linguistics. So a critique of ideology needs to scrutinize manipulative language which Habermas sees as containing distortions of power. Habermas notes that language is:

> Also a medium of domination and social
> force. (quoted by Thompson 1982:117)

The unmasking of ideolgy and power differentials in language is a liberatory action in Habermas's thought, and close to the thinking of Freire.

One of the major distinctions Habermas draws is between violence on one hand and communication and consensus on the other. Language for him always carries the potential for the latter which is not the cessation of the use of power but its constructive social deployment. This is his concept of "universal pragmatics". In commenting on Hanna Arendt's evocation of fascism he wrote:

> Every political order that isolates its citizens from one another through mistrust, and cuts off public exchange of opinions degenerates to a rule based on violence. It destroys the communicative structures in which alone power can originate. (in Lukes 1986:80)

The central rationality in people and language compels a "co-operative readiness to arrive at an understanding" (quoted by Thompson:119), and :

> Those involved (in communication) are orientated to reaching agreement and not primarily to their respective individual successes. (in Lukes 1986:77)

This is not to deny that there is no attempt in our society to distort and manipulate through language, which Habermas accepts is the case. However for him there is a reconstructive possibility in language:

> The strength of a consensus brought about in an unconstrained communication is not measured against any success but against the claim to rational validity that is immanent in speech. (in Lukes 1986:77)

My difficulty with this, as with Pocock's assumption that anybody can exploit the ambiguities of language, is that rationality and the ability to use the uncertainties of language have to be uncovered through dialogue and education. Those at the oppressed

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end of symbolic violence have to become conscious of this for them to use it. This pedagogic aspects is not developed by either writer, partly because they assume people's freedom to follow these lines. This is an underestimation of the symbolic oppression prevalent in many societies that prevents access to an understanding of the possibilities of language. Paulo Freire is more specific about how language consciousness can be developed for liberation.

Thompson (1982:125) sums up the four areas that Habermas established for communication

1. that any speech act raises certain validity claims

2. that communicative competence implies ability to deploy certain pragmatic universals

3. that the ideal speech situation is presupposed on everyday speech

4. there is a rationality possible in any discourse.

These principles are meant to ensure the emergence of rationality and the discarding of ideology. I shall go through these, but my earlier criticism that these features have to be uncovered deliberately for social change still holds.

1.The first principle of the validity claims is that when true communication is to be maintained, what is said has to be intelligible, its propositional content true, the performative component correct (that is, aspects such as the way in which something is said), and lastly the intentions expressed need to be sincere. The maintenence of these four ensures consensus. This is the ideal situation which "competent speakers must reciprocally

maintain with each of their speech acts" (Habermas quoted by Thompson 1982:121).

2. The pragmatic universal Habermas suggests is the ability to use grammatically well-formed sentences as speech acts which are themselves rational.

3. This rationality is not for Habermas a rare phenomena, but possible in the desire to understand and be understood in everyday speech.

4. Claims to truth and correctness can only be proved, according to Habermas, through dialogue which is rationally motivated towards consensus.

These four points bring us to an assessment of the roles of the actors or participants in a communication, and by implication their roles in society. First Habermas suggests that a primary role in interaction is the "orientation towards reaching understanding":

> I use the term *communicative action* for that form of social interaction in which the plans of action of different actors are co-ordinated through exchange of communicative acts, that is, through the use of language orientated towards reaching understanding. (Habermas in Thompson 1982:234)

This supposes that the potential consent of all the people involved would be freely given; an attempt towards rational consensus. This ideal speech situation should be characterised by an effective equality of chances for all the participants to assume dialogue roles. By that is meant the symmetrical chance to begin and continue discussions, to present arguments and to question, and to offer interpretations without preconceptions.

Habermas is not naive to believe that this ideal situation is the present case; for him, it is the social goal to be worked for by continual discussion or verbal praxis. Only by this transformation of society can the ideal be realised:

> Only in an emancipated society, whose members' autonomy and responsibility have been realised, would communication have developed into the non-authoritarian and universally practised dialogue. (Habermas quoted by Mclellan 1986:79)

In our present society there are barriers to this ideal being realised. Next we shall turn to the work of Paulo Freire who offers an education for liberation based on language, an education intended to break those barriers.

3.Language and Liberation: The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire

Habermas implied that through consensus and respect for the other in dialogue a new social order could be forged. The writer and educationist who spelt out a methodology for this goal is the Brazilian Paulo Freire who worked with the dispossessed and illiterate people of the developing world where oppression is most rife. He showed how a people cowed into submission are not only materially dispossessed but barred from the power and control over language. This symbolic dispossession could be confronted by learning to reflect through and on language, and this was the beginning of questioning the social relations which perpetuated the unequal sharing of resourses. Freire ties his language awareness programme with an explicit action theory or praxis which is revolutionary. Some may argue that this is outside the consideration of linguistics, but I want to point out that the area

of linguistics being explored in this dissertation is bound inextricably with questions of wider social significance and action. One cannot shy away from the implications of learning how to confront injustice through language; it leads inevitably to social action.

Freire's practical concern was initially with adult literacy education. He found the illiterate people cowed into a "culture of silence" which suggests a helplessness with control over verbalization and attendant reflection. There seemed no point in offering a traditional education which would keep such people marginalized (see the section on language and education; chapter one). Against this Freire posited a methodology (see his book Cultural Action For Freedom 1972) which encouraged reflection on one's position in society and one's relation with the world. People had to discover their subjectivity, their creative potential, and this could be achieved by focusing on language and literacy:

> If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing itself, and on the profound significance of language. (Freire 1972:29)

By organizing key vocabulary around a community's interests and by treating the learners as equals in the democratic education setting, more than literacy was learned by those participating. They began the "difficult apprenticeship in naming the word" (Freire 1972:28), which is Freire's sense of how the world can be transformed. People began to verbalize their relations with each

other and the social and economic world they occupied. For Friere acquiring critical language means gaining an insight into the relationships in the world and thereafter acting on that new knowledge. The next rather lengthy quotation sums up Freire's thought and gives some idea of the flavour and fervour of his writing:

> Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for men to know what *speaking the word* really means: a human act implying reflection and action. As such it is a primordial human right and not the privilege of a few. Speaking the word is not a true act if it is not at the same time associated with the right of self-expression, of creating and re-creating, of deciding and choosing and ultimately participating in society's historical process. (1972:30)

An interesting feature of the language-naming theory of Freire is that there is no static resolution, the world cannot be named ultimately. That would suggest a future point where language comes to rest in equitable social relations and is no longer an arena for contest or creation. Freire sees our language and consciousness education as perpetually posing new problems ("problematization" in the vocabulary associated with Freire):

> To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. (Freire 1979:76)

Traditional schooling and education imposed an unequal social relationship between the teacher and learners, which becomes institutionalized in the authority hierarchy in society. Freire caricaturized this teaching as depositing the teacher's language

and knowledge into the passive learner. In his adult literacy classes Freire developed new relationships in the group, based on the practice of democracy. The teacher or co-ordinator enters into a dialogue with her/his learners and together they explore the language. It is essentially respecting each other and entering a communication, as that term was used by Habermas. Freire calls this a dialogical realtionship. It presumes a reciprocosity in the relations and a non-aggressive attitude or negotiation:

> Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who deny other men the right to speak their word. (Freire 1979:76)

To conclude this section, it can be noted that both Habermas and Freire granted us philosophical and methodological insights of how the ideology present in the language used in unequal social relations can be resisted. Both offered the vision of a future ideal society in which manipulation would diminish and human values would be asserted. For both of them this is no rosy dream, but a future to be striven for and dynamic in its concept, sustained by continuous dialogue and power thrusts towards equality. Language may be highly oppressive, but we are not bound to suffer that without resisting and offering an alternative vision.

CONCLUSION

The area of language, ideology and social context is not as clear cut as the field of formal linguistics, nor free from controversy and ambiguity. Examination of social interaction and cultural values insists that language cannot be separated from social conduct; and that is an area for interpretation and contest.

In this dissertation I admit that I have considered a limited focus from the field of language and social relations or even language and power. I have tried to show that ideology resides in speech acts and it is packaged in ordinary discourse. An examination of the illocutionary force and expected perlocutionary effects directs one towards uncovering this ideological intent. An examination of discourse can unpack and demystify ideological bias. Both these assist in critical reading which is an act of resisting the maintenance of inequality through ideological manipulation of language.

In the last chapter this resistance was located in how people can utilize the constant ambiguity of language. Resistance and critical thinking can lead to a more equitable social world; that is the rational outcome of the use of language for communication rather than domination. Language is, however, only one aspect in the drive to liberate people; it can raise consciousness and debate. To assume more would be naive:

> The whole concentration on language and

> communicative competence seems to neglect material domination and class interest: access to unfettered communication may not be enough to secure an emancipated society if access to wealth and status are not similarly equalized. (Mclellan 1986:79)

This reservation is not offered to undermine the gist of the dissertation, but is presented to acknowledge that consciousness through and of language has a limited emancipatory ability.

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