

MARNIE HOLBOROW, *The Politics of English*. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1999. 216 pp. £47.50 (hbk); £15.99 (pbk)

ADRIAN BEARD, *The Language of Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. ix+121 pp. £9.99 (pbk)

Politics and language are so closely related that, as Lakoff put it, politics is language and, at the same time, language is politics (1990: 13). The close relation

between politics and language reveals itself in many different aspects, of which the political view of language is a concern and the political communication through language is another. The two books to be jointly reviewed here cover the above two aspects, with Holborow the first, and Beard the second.

Approaching language through a Marxist standpoint, Holborow's book discusses, in a social and historical context, such 'political questions surrounding language' (p. 45) as the nature of the language; the relationship among language, ideology and reality; and the interconnections of language and thought. These questions, outlined in the first chapter of introduction, are elaborated in Chapter 2 by reference to the writings of Marx and Engels, and the two Soviet linguists Volosinov and Vygotsky.

Concerning the nature of language, Holborow explores the origin of language, for the reasons that '[E]stablishing how a phenomenon comes into existence tells us something fundamental about its nature' (p. 45). She believes in Marx's viewpoint that 'language arises as part of human development of cooperative labour as part of humans' growing mastery of their environment' (p. 46). She labels this a 'social view of language' and a 'historical dimension of language'.

As for the relationship between language, ideology and reality, Holborow first explores the relation between reality on the one side and the language and ideology on the other. To illustrate this, she quotes from Marx that 'neither thoughts nor language in themselves form a realm of their own', but 'they are only manifestations of actual life' (p. 22). Language and ideology bear a relationship with reality that is not predetermined or simply reflective, but dialectical, that is, there is a reciprocal influence of one on the other. She then explores the relationship between language and ideology, pointing out, citing Volosinov, that language is the centre of ideology and language reveals aspects of ideological formation and change.

In the area of language and thought, Holborow introduces Vygotsky's work on the organic interconnections of thought and language. Vygotsky, contrary to the contemporary emphasis on the parallel progress of language and thought, demonstrates that language is the means by which reflection, generalization and thought processes take place and that these cognitive processes are socially formed. Language and thought interact with each other through social activity and together in this dialectical process they constitute a qualitative leap forward in terms of consciousness. This thought-language relationship of Vygotsky's is further developed when he describes the features of inner speech.

In the following chapters, Holborow applies these political viewpoints of language to the actual analyses of the English language in terms of world English (Chapter 3), women's English (Chapter 4), and standard English (Chapter 5). All these analyses are done from a 'social-historical' dimension. Holborow strongly expresses her belief that the development of English into a world language is rooted in its social and historical context (p. 54), that women's oppression in society should be reflected in the language they use (p. 119), and that standard English came into existence as a result of a historical process in which a rising

middle class came to need a standard English for the consolidation of its wealth and dominance (p. 185). In the final chapter, the author expresses a hope that discourse theory and critical discourse analysis should go beyond the analysis of individual text or the form of discourse. She advocates that changing and interpreting discourse be seen as ways to unlock social change (p. 195). This echoes the words of Fairclough and Wodak: 'The critical analysis of discourse is firstly a feature of contemporary social life, and only secondly an area of academic work. And critical discourse analysis as an academic pursuit is firmly rooted in the properties of contemporary life' (1997: 260).

Holborow's ending links her book with discourse analysis, but Beard has done a detailed job within the field of discourse analysis. His book, devoted to the analysis of political discourses, begins with an analysis of the connotation of commonly used terms like politics/politicians/political/politicize, revealing that the use of these words and others like left/right/centre may tell where those who use them stand. He answers the question, 'What do they stand for?', by exploring how politicians and those who report on the work of politicians make use of metaphor, metonymy, analogy and transitivity to express their ideology. The author aims to examine the way in which language reflects the ideological position of those who have created it (p. 18).

This may be exemplified in the following BBC report: 'The White House today threatened Saddam Hussein with military action over the UN inspectors affair'. In this example the journalist has used metonymy in a way which gives a very favourable view of the American position. It is much better to have reported the threat emerging from the White House than from Clinton, for attacking a foreign country is not something an individual would want to be held responsible for. On the other hand, by using Saddam Hussein to represent the country he ruled, it appears that he alone would suffer the results of the attack.

Subsequent sections of the book concentrate on different types of political discourse, such as political speeches (Chapter 3), party slogans and posters (Chapter 4), national and local manifestos (Chapter 5) and politicians answering questions (Chapter 6). The analysis is also a detailed exploration of the matter. For example, political speech is analysed in terms of the soundbite/claptrap, the list of three, contrastive pairs and use of pronouns. *Soundbites* are highlights from speeches. They are carefully engineered excerpts, which the speakers hope in advance will receive attention. The list of three also contributes to the effect of the speech, as is shown in the opening words of Nelson Mandela's first speech on his release from prison in 1990: 'Friends, comrades and fellow South Africans, I greet you all in the name of peace, democracy and freedom for all' (p. 39).

In the same speech, Mandela also said: 'I stand before you not as a prophet but as a humble servant of you, the people', in which there is a contrast between 'not being a prophet' with 'being a humble servant'. He denies any special powers that would belong to a prophet and offers himself instead as a humble servant. The effect of this contrastive pair, as analysed by Beard, can be that in rejecting the role of a prophet, Mandela has nonetheless planted the idea that he might be one,

or that some see him as one (p. 41). The grammatical cohesion of the contrast is achieved through the phrase 'not as/but as'.

Another issue is politicians' choice of pronouns. In his 1998 budget speech, Gordon Brown, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, used the singular form (1) to refer to successful action already taken: 'The plan I put in place last July is not only on track but is being achieved more quickly than expected' and (2) to announce policies which will be popular: 'Today I announce a tax cut for hundreds of thousands of working families on low income'. When it comes to expressing a strong will to make fundamental changes, however, he chose to use the plural form: 'We do this to encourage enterprise; to reward work; to support families; to advance ambitions not just of the few but of the many'. By the use of 'we' the speaker here hopes to spread the load of responsibility, for 'politicians can never be certain that decisions they have made will always necessarily be seen in a positive light' (Wilson, 1990: 51).

As is seen in the above, Beard's analysis of political discourse is very detailed, but also very varied. He includes data ranging from journalists' reports, newspaper articles and literary works, to political events and politicians' texts/words. The politicians quoted in the book are numerous, including Mandela, Thatcher, Reagan, Blair, Lincoln, Brown (p. 148), Ashdown (p. 53), etc. The book also offers readers exercises in each chapter. These exercises provoke readers' thinking about the author's presentation and offer them a chance to do discourse analysis themselves. Accompanying them are helpful commentaries, and at the end of each chapter is an 'Extension' section, which offers further thinking about the topic discussed in the chapter.

#### REFERENCES

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