

Putting The Social Back Into Language: Marx, Vološinov and Vygotsky reexamined

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Abstract

Language as autonomous system, cut free of the social world, is seeing a revival through the popularity of genetic explanations about the origins of language. It is therefore timely to reassess the input of society into language. This article seeks to do this through a reexamination of the writings of Marx on the subject of language and consciousness. Within this framework, it then examines the contribution of the Russian linguist, Vološinov who took Marx's initial insights further and developed a rounded social theory of language which included the interplay between language and ideology and the making of language through social relations. Finally, the article briefly examines the contribution of another early twentieth century Russian Marxist, Vygotsky, who identified linguistic signs as the social tools of communication. The article makes the claim that these interpretations of the social nature of language are necessary to account for the dynamic and unpredictable nature of language.

Critical Discourse Analysis: History, ideology, methodology

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Abstract

The diversity of the field of critical discourse analysis is a sign of vigorous interest and growth, but also challenge to any such report as mine. As I write this, lively international discussions, from Loughborough to Queensland to Sharjah, are under way in the site 'Language in the New Capitalism' (LNC) on such fundamental topics as 'What is the point of critical discourse analysis [hereafter CDA]?', 'CDA & Academia', 'Accessibility and Democratisation in CDA', and so on. Evidently, a need is widely felt for some renewed comprehension and consolidation, or some review and preview, of our enterprise. These very issues are central to own my latest book, where I have sought to situate the field within a comprehensive framework of the 'study of text and discourse', supported upon 2,382 data samples (Beaugrande 2004, posted on website). What

follows is necessarily offered as a personal perspective, focused on the three aspects named in my subtitle.

'Capitalism' as False Consciousness

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Abstract

The assertion on which this paper is based is that Capitalism has been superseded by Corporatism. I put forward an argument as to why Marxist scholars can and should abandon the idea that Capitalism still exists based on Marx's approach to understanding political economy. Further, I argue that Marx's method can be deployed to better understand and change the corporatist system in which we are currently living first by understanding what it means to be "labour" in a system governed by complex structures of debt.

Contesting the Cynicism of Neoliberal Discourse: Moving towards a language of possibility

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Abstract

This paper argues that we are witnessing a "crisis of critique" and a closure of language meanings that are symptomatic of a deeper generalized crisis in political culture, society, and democracy. As such, it signals the cessation of questioning and the suffocation of critique. This general failure to question is a direct by-product of the neoliberal ideology, which has managed to produce a powerful myth about itself that it does not need to be interrogated. In offering an analysis of neoliberalism's language and the effects it has in limiting public participation in a democratic society, the paper will argue for the continued need to recognize language as a public good, inextricably connected to human agency, identity, and political existence. Finally, the paper identifies education as a central arena for the contestation of the expanding application of market ideology and the corresponding need for "counter-education". The project of educators, cultural workers, artists, and activists who would refuse the invocation of closure, counter-education will foster a reinvented humanity in our quest for decommodification and reclamation of the public sphere.

Eduscapes: Knowledge capital and cultures

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Abstract

Accelerating global flows of people and information have formed new communities and networks across social and political borders. Higher education is one such globalized knowledge community in which new patterns of knowledge, accreditation, research alliances, and social relationships are emerging. Education has become a lucrative global trade. New communications and information technologies have enabled new forms of community and knowledge exchange. Old boundaries and sovereignties, whether of nation, class or paradigm communities are eroding as new formations take shape. In this paper I outline the push-pull dynamics of globalization in higher education: the coconstitutive nature of local and global interests and educational formations, disjunctive flows of capital, information, people, and knowledge on the global eduscape, and the new politics of knowledge capital as they affect academic research and the public archive of scholarly publishing and university libraries. I close with reflections on the differential consequences of globalization on: the role of the nation state in higher education provision and reform, the role of education in nation building and national identity politics, and the governability of a global eduscape.

'Global English': Linguistic Imperialism or Practical Lingua Franca?

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Abstract

Despite its obvious political significance, political theory has not played a prominent role in the debates around the spread of 'global English'. Given the explosion of literature within political science and political theory on so-called 'globalization' and its effect on the nation-state together with the highly influential argument of Benedict Anderson on the historical role of language and print in the modern 'imagining' of nationhood, one would have thought political theorists would have a lot to contribute. However, even the recent growing literature on language and language rights within liberal political theory add little to the issues raised by the advent of 'global English'. This article aims at beginning to redress this situation by using several examples, especially the work of

Philippe van Parijs and Abram De Swaan, to show how separating the communicative aspect of language from issues of culture, identity and power creates an abstract and rarified conception of language that avoids any adequate approach to the politics of global English. By turning to the work of Antonio Gramsci and his argument for how a truly common Italian national language should be formed, we can find a more suitable framework and set of concepts including his well known, hegemony.

“The men say ‘They don’t need it.’” Gender and the extension of language testing for British citizenship

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Abstract

On November 7th 2002 the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act received Royal Assent, and passed into British law, extending the language requirement for naturalisation candidates to those applying on the basis of marriage. That is, language testing requirements extend to the spouses of applicants who are married to British citizens. In the chain of discourses which emerged in the wake of ‘race riots’ in northern England in the summer of 2001, understanding English is linked with social cohesion, even at the highest level of Government. This paper suggests that the extension of the State’s powers to award or deny citizenship on the basis of language testing legitimates an argument which associates Asian languages in Britain with social segregation and isolation. In this debate there are several references to language proficiency and use in relation to ‘husbands and wives’, ‘wives and husbands’, ‘people’ and ‘spouses’. Rarely is there specific reference to ‘men’ or ‘women’. This chain of discourses almost refuses to say what it means: that Asian immigrant women should be required to learn English as soon as possible, because their failure to do so brings about community segregation and lack of social cohesion which threatens society.

Genealogy, Ideology, and Counter-Terrorism: Writing wars on terrorism from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush Jr

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Abstract

The construction of any kind of sustained political violence, including large-scale counter-terrorism campaigns, requires a powerful political discourse capable of enlisting widespread consent and subduing dissent. This paper examines the key features and characteristics of the discourse of George W. Bush Jr's second 'war on terrorism', in large measure by comparing it to the first 'war on terrorism' inaugurated by Ronald Reagan. I argue that the genealogical roots of Bush Jr's counterterrorism policies can be found in the discursive constructions at the heart of Reagan's approach, and that both discourses are based on a similar ideological foundation and make the same appeals to formative American political narratives. The paper also argues that the Bush Jr. and Reagan 'wars on terrorism' have functioned in similar ways to structure overall foreign policy formation, write American identity, reflexively construct external threats, and discipline internal and external opponents. Finally, the paper argues that the war on terrorism discourse has a number of highly damaging political, practical and ethical-normative consequences.