

ELL P2SB

EXAMPLES & CASE STUDIES

Identity discourse:

Of self

- Viven Burr, 2002: the modern conception of the individual regards it as defined by a fixed set of traits constituting his/her personality, as a Cartesian being whose actions are a result of rational deliberation, as someone who strives for moral integrity and is well separated from his / her group
- Zygmunt Bauman, 2005: post-modern life is characterized by uncertainty, fracture, physical and social displacement, and the experience of flow and disunity

As a social construction

- Butler, 1990: Gender identity cannot be defined in terms of a core of fixed common characteristics, but is a much more flexible construct
- (cont. from Butler) Identity is not something that one has, but rather something one 'does' or 'performs' and recreates through concrete exchanges, discourses and interactions between human beings
- Social reality does not exist as an independent entity but is socially constructed
- Hall, 2000: one should look at *identity as a process* rather than as an attribute or series of attributes
 - Through indexicality: when associations are created between a type of accent or the use of specific words and expressions and a certain kind of persona
 - 2008 presidential election, Sarah Palin (governor of Alaska)'s language was used to depict her as an outsider to Washington politics, unpretentious, down to earth, 'regular hockey mom'
→ 'hi, mom and dad' / 'can I call ya Joe?' / 'fersure'
- Identities can be ascribed, rejected, and assumed
 - But not all identities can be easily negotiated as social agents are involved in power relations that may allow some to have a voice while denying this basic right to others
 - Allen, 1983: While the seeming purpose of a slur is to insult and injure, at an unconscious level it is an effort to control the behaviour of the disparaged group by imposing a negative social identity on them

Types of identities

- Individual - e.g., personal identities are constructs that may include not only sets of membership categories, but also moral and physical characteristics that distinguish one person from another
- Collective
- Social - large categories of belonging such as race, gender, political affiliation (these may not have concrete, but rather abstract referents that are not associated w/ particular people)
- Situational - roles related to the specific context of interaction

General e.g.s of language influencing attitudes:

- Description of immigrants by political leaders
 - British Premier, David Cameron: *swarm* (of migrants crossing the Channel)
 - Northern League leader, Matteo Salvini: *clandestini*
 - Italian for 'clandestine'
 - V.s. *refugee*: means someone whose application has been granted, giving them specific rights and benefits. BUT also means someone who's fleeing from war, persecution or natural disasters, regardless of whether they have applied for asylum
- ❖ Common collocation
 - 'Syrian refugee' is constantly uttered in news media, which places an established identity and ethnic background to refugees. This has a potential effect of assuming all Syrians are displaced, or that all refugees are from a certain part of the world, thus undermining other crucial reasons and conflicts that drive people to flee their countries.
- Noun premodification to mark a certain aspect of someone's identity
 - Illegal immigrant [emphasizes the legal issue, necessitates and obligates the law to take punitive action against the people]
 - Muslim terrorist [ethnicity]
 - Male nurse / female doctor [gender]
- Study by Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011: participants favoured a punitive approach towards an increase in crimes when it was presented as a '*beast preying*'. A reformative approach was preferred when it was presented as a '*virus infecting*' society instead
 - Material process of preying where the human Actors are likened to animals reduces their humanity, justifying harsher punishments for their blights on society

- Contrasted to semantic field of medical science / illnesses → implies the fact that the issue is curable and has a remedy
- Singapore's 'White Dot' movement against homosexuality slogan: Let us protect our families from evil' (**but can't find this online so authenticity is not verified!!!)
- English word order is typically Subject-Verb-Object (SVO)
 - Syntactical pattern places emphasis on doer / action taker
- Fred Jant: about 1/3 of English sentences lack a subject, while about 3/4 of Japanese sentences lack a subject
 - Thus, Eng speakers tend to say things like 'John broke the vase'
 - Japanese speakers would say 'the vase broke', 'the vase was broken'
- Caitlin Fausey, Stanford case study
 - Speakers of English, Spanish and Japanese watched videos of people popping balloons, breaking eggs and spilling drinks either intentionally or accidentally
 - When given a surprise memory test, Spanish & Japanese speakers did not remember the agents of the accidental events as well as the Eng speakers
 - Because for accidental events, Spanish and Jap speakers wouldn't normally remember the agents for them
- Newspeak: an FICTIONAL, extreme and unrealistic form of language policing / verbal hygiene in a dystopian society (from 1984 by George Orwell)
 - Joycamp: a forced-labour camp meant to isolate and punish those convicted of crimes against the Party
 - Minipax: Ministry of Peace, whose responsibility it is to wage war
 - Thoughtcrime: the crime of thinking anything that is unorthodox or outside of the Party's position

Age discourse:

- Chinese neologism for Taiwanese people born in 1982 and beyond: *strawberry generation*
 - Now used to describe the younger generation as 'soft' and 'fragile'
- Time Magazine's May 2013 issue title "*The ME ME ME Generation: Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists who still live with their parents*"
- Common collocations (pairing of words)
 - At risk youth
 - Juvenile delinquent

→ reflects common perception of teenagers
- Coinage of "ephebiphobia"- refers to the phobia of street culture, crime, gangs which are concepts closely associated with youths
 - 1998, England Prime Minister Tony Blair introduced the 'Anti-Social Behaviour Order'
 - Hoffman & Summers, 2001: ephebiphobia is an inaccurate, exaggerated, and sensational characterisation of young people
 - Further aggravated by 2011 London riots, as the media constantly portrayed the teenager looters as a source of instability and disruption to society
 - 'Scums'
 - Being 'feral'
- Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa, 2006: performative practices of cultural hybridity
 - Young people negotiate forms of personal and group identity in the modern world
 - Deliberately 'Other' themselves as part of their anti-hegemonic resistance
- (related) youth subculture is a place for youth to construct alternative identities to the largely adult-defined subject positions offered to them by schoolwork and class
 - Hip-hop culture propagated by African American population
- Young people coinages
 - Facepalm
 - YOLO
 - Tank
 - Dope
 - True story
 - OOTD
- Proverb: Youth hopes much, believes most and fears least.
 - Positive representation of young people
 - Attributes suggest they are active agents in determining favourable outcomes for their lives

- Approaching of future with optimism
- In Singapore, youths are expected to be equipped to take on responsibilities in leading their own families, society and the country as they transition to adulthood
 - Hwa Chong's mission: To develop *leaders* for the nation
 - VJC: Visionary *leadership*
 - RI: Committed to developing *leaders of the future* steeped in character, confidence and commitment
- Representation of the elderly in Singapore
 - Silver tsunami
 - Suggests damage, danger, a destructive excess and influx
 - Grey brigade
 - Attaches qualities of discipline and strength
 - Perceives the elderly as a valuable force

Ethnicity discourse:

- Ideology is naturalized
- Overt racism: open and favourable coverage is given to arguments, positions and spokespersons who are in the business of elaborating an openly racist argument / advancing a racist policy or view
 - Circulates and popularised openly racist policies and ideas
 - Legitimizes public expression of them and increases threshold of the public acceptability of racism (racism becomes 'acceptable' and then 'true')
- Inferential racism: apparently naturalised representations of events and situations relating to race which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions
 - More widespread
 - Can be invisible even to those who formulate the world in its terms
- 'Nigger'
 - Borrowed from 'negro' meaning black, used by Spanish and Portuguese slave traders
 - Not taking word final -er, the African American form ends in a schwa without /r/ → the -er form is *the slave form*, according to the interviewee in the research paper by Jacquelyn Rahman
 - Henderson, 2003: it has acquired a taboo associated with the most obscene word of the English language

- Core social meaning related to survival
- Rejected within the AA community because (1) seems to internalize white racism, (2) contributes to the construction of an identity founded on self hate
- But more majorly, is a tool to project a facet of identity as a culturally aware survivor in the diaspora

→ Troutman, 2001: among AAs, the term conveys solidarity and does not have negative connotations

- 'The N word'- a euphemistic term
- Use of vermin-related metaphor to demonize and justify discrimination against other races or ethnicities
 - Rwandan Genocide: Hutus were called 'cockroaches' on national media, encouraging mass extermination
 - Leeches / parasites / rats
 - Nazi Germany to Jews
 - Apartheid-era South Africa to Black South Africans
 - Soviet Union to those opposed to communism

Kommentar [1]: find out which one was to which event specifically

Gender discourse:

- Curzan, 2003: it is widely agreed among feminist scholars that because of the lower societal position of women, female referential terms undergo pejoration more often than male referential terms
- Women's language operates as a powerful hegemonic construct of preferred feminine behaviour
 - Hegemony involves control by consent rather than by force. The representational practice of stereotyping plays a central role by endlessly reiterating what amount to caricatures of subordinate groups
- Spender, 1985: women are perceived as too talkative because how much they talk is not measured against how much men talk, but against an ideal of female silence.
- [case study] by Victoria Bergvall, 1996: studied verbal interactions among a group of students in the traditionally masculine area of engineering; particularly for the females
 - If they wanted to take part in heterosexual social + sexual rships, they needed to behave in stereotypically feminine ways, e.g. presenting own views tentatively
 - If they were to succeed in their studies, they had to behave in ways perceived as masculine, such as asserting themselves + their views

- [case study] Michelle Stanworth, 1983: talk in the classroom
 - Boys were encouraged by teachers to be assertive in classroom interaction
 - Girls demonstrating assertive abilities were not admired and had scorn heaped on them by other girls
- [example] British Telecom advertisement, 1990: criticized men for making women feel guilty about running up phone bills
 - Slogan: 'why can't men be more like women?'
 - Reversal of the lyric 'why can't a woman be more like a man?' from the musical My Fair Lady
 - Women are held up as model communicators

(also political discourse)

- Hillary Clinton's linguistic evolution from First Lady to US Senator to Secretary of State
 - 1996, asked what she would have done differently in her push for healthcare: 'Yes, **I know I've made mistakes and I know** there are better ways I could have done things....**I don't know if we'd have** a better outcome, **but I certainly would try.**'
 - 2014, similar qn on what she would have done differently during the 2011 attack on a US diplomatic compound in Libya: 'Well, **that's a difficult question, because our ambassadors** are the **personal representatives of the President** of the United States.'

*women tend to use at a higher rate than men- pronouns, esp 1st person pronouns, common verbs & auxiliary verbs, + social / emotional / cognitive words

*men tend to use more frequently than women- first person plural words (we), big words (>6 letters), words associated with anger

Politically correct language

- Expansion of gender labels and categories in University of California forms, 2015
 - 6 gender identities available to choose from on the admissions form
 1. Male
 2. Female
 3. Trans female
 4. Trans male
 5. Genderqueer / gender non conforming
 6. Different identity
- Adoption of gender-neutral pronouns
 - 'Ze' or 'xe'
- Change of the name of an institution from 'LGBT Center' to 'Duke's University Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity'

- LGBT- initialism for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender, which are essentially labels that categorises people according to their sexual identity. These may not give room for certain levels of ambiguity
- The change seeks to reflect a more fluid understanding of gender, as gender is not something that can be pigeonholed neatly

**these changes show a belief from the higher echelons of society that language plays a significant influence in the demarcation of gender categories.

Advertising discourse:

- Cameron, 1998: advertisers must make their appeals to the familiar and recognizable
- Vestergaard & Schroder, 1985:
 - *Utopia*- the world portrayed in advertisements moves on a day-dream level, which implies a dissatisfaction with the real world expressed through imaginary representations of the future as it might be.
 - Ads project imaginary situations or worlds which invite the addressee to identify with the desirable properties displayed in the ad
 - Product
 - Lifestyle
 - Service
- Pardun, 2013: **Cause-related marketing** stems from a trend of consumers expressing more knowledge and concern surrounding conditions of others
 - Establishes a partnership between a company and a cause

(cont)

- Knox & Marston, 2012: This trend is a result of globalization “shrinking” the world, and making the planet increasingly interconnected economically, environmentally, politically, and culturally
- L'Oreal: *Because you're worth it*
 - Specifically targets females w/ the only subject position available in you, 2ppp
 - Synthetically empowers the reader to realise her dreams goals or desires by directly addressing her as if she was the ideal reader meant to fulfill this subject position
 - Positively connoted ‘worth’ suggests that the woman’s inherent value makes her fully deserving of the product being promoted

Refer to Fairclough’s Subject Construction theory

- Audi: *Everyone dreams of an Audi*

- Traditionally, car ads target the male audience, but use of indefinite pronoun 'everyone' widens the range of readers to include both males and females
- Those who are loyal to the brand / are attracted to the car design would better fit into the subject position created
- Presupposition that he or she, like everyone else, dreams of owning an Audi
- Positive connotation of 'dreams'
- Singapore Navy recruitment commercial slogans:
 - I am the wind
 - I can ward off danger even after it takes flight
 - You may not always see me, but you will always feel me

Media:

- Vasterman, 1995: (media organizations) construct facts, they construct statements and they construct a context in which these facts make sense. They construct a reality.
- Bell (1991): values in news process
 - Continuity → making the interview part of an ongoing story
 - Competition → scooping one's rivals with an exclusive
 - Composition → presenting a mixture of different kinds of news
 - Co-option → presenting lesser news in relation to a high profile story or item
 - Predictability → pre-scheduling of events
 - Prefabrication → existence of ready-made text which can be transformed into a story

Political discourse:

[case study]

- Donald Trump (became President in 2016): (Jennifer Scalafani, 2018)
 - Relatively high exploitation of turn initial 'well'
 - Contributes to impressions of him as a candidate who reflects before speaking and who carefully considers all aspects of moderators' questions before answering in debates
 - Discourse marker or turn medial '*by the way*'

- It is one of the few ways in which a candidate can steer the debate toward a topic of his / her own interest and be released from the constraint of having to comply with the topics selected by moderators' questions
 - For Trump, the phrase allows him to fluidly shift the topic of his response anyway from propositions that could be damaging to his presidential self and towards topics that construct his identity as a candidate in tune w/ more imp't problems facing the nation
- 'Believe me'
 - (Viser, 2016): a ubiquitous phrase that works to somehow discursively cancel out the ideological inconsistency of Trump's discourse
 - Trump used it 30 times in the debates, compared to zero by the Democratic candidates
 - * also an example of **synthetic personalization**, i.e. when language of mass media is tailored in a way that targets a hearer or reader to give the illusion that the speaker is having an intimate conversation with an individual in the audience
- Interruption
 - Is a means of power and control
- Constructed dialogue, AKA use of direct reported speech
 - (Gordon, 2004): a family uses constructed dialogue (recycling quotations of a presidential candidate) in order to negatively evaluate the candidate and construct a coherent political family identity as supporters of the opposing political party
 - (Kuo, 2001): it plays a role in self promotion and other denigration in debate contexts. The act of articulating someone else's words to objectify praise of oneself and vilify one's opponents
 - Kuo again, : it can also work to downplay **epistemic** status by distancing oneself from the source of one's knowledge

Kommentar [2]: relating to knowledge or to the degree of its validation.

Business / organizational discourse:

- Changes in business today
 - End of 9-5 workday
 - Advent of flexi-time
 - Employment casualisation
 - Intrusion of work-related technologies into the home sphere

→ these changes blur the boundaries between private self and work self

Habermas, 1987: more and more aspects of social and interpersonal life are put to the service of capitalist production and income generation, with business activity increasingly colonising the employee's lifeworld

- Related: capitalism has power to destroy environments and marginalise people (Knights & McCabe, 2003)
- Emotional & listening skills that were confined to the domain of relational work are brought to the forefront of management + processing of info and people
 - Hochschild, 1983: Emotional labour is a notion used to shed light on new ways of feeling and relating in the workplace
- Rise in knowledge work (Drucker 1993), i.e. work that centres on the producing, sharing and applying of data and information
 - Knowledge work now increasingly permeates most business and all levels within a business, independent of whether their output is goods or services
- Kantor, 1993: Where workers have low paying jobs, they often feel marginalized, voiceless, and excluded from company culture
- Fiona Czerniawska, 1998: the adoption of new managerial approaches in a context of intensified global competition has sharpened awareness of language as a valuable commodity, potentially a source of competitive advantage which needs to be managed rather than simply left to take care of itself.
- Positioning of organisations / businesses as responsible social agents, even as they pursue profit-driven goals
 - Starbucks' use of lexis in the semantic field of morality & ethics
 - (on the actual website) *ethically sourced, sustainability, improving farmer livelihoods*
 - H&M's public apology letter following the controversial Coolest Monkey in the Jungle shirt (but unrelated to the point above)
 - it is...'fully committed to *playing its part* in addressing society's issues and problems, whether it's diversity, working conditions or environmental protection- and many others.'
 - Adverb of manner or quantity shows the extent and certainty of their dedication
 - Material process also reveals their belief that they have the duty, responsibility and power to redress these social issues.
- Powers of authority attempting to develop a common consensus towards a certain goal
 - PM Lee's speech at the Smart Nation Launch, 2014: '**We** want to transform our lives for the better, and we have what it takes to achieve this vision- the capabilities and the daring to put it all together and make a **quantum leap** forward.'
- National Day songs? Lol

Sports language:

Usage of metaphors

- Sports-writers tend to express value judgements, imposing a particular POV on readers, by using emotionally-loaded metaphors
- Metaphors are designed to enliven the discourse of football reporting and arouse the reader's interest

A soccer match can be presented through various metaphors, such as

- A theatre performance: elevates a soccer match to the status of a sublime kind of activity, which besides sheer entertainment is supposed to provide spiritual values
 - Finale
 - Spectacle
 - Taking to the stage
 - Play
 - Spectators
- Footballing superiority = royal power
 - Reign- used as a synonym for domination in footballing competitions but also as a term denoting someone's influence
 - Kings- to describe winners, or individs with outstanding abilities
- As a machine: downplays the role of individual players, seeing the team as an impersonal unit which operates in a predictable manner.
 - Out of steam (idiom), steam indicating the team / player's stamina or energy
 - Being *dismantled* by the opposition

* this metaphor is often applied to the Germany national team, which has earned a reputation for good organization and efficiency on the pitch. Indicates that metaphors are not selected at random but can be motivated by cultural factors (stereotyping)

- The winning team is ahead, the losing team is behind: an orientational metaphor
 - Ahead
 - Back in front

MISCELLANEOUS REAL- LIFE E.G.s:

- NTUC Income, 2012: overhauled its contracts into plain English to make it easier for customers to understand its insurance policies and enable them to make informed decisions

- The 1st insurance company in Asia to undertake a major Crystal Mark initiative, which is a globally-recognized standard for plain English (guarantees that a document is written in PE and gives simple, clear, concise information)
- Crystal Mark- is given by a British based body, the Plain English Campaign, which was set up in 1979 to advocate use of plain English in business