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978-1-107-00652-2 - Ideology in Language Use: Pragmatic Guidelines for Empirical Research

Jef Verschueren

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Ideology in Language Use

The relationship between language and ideology has long been central to research in discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology, and has also informed other fields such as sociology and literary criticism. This book, by one of the world's leading pragmaticists, introduces a new framework for the study of ideology in written language, using the tools, methods, and theories of pragmatics and discourse analysis. Illustrations are drawn systematically from a coherent corpus of excerpts from late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history textbooks dealing with episodes of colonial history, and in particular the 1857 'Indian Mutiny.' It includes the complete corpus of excerpts, allowing researchers and students to evaluate all illustrations; at the same time, this provides useful practice and training materials. The book is intended not only as a teaching tool in language-, discourse-, and communication-oriented programs, but also for historians and social and political scientists.

JEF VERSCHUEREN is a professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Antwerp.

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and

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To the memory of Tim McDaniel:
True scholar, great friend

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Preface

The public sphere is an arena with never-ending struggles over meaning. Situations may ‘arise’ but, more often than not, human agents are involved whose decisions and actions are based on assessments of and disputes over a present or prior context as well as hopes for the future. Decisions have to be argued for in advance. Actions may require subsequent legitimation. The idea that an issue – any issue – could be settled once and for all is an illusion. Not so long ago, for instance, some of us were convinced that Europeans’ views of their past as colonizers had finally matured, a strongly critical stance being allowed to come to the foreground. As in other areas of debate, however, the pendulum kept swinging. A social and political dynamics trying to cope with more recent questions concerning diversity and patterns of dominance, and the possible conclusions one might have to draw on the basis of an admission of past errors, led, in France, to the adoption of law 2005-158 (23 February 2005), “*portant reconnaissance de la Nation et contribution nationale en faveur des Français rapatriés*.”¹ Article 1 says,

La Nation exprime sa reconnaissance aux femmes et aux hommes qui ont participé à l’oeuvre accomplie par la France dans les anciens départements français d’Algérie, au Maroc, en Tunisie et en Indochine ainsi que dans les territoires placés antérieurement sous la souveraineté française.²

With this opening article, as well as with the title, this law casts itself as a means of protecting French citizens who served in former French colonies against undue personal disregard and disapprobation. This is fully compatible with the many practical measures specified in the law to the benefit of those citizens, or with an article explicitly prohibiting attacks on anyone identifiable as or supposed to have been an *harki*, an Algerian soldier loyal to the French during the Algerian War of Independence. This noble goal of protecting individuals who can barely be held responsible *as* individuals for policies of the state is used in passing,

¹ See Claude Liauzu (2005); “bearing on recognition of the Nation and the national contribution in favor of the repatriated French.” Note that, throughout this book, all translations from French sources are my own.

² “The Nation expresses its recognition of the women and men who have participated in the work accomplished by France in the former French departments in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Indochina as well as in the territories placed earlier under French sovereignty.”

however, as a frame of legitimation for measures with clear *ideological significance*. Thus Article 4 says,

Les programmes de recherche universitaire accordent à l'histoire de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, la place qu'elle mérite.

Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit.³

This is a straightforward instruction for history writing and history teaching. The heart of the matter is a definition of events, discursively generated meaning, which enters the cycle of assessments, arguments, decisions, actions, legitimations.

The purpose of this book is to provide a research tool, methodological building blocks, for the investigation of such processes. Its background is linguistic pragmatics, the interdisciplinary science of *language use*. But the target audience includes students in all fields of inquiry to which the societal construction of frames of reference or ways of viewing actions and events, as mediated through discourse, is relevant: historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists, to name just a few broad categories.

The book has been specifically designed for training purposes. That is why there is an extensive appendix (Appendix 2) with the texts I use for purposes of illustration – all taken from history textbooks published during the transition years from the nineteenth to the twentieth century and bearing on colonial history. No full-scale analysis is provided. Rather, issues for analytical attention are defined and illustrated. Appendix 2 is sufficiently rich to allow further practice of all angles of approach reviewed in this book without a student having to go through the process of looking for appropriate materials which require their own contextual specifications before matters of detail can be addressed. These extracts are also available online at www.cambridge.org/verschueren

Unoriginal as it may sound, this book has been much too long in the making. A skeletal picture was presented as early as 1996 at the 5th International Pragmatics Conference in Mexico City. First it had to wait for two other book projects to be completed, then an eight-year spell as dean of my faculty at the University of Antwerp took my mind and time in other directions.

During that latter period, fortunately, I enjoyed a three-month research stay at Monash University (June–September 2004), during which the first half of this book was written. I will be forever grateful to Keith Allan for inviting me and providing a stimulating environment for research, which has led to other

³ “University research programs give the history of French overseas presence, specifically in North Africa, the place it deserves.

Educational programs recognize in particular the positive role of the French overseas presence, specifically in North Africa, and grant the history and the sacrifices of the soldiers in the French army coming from these territories the eminent place to which they are entitled.”

fruitful forms of collaboration as well (most recently, the organization of the 11th International Pragmatics Conference, July 2009, in Melbourne); to Marko Pavlyshyn and Brian Nelson, heads – before and after my arrival, respectively – of my host institution, the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics; to Irene Romanowski and Lona Gottschalk, for their logistical support; to Brian Gerrard and Richard Overell of the Rare Books section of Monash's Sir Louis Matheson Library, who were helpful beyond the call of duty while I was collecting most of the sources I am now using as illustrative data; and to many Melbourne colleagues, including Kate Burridge, Michael Clyne, Marisa Cordella, Ana Deumert, and Anna Margetts, for useful discussions.

After Monash, the half-finished manuscript entered a dormant state again, to the great frustration of a number of doctoral students who could have used better-developed methodological advice in their language-and-ideology-related endeavors, until I emerged from the deanship at the end of September 2009. I completed this book while enjoying the hospitality of the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (ÉHESS) and the Maison des sciences de l'homme (MSH) in Paris. I owe a serious debt of gratitude to Michel de Fornel (Centre linguistique anthropologique et sociolinguistique), and Louis Quéré (Centre d'études des mouvements sociaux) for their kind invitations to ÉHESS, Institut Marcel Mauss; to Michel Wieviorka, Director of the Fondation MSH, and Jean-Luc Lory, Director of the Maison Suger (Fondation MSH), for providing the unparalleled hospitality at 16–18 rue Suger; to the entire staff of the Maison Suger for making life so easy. I also thank FWO-Vlaanderen for financially supporting the sabbatical year I was enjoying, the University of Antwerp for granting me a leave of absence, and Bruno Tritsmans, my successor as dean of the Faculty of Arts, for systematically not bothering me with all the unfinished business I left behind.

In the course of the past fifteen years, roughly, I have been able to benefit from working with many students and close colleagues, traces of whose contributions are no doubt to be found in the following pages. A minimal list includes Kaspar Beelen, Jan Blommaert, Frank Brisard, Chris Bulcaen, Eric Caers, Jonathan Clifton, Roel Coesemans, Pol Cuvelier, Helge Daniëls, Walter De Mulder, Patrick Dendale, Sigurd D'hondt, Gino Eelen, Isabel Gomez Diez, Geert Jacobs, Jürgen Jaspers, Lut Lams, Gilberte Lenaerts, Katrijn Maryns, Michael Meeuwis, Liesbeth Michiels, Eva Palmans, Stefanie Peeters, Kim Sleurs, Dorien Van de Mierop, Sarah Van Hoof, Tom Van Hout, Eline Versluys, Matylda Weidner, and Jan Zienkowski. Outside this immediate past and present circle, in order not to forget too many colleagues whose ideas have had an impact on my own thinking, I must restrict myself to a few of the guests received at the IPrA Research Center (ipra.ua.ac.be) over the years: Monica Aznárez, Teresa Carbó, Paul Chilton, Jenny Cook-Gumperz, Carmen Curcó, Baudouin Dupret, Irene Fonte, John Gumperz, 'Daisy' Jiang Hui, Monika Kopytowska, Rūta Marčinkevicienė, Luisa Martín Rojo, Inés Olza, Rod Watson, Igor Žagar, and, last but not least, Jan-Ola Östman, who is probably my steadiest fellow traveler in academia. I would like to reserve a special mention for three historians. Steven Epstein strengthened my

belief in the potential relevance of a pragmatics-based approach to historical data during the discussions we had while we were co-residents at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center (February–March 1997) and by demonstrating it in his *Speaking of Slavery* (2001). At the University of Antwerp, interesting collaboration on historical data is being developed with Henk de Smaele and Marnix Beyen; Marnix also undertook a thorough critical reading of the post-Melbourne half of the manuscript, saving me from some important errors. Finally, this book benefits from a last-minute reading by Johannes Angermüller, and from extensive comments by Rod Watson and two anonymous reviewers as well as a dedicated editor, Helen Barton, production editor Elizabeth Davey, and copy-editor Karen Anderson Howes at Cambridge University Press. All remaining mistakes are of course my own responsibility.

Acknowledgements are not complete without thanking Ann Verhaert (some 13,000+ times) for sharing work and life.

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