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Ideological Conceptualizations of Language

Discourses of Linguistic Diversity

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Approaching the study of language use and ideology: An introduction

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For several decades the interconnections between ideology and language have been at the heart of investigations into the social meaning of language. In linguistics, ideology has frequently been attached to the study of discourse, particularly to the politics of discourse, which is concerned with social actors' efforts to organize or manage the ways discourses come to life. The present volume broadly contributes to this line of investigation as it addresses the question of how language is conceptualized ideologically when it enters human interaction. The particular concern to the authors of this volume is linguistic diversity, that is, communicative contexts in which language is perceived in its plurality and hybridity. These contexts are particularly fertile for studying how social actors think about languages, how they evaluate them and jointly negotiate meanings.

Our volume has developed out of the editors' sustained interest in the relationship between language use and ideology. It is meant as a contribution to the growing interdisciplinary body of linguistic research into the social theory of meaning and change. The twelve authors of the ten contributions in the volume would all identify as social theorists of language in use of various scholarly traditions who investigate language as social practice that shapes and is shaped by the relationship between users and their cultural and social contexts. The particular interest that brings them together in the present volume is the exploration of the relationship between language use and ideology.

Our joint interest in the relationship between language use and ideology developed from a conference workshop entitled 'Ideology and Language Diversity', which was organized by Erzsébet Barát and Patrick Studer for the annual conference of *Societa Linguistica Europaea* (SLE), at Universidade de Lisboa, in 2009. This workshop was supported by the European research project *Languages in a Network of European Excellence* (LINEE) under the Sixth Framework Program (2006–2010). LINEE was concerned with the analysis of discourses on linguistic diversity and the ways in which they reflect or contribute to the development of a European knowledge-based society on regional, national, and supranational levels of analysis. Six chapters of this volume have been written by authors directly involved in the LINEE research project (Barát, Beswick, Dovalil, Flubacher, Nekvapil & Sherman, Studer). Draft versions of two additional chapters were presented at the workshop in Lisbon

by colleagues from Italy and Belgium conducting research in a similar area of study (Trumper & Maddalon, Vosters). The last two book chapters were specifically invited by the editors at a later stage to complete the volume (de Bres, Marková with Studer).

While we as editors share a general interest in ideology, we did not intend to invite contributions that represent and demonstrate a particular approach to ideology and ideological conceptualizations of language. We refused to act as academic gatekeepers, authorizing a single understanding of ideology or language ideology. We wanted to keep the range open and allow for the divergence of approaches. The editors themselves are also of different positions on the meaning of ideology and on its explanatory power for linguistic analysis. While different in their approaches to the relationship between language and ideology, the contributions share a common goal: they all explore, in different ways, the European Union's ideal of multilingualism and the genealogy of the various struggles over language-based rights and linguistic diversity within different societal and cultural contexts. In our understanding, a volume on ideological conceptualizations of language in the European Union is of particular relevance at the moment when the ideology of multiculturalism and linguistic diversity is in the centre of heated debates. In these debates, language use has figured as the stake in political struggles over entitlements to the distribution of assets and to recognition. Language is not merely the 'medium' of these debates 'about' rights and democratic institutions, but has been foregrounded as the very topic of the various social conflicts. The publication of the book is also meant to challenge the most worrying position in this debate that should equate multiculturalism and linguistic diversity with some alleged decay of social cohesion and stability. This intellectual commitment functions as the principle underpinning the critical empirical research presented in the volume.

At the same time we wanted to make sure that the volume functions as a discursive site for various epistemological stances on how language use and the perception of language use itself gain, directly or indirectly, significance. The (enabling) limitations of a given approach may best be demonstrated when juxtaposed in relation to other research paradigms exploring the same social event that should grant the unifying force for the present collection. In this regard, our major motivation was to acknowledge the multiple traditions in a relatively new field of research and contribute to a dialogue on how to approach ideological interpretations of language use. Our editorial principle is similar to Schieffelin et al. (1998: 9), one of the most influential collections on language ideologies in linguistic anthropology, who refuse to legitimize a single interpretation of the language-ideology relationship. However, since the early attempts of the 1990s, when the role of language ideology as the mediating link between social practices and institutions earned systematic scholarly attention mostly in the anthropology of language (Kroskrity et al. 1992), the focus

on ideological conceptualizations of language has spread across various disciplinary boundaries. This travelling of the topic across boundaries has resulted in a productive reformulation of the relationship between language, ideology and power. Language attitude research, critical studies of discourse, sociolinguistics, and cultural studies, to mention but a few, have also contributed in their own right to the topic (Gee 2008; Heller 2006; Makoni & Pennycook 2007; Shohamy 2006). The contributions in our volume are informed by this rich cross-fertilization in contemporary research on ideology. Their disciplinary boundary crossings should entail important re-articulations of the concept of ideology, making any authoritative grouping impossible.

The present volume focuses both on institutions and on individuals carrying ideologies forward into the discursive space, be it through policies, propaganda or individual perceptions and reflections. We understand this forward-carrying momentum, which gives language use a sense of ideological direction, as a fundamentally conceptual phenomenon. It is a mode of social knowledge formation that involves ideology both as process and product – an act of conceiving which necessitates the existence of some (ideological) *thing* that can be conceived. This understanding of ‘conceptual’ implies a constructivist approach to meaning-making but, at the same time, reflects a historical and cultural awareness of the potential ideological meaning that is already ‘out there’ in the discursive space. One theory from language policy and planning research that falls within the scope of this understanding is Language Management Theory, which includes ‘ideology’ as a concept in the institutional or organized management of linguistic practice (see Nekvapil 2011).

The claim of intuitive, yet principled and rational explanations of events, however, is not new. Alongside well-known ethnomethodological approaches, it has enjoyed a long and controversial debate in social psychology over the past fifty years (cf. Heider 1958; Schütz & Luckmann 1975; Kruglanski 1996; Kruglanski & Webster 1996). Social psychologists, notably Heider (1958), have developed the notion of the human mind as a naïve scientist striving for accurate and rational explanations of events. Conceptualizing processes, therefore, may follow common-sense principles, an argument which has been developed by social representation theorists for some time now (cf. Flick 1998; generally Moscovici & Duveen 2000; Moscovici 2007). Common-sense making, which is essentially based on rationalizing processes, entails the reduction of content and the simplification of reality, qualities one might easily connect to ideologies. Most importantly, however, it is accompanied by a deontic ‘touch’ – by the future implication of something that is believed to be true or false. When we speak of ‘conceptualizing’ or ‘conceptualizations’, therefore, we not only wish to acknowledge the impact of these theories on developing an understanding of how ideologies arise, we wish to acknowledge equally the structured and principled disposition of the human mind towards coherence and stability in a predictable world.

The ten contributions in the present volume explore discourses on linguistic diversity as ideological conceptions of language that reflect and shape positions of stakeholders in the construction of the geopolitical space of the European Union. The papers address the differential ideological meanings of linguistic diversity and their interconnections in different discursive and institutional contexts. The key concepts they all make use of and explore are ideology and discourse but from different perspectives, falling into two broader approaches. One approach seems to see the social actor's ideology in a more static way and defines it as a matter of beliefs and ideas. Ideology, according to this logic, is a system of meanings. The other understands the social actor's ideology within a dynamic framework. It sees ideology as an effect of negotiation that emerges from interaction with particular representations of the social and cultural reality cross-cut with diverse power relations. The former tends to denote mental constructs or scripts that can easily be seen as 'possessions' of particular individuals or social collectives. The latter, on the other hand, sees representations of the world, including that of language, as a fluid social construct caught in socially organized conventions. These views correlate with their concept of discourse. The first one sees discourse more as a matter of product, a particular representation, while the other understands discourse more as a matter of ongoing negotiation, dispersed across multiple fields of signification.

One major potential risk of the more static approach may be that its logic pushes to legitimize concerns about what is true and what is false (because it is ideological) and rooted literally in the experience of a given social position. The other approach, at the same time, may easily valorize contingency to its extreme and produce the meaning of contingency as if completely arbitrary, dislodging meaning from its social structures. Therefore we decided to keep the various approaches within the framework of the same volume as it may help the reader to go beyond the counter-productive 'representation' versus 'process' binary. The juxtaposition may advance a dialectic and intersectional logic. A dialectic relationship between discourse as representation or social construct and discourse as a social practice of signifying would acknowledge the mediated character of experiences as well as the question whether all relations of power are inherently rendered into patterns of domination. The resolution of product versus process may subvert the paradox of immanent being versus ephemeral active becoming, allowing for a contingent but not arbitrary system of values and social positionings of speakers as autonomous agents.

In spite of the juxtaposition of multifaceted papers, the volume is coherent especially in that the contributions are critical in their stance to the particular dimensions of ideology they explore. Some of them even share a critical stance to their own analysis, questioning their own assumptions (Barát, Dovalil, Flubacher, and Studer), sometimes even the analytical relevance of the concept of ideology itself (see Studer with Marková). In our opinion this (self-)reflexivity may actively promote

a dialogue on the various methods and traditions drawn on in the contributions. Furthermore, all contributors share the understanding that meaning is of social origin and that power plays a crucial role in the conceptualization of language and language varieties. When it comes to attributing more explicit political meanings to their findings, though, most of the authors are reluctant to go that far and assume a particular standpoint, leaving the work of inference to the reader.

The volume is divided into four parts on grounds of relative intellectual differences in approach, which also corresponds with some thematic similarity across the particular chapters included. The chapters are not necessarily included in a given part because they correspond to the actual theme, or level of multilingualism in the European Union implied by the title; rather, their placement allows us to foreground the analytical similarities in their challenges to the ideological investments of language in the European Union.

The first two contributions of this volume in Part I represent approaches which are based in sociolinguistics or the sociology of language. The authors view ideologies in their relationship with the formation of nations or 'national identities', particularly when it comes to the distinction of '(national/standard) language' and 'dialects'. Under this perspective, in their joint paper John B. Trumper and Marta Maddalon analyse the historical development of the linguistic situation in Italy and compare it with some features of the situation in Great Britain. Particularly, they focus on the role of ideologies in the development of the concept of language minority. In the second contribution, using Pierre Bourdieu's concept of legitimated language, Rik Vosters addresses similar problems; however, his analysis focuses on ideological aspects of language variation which took shape in a particular historical period of the development of the linguistic situation in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (in the early nineteenth century).

Part II consists of three contributions that highlight language ideologies in the context of economic migration. Julia de Bres shifts attention to the phenomenon of cross-border migration in Luxemburg where migrants live in one nation and work in another. Based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews, De Bres explores language ideologies of cross-border migrants in the 'metalinguistic discourse' to reveal stakeholders' own interests and group identities. The second contribution, by Jiří Nekvapil and Tamah Sherman, focuses on the context of multinational companies in Central Europe. Applying Language Management Theory (Nekvapil & Sherman 2009) to a range of data, Nekvapil and Sherman analyse language ideologies surrounding the use of Czech, Vietnamese, German and English. They aim at exploring hitherto 'unidentified ideologies', which represents the approach that they share with the previous chapter by Julia de Bres. In the third contribution of this part, Jaine Beswick takes the example of the Portuguese-speaking community in St. Helier, a small town on the island of Jersey, to investigate the relationship between language

and ideology in the hospitality industry. Drawing on critical theories surrounding the concept of the knowledge economy (especially Bourdieu), Beswick analyses the various social actors' language attitudes, knowledge, values and experiences.

The four contributions in Part III explore ideological conceptualizations of language diversity and multilingualism on different levels and within diverse cultural contexts. The first two contributions present case studies that apply relevant theoretical approaches. Basing his analysis on Language Management Theory, Vít Dovalil looks at the management of linguistic diversity at the level of the European Union, while Mi-Cha Flubacher's contribution draws mostly on the work of Iwar Werlen (2004), Terry Eagleton (1994) and Kathryn A. Woolard (1998) to explore the policies of linguistic diversity on the national level in the German-speaking region of Switzerland. Dovalil's study concerns the principle of 'equal treatment' of the member states in the European Union with a particular focus on the realization of this alleged equality in the field of European language policy and planning, using a particular dispute taken to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Mi-Cha Flubacher's contribution is concerned with Swiss public debates and legal texts to examine the ideological representation of diglossia in discourses of migrant integration policy. The analysis deconstructs the metaphor of 'language as the key to integration' in various federal and cantonal policy documents regulating the acquisition of the 'local language' by migrants. The other two chapters in Part III are more interested in developing particular theoretical concepts and categories of analysis for discourse studies. Patrick Studer's paper proposes a model of social representations theory for revealing ideological investments in discourses of both formal and informal language planning. His analysis deals with social contexts in which language becomes something that is seen to be in need of 'being managed' both conceptually and linguistically. The chapter emphasizes the relevance of Harré & Moghaddam's (2003) concept of performance style as an additional perspective in discourse studies. Studer looks at the mundane or everyday forms of political reasoning in spontaneous focus group discussions with university students from various areas of study. Erzsébet Barát's chapter performs a critical analysis of the ideological effects of the conflation of language and culture in the centre of the articulations of the 'one nation, one language' ideology of nationalism in the local context of a Hungarian multiethnic town. Her theoretical aim is to argue for the possibility and importance of a relative differentiation between ideological and non-ideological meaning productions by bringing together feminist scholarship (Thompson 2001) and critical discourse studies (Gee 1999; Fairclough 2003). She analyses two sets of interviews carried out with Polish migrants and US and UK speakers of English who arrived and settled down before and after the system change, respectively. The analysis also explores whether the political change has an effect on migrants' sense of self and the ways this discursal articulation of the self is shaped by ideologies of gender.

Part IV comprises an extensive interview that Patrick Studer conducted with Ivana Marková. The chapter functions as a systematic and detailed discussion of the various approaches to studying discourse from a social psychological perspective. Studer's questions first invite Marková to revisit her standing on the epistemology of social representation and the role language plays in social representation. The invitation allows Marková to revisit the legacy of Serge Moscovici's works for her own intellectual development. In the centre of their dialogue are the concepts of trust, responsibility, the Self, and social recognition. On the other hand, the two researchers differentiate between Discursive Psychology and Social Representations Theory based on the epistemological assumptions of the two traditions. The comparison opens up a space to discuss the two major agendas of discourse analytic activities, namely social criticism and the thematization of social injustice. The constitutive differences and similarities are developed in terms of the potential values and/or limits of the concepts of ideology and power for analytical purposes. Marková, in agreement with Moscovici, argues against their use on the grounds of their Marxist, or 'leftist' disposition that in her understanding undermines the centrality of dialogicality.

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