Lingua Inglese II

The Language
of Politics
Unit 2

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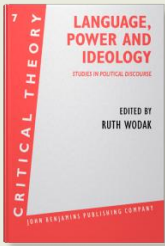## Unit 2

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What do they stand for?

Language and Ideology

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LANGUAGE
tells us
a great deal about the
IDEOLOGY of those
who use it-
politicians-
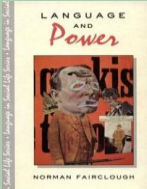but also those who report
on the work of politicians.

Language and Power

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Norman Fairclough: Language and Power

Language in the ⇨ production / maintenance / change ⇨ of <u>social relations of power</u>

LANGUAGE contributes to the
⇩
DOMINATION OF SOME PEOPLE BY OTHERS

IDEOLOGIES
closely linked to

POWER	LANGUAGE
they are a way of LEGITIMIZING existing SOCIAL RELATIONS and DIFFERENCES OF POWER	using language is the commonest form of social behaviour and social behaviour rests upon ideologies.

LANGUAGE
has become
⇩
PRIMARY MEDIUM OF SOCIAL CONTROL AND POWER

We can't afford to ignore language!

Norman Fairclough: *Language and Power*, 1989

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Language as a form of social practice	• Language is part of society • Language is a social process • Language is socially conditioned (conditioned by other parts of society) • Linguistic phenomena are social phenomena • Social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena

	process of <u>PRODUCTION</u>		written
DISCOURSE		⇨ of TEXTS	
	process of <u>INTERPRETATION</u>		spoken (generally a written transcription of what is said)

Norman Fairclough: *Language and Power*, 1989

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The problem of truth (1)

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1) **Politicians often complain about bias in the media and about witch-hunts**
- **bias**: 'baɪəs, prejudices, preconceptions, preferences or inclinations;
- **witch-hunts**: a hunt against opponents, searching out and harassing dissenters;

2) **"media do not report the truth, but present a distorted picture which serves their own interests"**

"Is it me, or is it hot in here?"
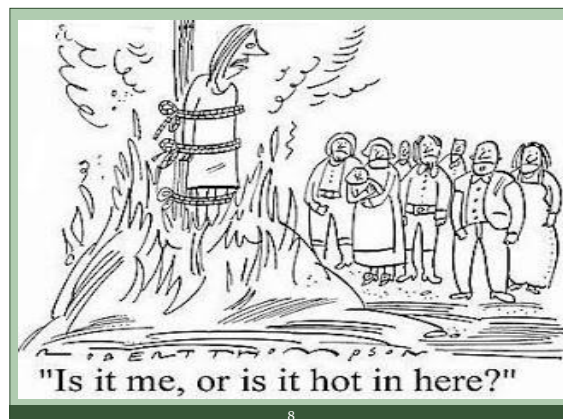
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The problem of truth (2)

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3) **the complaints often concern the presentation of a story including the language used to tell it**
4) **Is there an absolute truth? Is there a neutral language? Is there an unbiased report?**
  unbiased: impartial, fair, non-partisan

ISLAMOPHOBIA ON THE RISE

Truth

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There's no such thing as "absolute truth".

Truth is both **relative** and **subjective**.

The idea of truth is very problematic especially when reporting a political story: **you can report the same story in many different ways.**

STOP TERRORIST PROPAGANDA BBC REPORTS NOT BALANCED

Language is a means of communication
⇩
Language is a means of presenting and shaping political argument
⇩
Political argument is ideological (it comes from a series of beliefs)
⇩
Language is not separate from the ideas it contains
⇩
The way language is used says a lot about how the ideas have been shaped
⇩
therefore
analysing political language means looking at the way the language reflects the ideological position of those who have created it

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The power of metaphor

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| metaphor | ⇨ | When a word or phrase is used to establish a comparison between one idea and another: substitution of one thing for another in order to suggest comparison or resemblance. A figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity. Although some metaphors are easy to detect, some others are embedded/enclosed in the language. Inactive metaphors: metaphors which have become lexicalised: defined in dictionaries with their new meaning. |

Metaphors

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What spheres of life are metaphors drawn from?

- everyday life
- nature
- religion
- sport
- war
- animal behaviour
- technology
- disaster
- body and disease

The role of metaphors

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Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Goatly (1997) investigated the role of metaphors in everyday speech.
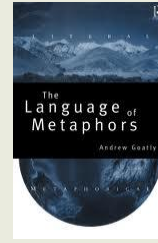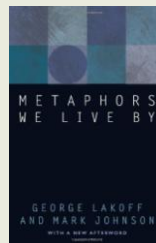
Metaphor is embedded in the way we construct the world around us and the way in which that world is constructed for us by other people.

METAPHORS ARE USED BY POLITICIANS AND BY THOSE WHO REPORT ON POLITICS AND ON POLITICAL EVENTS.
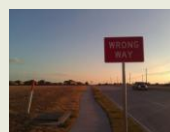
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METAPHOR OF THE JOURNEY

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MATCHING:

1. step by step
2. go round in circles
3. go off in the wrong direction
4. arrive at a conclusion
5. be lost
6. be stuck

a) keep going back to the same subject
b) be confused
c) gradually, in stages, little by little
d) be confused, puzzled, lost
e) reach a conclusion, decide on an issue
f) going on the wrong track

Journey & path

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N	Concordance
1	. So there's a lot to do . It's an exciting **journey**, and if you decide to take it ,
2	Asia are at the beginning of your own **journey**. I know that there are still many
3	I've mentioned have only started their **journey** toward democracy within the last
4	tried to be covered up . So we know the **journey** that is necessary to move from
5	and it was the beginning of an epic **journey** that has taken us together and
6	about . You've begun your own personal **journey**. And in some cases , you've had
7	right for you as you continue your own **journey** of leadership and service . Thank
8	somewhere . and we are all on the same **journey**, and the sacrifices made by so

N	Concordance
1	that's great news . But we still have a **long way** to go . We know that when
2	honest with ourselves – there is still a **long way** to travel . According to the
3	my tenure . I recognize that there is a **long way** to go for our country and our
4	dangerous conditions . She has come a **long way** , and we stand in solidarity with
5	have made great progress , but there is a **long way** to go . Women are still the

Journey & path (2)

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- women have to **lead the way**
- there is a lot **ahead** of us
- **how far** this country has come
- the pioneers who began **charting the path** that we ourselves **walk** today
- willingness to make this **march** together with us
- we will **take those steps** together
- we will **keep moving toward** a **destination**
- women and men around the world are **stepping forward**
- consolidate our gains and to keep momentum **moving forward**

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SPORT AND WAR

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- Two common sources of metaphors in politics are SPORT and WAR: both involve physical contest.

- Boxing metaphors: convey a sense of toughness and aggression ⇨ in electoral campaigns when elections are seen as a fight.

- Baseball metaphors: especially in the USA? The UK?

- Cricket metaphors: especially in the USA? The UK?

Metaphors of war, contest or sport involve concepts of ENEMIES and OPPONENTS, WINNERS and LOSERS.

They don't suggest that good government can be achieved through discussion, co-operation, working together.

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BOXING METAPHORS

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MATCHING
1. the gloves are off
2. bare-knuckle fight
3. throw in the towel

a) give up, admit defeat
b) without boxing gloves
c) it is going to be a serious dispute

BASEBALL METAPHORS

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MATCHING
1. a new ball game
2. a ball park figure
3. spin
4. to play ball
5. back at first base

a) to go back to the initial stage
b) rotate quickly
c) to agree to do something together
d) a rough or approximate number
e) a particular situation radically different from the preceding one

CRICKET METAPHORS

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1. to keep your eye on the ball
2. batting on a sticky wicket
3. to be stumped by a question
4. to play a straight bat to a question

a) to remain alert
b) to be confused or puzzled by a question
c) to avoid answering someone's question
d) to find yourself in difficulty because of your position on an issue

4

WAR METAPHORS

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MATCHING

1. hit the ground running
2. damage control
3. campaign
4. leads are surrendered
5. collateral damage
6. ethnic cleansing
7. fighting a last-ditch

a) something done as a final recourse to prevent a crisis or disaster
b) incidental destruction of things (not the intended target)
c) eliminating unwanted ethnic or religious groups
d) effort to minimize damage or loss
e) military operations; activities to achieve a goal
f) running straight into action; start very energetically
g) give in

Work in pairs. What is the meaning of these metaphors in your language?

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- acceptable losses
- acceptable risk
- acting a part
- adding value
- all the world's a stage
- at stake
- balancing the books
- be a machine
- bombarded by insults
- cost-benefit analysis

Do you know what source they come from (politics, sports, religion, history, economics, family life, health and medicine...)?

Melting pot or salad bowl?

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Work in pairs. What is the meaning of these metaphors in your language?

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- diamond in the rough
- difficult to swallow
- food for thought
- launching an attack
- melting pot
- my life is an open book
- no pain, no gain
- play hide and seek
- play to win
- puppet government
- salad bowl

Work in pairs. What is the meaning of these metaphors in your language?

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- sowing the seeds of progress
- the best defense is a good offense
- to sing the same old song
- to strike a familiar chord
- to be on the offensive
- take flak
- target
- time bomb
- to have faith
- witch-hunt

Pronoun reference

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Pronoun reference is very important in political persuasion.

you / your	▪ the reader is being addressed personally ▪ *you* is not just the single reader but also everyone in the country
we / our	▪ politicians are trying to persuade us to a point of view ▪ we already agree with them ▪ *we* gives a sense of collectivity, of us being all together

Degree of adjectives and adverbials

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative	Adverbial
heavy	heavier	…	…
soft			
important			
clear			
honest			
…			
…			
…			

Contrast of comparison in adjectives and adverbials is called **degree**.

Cohesion and anaphoric reference

cohesion	⇨	the way a text develops and holds together. It refers to the organisation of larger units of texts, beyond the sentence boundaries. Many paragraphs open with clear connections to what has been said before.
Lexical cohesion		▪ words which are repeated in the texts (**repetition** or **reiteration**) ▪ words with related meanings (**synonyms**) ▪ words with opposite meanings (**antonyms**)
Grammatical cohesion		▪ **conjunction** creates cohesion (temporal: *after, before first, second, third*; causal: *because*; coordinating: *and*; adversative: *but, however*; additive: *further, what's more*) ▪ **discourse markers** (*now, well, after all*) ▪ **demonstratives**: *this, that, those.* They point back at something that has already been mentioned.
Graphological devices		▪ **bold type** signals a step in the argument, a key word or concept ▪ **lists** give order to the sentences/concepts

The power of metonymy

Replacing the name of something with something which is connected to it, or is a part of it, without being the whole thing.

Work in pairs. Complete the following table identifying where these metonymic expressions are used and what their meaning is.

	Place/Country	Meaning
Shakespeare		The works of Shakespeare ex. "I love Shakespeare"
The White House		
Buckingham Palace		
Westminster		
The Crown		
Downing Street		
Hollywood		
Wall Street		
Palazzo Chigi		
La Scala		
Viale Mazzini		
Saddam Hussein		
Brussels		
The Red Cross		
Palazzo Madama		
La Borsa		
The Pentagon		
Washington		

Work in pairs.
Try to explain these examples of metonymy.

He bought *a Ford*.	
He's a *big question mark* to me.	
He's got *a Picasso*.	
Let's not let *Iraq* become another *Viet Nam*.	
Napoleon lost at Waterloo.	
The *buses* are on strike.	
The *ham sandwich* is waiting for his check.	
The *Times* hasn't arrived at the Press Conference yet.	
The *White House* isn't saying anything.	
Wall Street is in a panic.	
Watergate changed our politics.	
9/11	
Brazil won the soccer match.	
The pen is a powerful weapon.	

Synecdoche

- Part of something refers to whole.
- It is sometimes considered a subclass of metonymy.
- A figure of speech in which a part is used to represent the whole, the whole for a part, the specific for the general, the general for the specific, or the material for the thing made from it.
- It is a **synecdoche** if A is part of B, or vice versa.
- It is **a metonymy** if A is commonly associated to B but it is not necessarily a part of it.

Work in pairs. Discuss on the meaning of the following examples of synecdoche.
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She's just a pretty *face*.	
There are a lot of *faces* out there in the audience.	
We need some new *faces* around here.	
Give us this day our daily *bread*.	
Friends, Romans, countrymen: lend me your *ears*.	
hands	
mouths to feed	
the *press*	
"Oh, this hurts *my heart*!"	
There are lots of *ears* in next room.	

Intertextuality
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One text uses reference to another. "*The presence of a text in another text*" (Genette, 1983)

• -*gate* = scandal

What is Watergate?

Watergate, datagate, sexygate, Camillagate, fornigate, Dianagate, zippergate, Monicagate, Lewinskygate, Rubygate (Billgate? Silviogate? NO!)

• -*poli: from the Greek polis*

baraccopoli, tendopoli, tangentopoli, concorsopoli, vallettopoli, appaltopoli, parentopoli...

The power of analogy
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• **Metaphor**, **metonymy** and **synecdoche**: word or phrase level. They establish comparison between words and phrases, between one idea with another.

• **Analogy**: comparing two objects of different types; but these two objects have certain elements in common. Objects of the first kind have a certain characteristic: it is not known if objects of the second kind have it or not, but by analogy we conclude that since objects of the two kinds have certain things in common, they may have other things in common as well.

• **Analogy**: comparison between one thing and another, in an attempt to explain or clarify a certain situation.

• ̲

Household debt analogy
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• Margaret Thatcher used analogy comparing the ***economy of the nation*** with the ***economy of an individual household***: as it is dangerous for a family to have debts (to accumulate debts), so it is dangerous for a country to do the same.

government budget = family budget

The art of spin
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"**spin**": (baseball) putting spin on a ball is a pitcher's technique used to fool or deceive an opponent
"**doctor**": a "healer", someone who resolves a problem, a crisis

SPIN-DOCTOR	⇒	▪ SOMEONE WHO DECEIVES, WHO PRESENTS A FALSE PICTURE TO SUIT THE POLITICIAN ▪ person who is employed to publish favourable commentary on the opinions and actions of a famous person (usually a politician) in order to prevent negative publicity ▪ portavoce incaricato di fornire interpretazioni di fatti o informazioni che favoriscano un particolare partito o una personalità politica.

Spin (public relations)
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• In public relations, **spin** is a form of propaganda, achieved through providing a **biased interpretation** of an event or campaigning to persuade public opinion in favor or against some organization or public figure.

• While traditional public relations may also rely on **creative presentation of the facts**, "spin" often implies the use of disingenuous, deceptive, and highly manipulative tactics.

• Politicians are often accused by their opponents of claiming to be truthful and seek the truth while using **spin tactics to manipulate public opinion**. Large corporations with sophisticated public relations branches also engage in "spinning" information or events in their favor.

• Because of the frequent association between spin and press conferences (especially government press conferences), the room in which these take place is sometimes described as a spin room.

• A group of public relations **advisors**, **pollsters** and **media consultants** who develop spin may be referred to as "**spin doctors**" who **manipulate the truth** and **create a biased interpretation of events** for the person or group that hired them. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spin_public_relations)

How is **SPIN** placed on a story?

- the overall political effect that is desired
- celebrating success or ridiculing failure
- the way information is presented
- metaphors to influence the audience's view of the event
- claiming credit or distributing blame or guilt
- <u>emphasizing</u> the role of a participant/action
- <u>minimising</u> the role of a participant/action
- foregrounding or backgrounding a participant through ACTIVE or PASSIVE voice

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Spin: active or passive voice

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Foregrounding or backgrounding participants:

1) ***Chancellor announces tax cuts*** (active voice-Chancellor given prominence)
2) ***Tax cuts announced by Chancellor*** (passive voice-less prominence given to Chancellor)
3) ***Tax cuts announced*** (passive voice, actor not included-no reference to Chancellor)

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Opinion polls and pollsters (1)

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- Inquiries into public opinion conducted by interviewing a random sample of people.
- Opinion polls are used by the media to assess **public perception** on political issues.
- They are used during **electoral campaigns** to see how people are likely to vote.
- They are also used during the lifetime of a government to see how the public views the government's performance.

Do you trust public opinion?

Who do you think will win?

Other examples: p. 33 on your book

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2012 PRESIDENTIAL EXIT POLL RESULTS

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Nationwide opinion polling for the United States presidential election, 2016

Poll numbers verified as of 7 October 2015.

Poll model	Democratic candidate	%	Republican candidate	%	Leading by %
	Hillary Clinton	46.4%	Donald Trump	43.0%	3.4
	Hillary Clinton	44.5%	Jeb Bush	44.8%	0.3
	Hillary Clinton	45.2%	Ben Carson	46.6%	1.4
	Hillary Clinton	45.3%	Marco Rubio	44.0%	1.3
	Hillary Clinton	49.0%	Ted Cruz	41.3%	7.7
	Hillary Clinton	46.2%	Carly Fiorina	43.0%	3.2
Real Clear Politics	Hillary Clinton	46.5%	John Kasich	39.0%	7.5
	Hillary Clinton	46.5%	Rand Paul	42.5%	4.0
	Hillary Clinton	49.0%	Mike Huckabee	41.5%	7.5
	Hillary Clinton	48.0%	Chris Christie	39.0%	9.0
	Joe Biden	51.2%	Donald Trump	40.2%	11.0
	Joe Biden	48.0%	Jeb Bush	41.6%	6.4
	Bernie Sanders	45.8%	Donald Trump	41.5%	4.3
	Bernie Sanders	43.7%	Jeb Bush	44.3%	0.6

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Questions for the exam   (9 CFU)   Unit 2

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1. What is the relation between <u>language</u>, <u>power</u> and <u>ideology</u>?
2. Why is the '**problem' of truth** particularly relevant in the language used by politicians and those who report political news in the press?
3. Give definitions of <u>metaphor</u>, <u>metonymy</u>, <u>synecdoche</u> and <u>analogy</u>, with simple examples.
4. Give examples of journey, sports (cricket, baseball, boxing) and war metaphors.
5. Metonymy is a powerful tool because it 'gives a more sympathetic picture ... and a favourable view', or removes direct responsibility for an action. Find examples.

Questions for the exam   (9 CFU)   Unit 2

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6. *Intertextuality* is when a text refers to another text that is associated with it in some way. This is why it is often difficult for non-English people to understand English newspapers and magazines (and for non-Italians to understand Italian news stories and articles). But 'intertextuality' can operate across national boundaries. Can you think of any examples?
7. Where does the term <u>spin-doctor</u> come from? What is the job of a spin-doctor? How can <u>spin</u> be placed on a story?
8. What are <u>opinion polls</u>? What is the relation between opinion polls and spin?