Political Correctness and ideology:

A cross-cultural linguistic study

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To ‘he’, or not to ‘he’: that is the question.

Shakespeare&Silverstein

Introduction

My aim in this thesis is to discuss the connection between language and culture. Modern linguistic inquiry has, to a large extent, focused on the analysis of language as an abstract system (Saussure's langue), paying less attention to the realization of these structures in interaction (Saussure's parole).

As I will try to show, this view is problematic: the study of language in use has raised a number of questions which seem impossible to be answered from an abstract, structural point of view.

I will therefore discuss some alternative models which have been developed in the field of Linguistics, Sociology and Philosophy to make the point that meaning is not simply the transfer of an uttered proposition from a speaker to a hearer, but a much more complicated process, involving the participants to a linguistic interaction and heavily depending on factors which, traditionally, were considered to be outside the field of Linguistics, such as the context of interaction and the interactants themselves.

Particularly, I will try to show that meaning and understanding do not follow from applying a pre-given set of rules, but that they are constructed by the interactants out of the situation itself on the basis of learned cultural and linguistic believes grouped under the notion of ideology. I will also discuss the implications of this model, which involves a (revised) cultural and linguistic relativity.

I will then consider Political Correctness. The discussion in the United States seems to have reached its culminating moment around 1992, slowly loosing consideration since then. Some of the issues involved, though, have not been discussed from a linguistic point of view, which can partially be retraced to the quantity of issues involved. Still, some

aspects, such as the abundance of alternative terminology and the criticism that language is ‘biased’, favoring some people according to factors such as gender, ethnic origin and sexual orientation, seem to be interesting from a linguistic point of view. I will consider these issues trying to apply the model developed in part one.

The result will be a notion of language which is rather different from the one underlying abstract structural inquiry; a distinction between language and culture, at the level of interaction, cannot be maintained. This also changes the notion of the relation between languages-and-cultures: we can consider English (e.g.) to be uniform only from an abstract point of view; from the point of view of interaction, we have many different ‘Englishes’, some of which might be quiet uninterpretable among one another. This also changes the notion of ‘cross-linguism’: linguistic relativity is not only to be found across languages (langues), but also inside them.

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distract me constructively from thinking and writing this thesis.

Part 1: Linguistic Ideology

Some unresolved questions

In discussions about linguistic issues some questions seem to appear constantly, such as: how do we learn language (is there a genetic factor, or is it culturally transmitted)? In which ways do languages differ? What is the connection between language (or a language) and the world 'out there' we want to communicate by it or, formulated differently: what is the connection between language, reality, perception, thinking, acting? Does reality determine language, or does a language in some way determine reality?

The general answer to these questions does not exist. In fact, in the field of philosophy, some of them have been discussed for millennia (e.g. Plato's Kratylos, 4th century before Christ, discussing the relation between words and the 'things' they stand for), and no certain answers are at the horizon either. But, as their continuous appearance shows, they are still of central importance.

Since there does not seem to be a way to answer these questions directly, it is being tried to do it the other way around. These questions have been turned into: 'what are the phenomena appearing in language? Let us describe them and see what generalizations can be drawn based on real, empirical data.' I think that the essence of linguistics is exactly this: to come to a definition of language by analyzing particular structures and uses of it. Unfortunately, there are at least two hindrances on the way to a satisfactory and complete solution: one certainly is the seemingly endless number of languages that could be studied - in northern America alone, e.g., there were more than a thousand native

languages before the European conquest (Rossi-Landi 1973, p.11).

The other is the focus chosen to study the matter. Concentrating on particular issues, such as structures detached from use, or on what determines the use of certain structures, more than others (context, goal, etc.), how the producer of language (the speaker, the writer) and its receiver(s) (the listener(s), the reader(s)) are related/ interconnected, amongst others, contrasting and sometimes colliding answers have been given.

Even a global approach, that of cognitive science, which has been trying to combine different areas of research, such as the study of grammar, psychology, neurology, has not produced more than tentative, partial answers. That is: answering the questions given at the beginning starting from the other way around seems to encounter huge problems as well.

Some kind of distress appears here and there; the following excerpt is taken from a discussion of the relation between reality, thought and language:

> It is impossible to unravel this tangle here (and it is perhaps useless to attempt it anywhere): an interminable casuistry would result - some sort of gigantic table of all linguistic factors that could exercise any type of influence on all the non-linguistic factors conceivable, as well as on other linguistic factors. Here we shall make a paradigmatic outline for the reality of physical objects only, a paradigm which with the necessary completions could also be repeated for other types of entities, taking into account the level and tenor of reality attributed to them. (Rossi-Landi 1973, p.47)

Typical in this excerpt is the author's avoidance of defining the main terms on which the analysis is based, and the extrapolation of a more or less small portion from the 'whole matter' which, after having been analyzed, is put back at its original place in the hope that something can be stated about the 'whole' itself.

My aim in this thesis is to describe yet another possible perspective on this 'big tangle'. The focus will be on the contextual use of language and not on abstract, context-free structures. Culture and language use are not seen as two distinct entities, but as deeply interconnected and not detachable. As I hope to show, language use heavily depends on cultural elements, which are expressed by it. The traditional approach which discusses the relation between language structures, thought and reality is not so much considered as the relation between use and culture.

Analysis of conversation, a kind of study which has been very fruitful in the last three or four decades - its recentness being to large extent attributable to insufficient technical possibilities before - has shown that concentrating on the notion of language as an abstract structure (be it a social fact as Saussure's langue or a more individual, psychological matter as Chomsky's competence)[1] to a larger extent than on the application of these structures (parole or performance) is problematic when it comes to explain a) when certain structures are employed, b) how they are employed, c) why they are employed d) what their effects are and what makes it possible to understand them [2].

The possibility of employment has been shown to depend on a series of sociological factors such as gender, social status, geography, etc. on the one hand, and on the specific context of use on the other. While it has been shown that people use determinate structures or patterns (not only from a grammatical or semantic point of view - the propositional content of what is said - but also the intonation, pitch, etc.

[1] See Sampson 1980, p.50 for a brief discussion.
[2] 'Linguistics ... has been occupied almost wholly with developing analysis of the structures of language as a referential code, neglecting social meaning, diversity and use ... the main course of linguistic work has been from the newly captured sector of phonology (before World War II) through morphology and syntax' (Hymes 1972, p.40).

i.e. phenomena that were difficult to analyze before the availability of proper technical equipment) in determinate situations, not much consideration has been given yet to why these patterns and structures are being used. In other words: how does a speaker know when to use a form and not another? The answer to this question involves a linguistic knowledge which seems to be much subtler than the semantic or syntactic one. Whatever we say does vary its meaning not only when the context of use changes (e.g. saying 'yes' at a wedding or saying 'yes' after one's favorite soccer team scores a goal), but also according to other factors such as intonation (a sarcastic 'yes' really meaning 'no') or even ones apparently not directly linkable to language. Why is there public outrage every time some 90-year old Texan billionaire marries a 19-year old blond beauty known by the general public from some soap-opera? Or even: why should people smile when they hear that a nine year old boy goes to a priest with his eight-year old sweetheart asking an appointment to be married? There must be some way to distinguish these situations that tells us: 'well, this is possible or allowed and this isn't.' That is: not only do we know linguistic structures, but we also know how and when to apply which part of our linguistic knowledge in which way.

In order to explain this other aspect of language, Hymes' attempted to outline a theory of 'the rules of speaking', i.e. of 'the ways in which speakers associate particular modes of speaking, topics or message forms, with particular settings or activities.' (Hymes 1972, p.36[3]). The focus was on the functions of language and he proposed a model by which to classify them according to certain features and dimensions applicable to any language - 'they will be found to be universal' (H., p.49). His model[4] considered the social unit of

[3] In the following: H.
[4] Which he rather ironically defined 'toward toward a theory' (H., p.52).

analysis including ‘speech community, speech situation, speech event, speech act, fluent speaker, components of speech events, functions of speech, etc.’ (H., p.53). Some of these notions will appear further on, as his very useful notion of participant to a speech act, which substitutes the traditional one of speaker-hearer dyad. He also delineated ‘the range of actual types of participant relations’ (H, p.59), which can be summarized in the letters composing SPEAKING[5]. This model, in his view was a good way to analyze the communicative competence of a speaker. Language use is thus

> based on a knowledge, sometimes conscious, often unconscious [;] ... competence ... underlies communicative conduct, not only within communities, but also in encounters between them. The speaking competence of persons may be seen as entering into a series of systems of encounters at levels of different scope. (H., p.53)

Hymes’ 1972 approach has been at the base of much subsequent empirical work. The notion of rules that underlie speakers’ competence and speech events, though, has shown to be problematical:

> they are bad predictors of what actually happens. They cannot account for the many often unforseeable contingencies that govern everyday behavior [[6]] ... Anthropologists and folklorists concentrating on performance discovered more often than not that events were not clearly bounded. Rather, the participants’ definition of what the relevant context is „emerged“ in and through the performance itself. (Gumperz 1996a, p.365 [7])

These results show that

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[5] I.e. Settings, Participants, Ends, Act sequences, Keys, Instrumentalities, Norms, Genres (H., p.65).

[6] As demonstrated by Brown P. & Levinson S.C. 1979. Social structure, groups and interaction. In: Giles, H & Scherer, k. (eds.). Social markers in speech. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.291-341. (In: Gumperz 1996a, p.365)

[7] Who also lists a series of works this statement is based on.

> The idea of objectivist rules is replaced by schemes and strategies, leading one to view genre as a set of focal and prototypical elements, which actors use variously and which never become fixed in a unitary structure. (Hanks 1987, p.681[8])

A central point of Hymes' 1972 model which is not challenged by subsequent studies is the notion that the beliefs of the participants in the interaction are central both to the production and understanding of speech. To define these beliefs, as communicative competence, though, is misleading, because it designates a set of rules a speaker possesses just as he possesses Chomskyan syntactic rules; the concept of syntactic competence (Chomsky 1965) is applied to speech events (Hymes 1972, pp.66 ff.). This, as pointed out above, does not seem to be the case. It might be more useful, then, to use a different term to designate these beliefs: ideology.

General considerations on the term ideology

What is ideology? This term seems to be one of those tricky ones mentioned above, like language or culture, which everybody agrees on having a particular meaning that we all know and share, but which nobody can really explain or define.

This certainly is not a very scientific way to consider the topic. We need to be more precise if we want it to be a useful concept. Here we are interested in a discussion of ideology from the point of view of linguistic study and not in the concept of ideology in general (cultural ideology)[9], which would involve considering many more aspects that will not be dealt with here (e.g. a historical discussion of the use,

[8] Quoted in Gumperz 1996a (p.365) who again takes it from Briggs, C.L. & Bauman, R. 1992. Genre, intertextuality and social power. In: Journal of Linguistic Anthropology 2(2), pp.131-172.
The original: Hanks, W.F.1987. Discourse genres in a theory of practice. In: American Ethnologist, 14(4), pp.668-692.

[9] For a discussion of this kind, see e.g. Conrad 1987.

evolution, deployment of the term by various authors throughout centuries and theories).

The simplest method of obtaining a definition is to look up the term in a dictionary. The American College Dictionary defines ideology as 'the body of doctrine, myth, and symbols of a social movement, institution, class or social group'. This kind of approach is 'an example of a very common American linguistic ideology in action', as Silverstein 1979[10] (p.193) points out. He considers this approach to be 'incorrect or contemptible' (S., p.193). This statement can be considered to be a critique of linguistics as a whole, or better: of the view that linguists have had of language.

Let us consider this point for a moment. Silverstein defines ideology as

> any set of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use. (S, p.193)

Several points are relevant here and deserve to be considered separately: the general nature of linguistic ideology; its relation to structure; its relation to use; its being a rationalization of the former two aspects.

First of all let us consider the concept that users of a language not only use it in certain ways (which will be discussed further on), but also have beliefs about this use that influence or determine the use itself. This concept is not new and has been expressed by several authors in the past: Weltanschauung (such as in Humboldt), habitual thought pattern (Whorf), e.g. The reason for the neglect of linguistic ideology can be, I think, at least partially retraced to particular views, set of beliefs, ideas of language (and thus, according to the definition given above, to a linguistic

[10] In the following: S.

ideology itself) that saw the field of analysis of linguistics in underlying general structures, detached from daily and individual use, a notion which has been briefly discussed above. From this point of view it appears quiet obvious that the notion of belief had to be segregated as much as possible, since it could only discredit a scientific formulation.

Analysis of conversation has shown that language is not simply the most complicated and complete way to communicate propositions about world 'out there', but also that it has a myriad of functions of which only few seem to have been individuated yet (as the enormous numbers of projects and publications based on the analyses of spoken language/everyday conversation shows). The utterance by Bill, 'it's raining' can be a propositional statement on a state of affairs (i.e. water falling from above); on the other hand he might intend something like 'I want to play with my gameboy and not go play soccer with Mili' or 'this morning I want to go to school wearing my new cool sneakers because the old rotten ones have holes in their soles and I'll get wet feet', and so on.

That is, to come to an understanding of language that is not highly theoretical and basically absolutely detached from actual use, we have to take into consideration the phenomenon as a whole with all its complications, idiosynchracies, alterations, aberrations that, in the end, make it so powerful and important in social life. Thus we also have to deal with what people's ideas about language are: how it is connected to the 'world out there', what can be done by it, what can't be done by it (such as 'we need action and not words'), etc., and how (or even if) these are related to language in some way or another. This I will try to outline now, discussing ideology from three connected point of views: reference, performance and consciousness/unconsciousness.

First, let us consider language as a system of reference-and-predication. From this point of view, single words, or utterances, have precise, propositional contents (something like the word cat and the corresponding element in the outer world, i.e. a living - or even dead - cat); there also are certain relations between words and objects and a series of beliefs by the users of language about these relationships. Silverstein 1979 discusses this notion the following way, considering Whorf's ideas: people believe that there is a direct connection between a word and its meaning and thus that structures in language directly reflect structures in the 'outer world' (S, p.202). Let us call this the ideology of reference. Language thus 'serves as a system for segmenting, classifying and thence speaking about the universe of experience „out there"' (S., p.194) [11].

This notion derives from the most fundamental assumption that can be postulated about language: namely that by it we can describe and comment on the world in a way that is impossible through any other symbolic system. To say: 'language does not in any way reflect reality' (however this world 'out there' might be interpreted) implies the elimination of the ties of reference-and-predication; it would make language an artificial symbolic system, completely arbitrary and utterly useless.

Thus we can consider the ideology of reference to be at the very center of language, its basic ontological assumption. I want to go as far as to say that this is a characteristic of any language and thus something universal. Even apparent contradictions to this claim finally do not represent a challenge.

[11] Whether this understanding is related to the way the grammars of particular languages are structured - Whorf's argument - will be considered further on. For the moment we will consider the matter indipendently from a particular language.

Luhrmann 1989[12], in her highly interesting ethnological study on contemporary magical rituals and communities in Britain, dedicates a chapter to the use of language. She considers several discussions (the transcripts of which are in her book) involving an adept - the initiated, leader of the group - and various novices who try to formulate what magic is about.

> The method the adept uses is to state a general position, then to involve different members by challenging them, showing them the difficulty of the verbal formulations which they are using. Then he provides words to describe what is under discussion ... he [then] announces that words cannot grasp what is the case, that any distinctions and divisions make a mockery of the interconnected whole. Words are essential tools but have no hold on truth ... Language ... is a tool used to structure something which is structureless and inherently unknowable, and performs a function in letting one work within. (L., pp.213-214)

This seems to contradict the claim stated above. But the contradiction is only apparent. First of all, what is under discussion here is a specific kind of language, namely the magical one, what Luhrmann terms 'magician's meta-magical language' (L., p.214). People involved in magic, at least those considered in her study, also have ordinary jobs and a 'normal' life. 'Modern magicians are sophisticated, educated people ... They are clearly equipped with the mental equipment to think non-magically' (L., p.10). In other areas of their life we can thus suppose that their understanding of language is like the one described at the beginning of this chapter. Utterances like 'I'd like to have a BigMac' or 'I'm gonna take a shower' can be interpreted the same way as if they were uttered by any person not involved in magic.

Secondly, magical language is characteristically highly metaphorical and ambiguous. An explanation of this can be in that

[12] In the following: L.

> The style of the language helps ... rationalistic practitioners to accept statements which if baldly claimed they might find difficult to sanction ... The language can be both persuasive, for literalness asserts the reality, and incontestable, because its metaphoricity avoids making the direct assertion which can be attacked. (L., p.216)

So, although 'According to metatheory, all statements about magic are false, and yet also true' (L.,p.216), the denial of the belief of reference-and-predication is at least partly due to achieving certain goals, such as the understanding of magic, which cannot be done by the instruments given by society (such as rationality, education, etc.). An understanding can only be achieved by denying basic suppositions. But the way to achieve this understanding, and this is the final and conclusive point, is by using language. That is, by uttering a certain sequence of words, the adept and the other participants assume that they will be understood. They can only reach the world of magic by employing language. Thus the setting of a ritual is done by linguistic description and the ritual itself is performed linguistically (through the narration of a story, e.g., see L. p.205 ff.), What is consciously negated, therefore, comes back through the backdoor of (unconscious) performance and use.

Ideology and performance

A different (although related, as we shall see) aspect to the one just discussed are the beliefs people have about what and how we can achieve, communicate, act through language, regarding a function of language that is not reference-and-predication but performativity (1971). These beliefs we will term ideology of performance .

The ideology of performance is the set of beliefs behind our daily linguistic interactions. It does not only regard the question whether a particular utterance is able to reflect a particular propositional content, but it especially involves

aspects connected to language in everyday use and therefore connected to certain, definite contexts.

In this sense Silverstein 1979 discerns two kinds of function; one is the goal-orientation of language which he names function$_1$, related to the understanding of 'the individual's ability to use forms of language strategically' (S., p.206), i.e. to reach certain goals; the other is the indexical aspect of language, connecting what is said (or written) to a larger context: this he terms function$_2$. So, the ideology of performance concerns the way in which speakers use language in certain contexts to achieve certain effects on the listeners (goal-orientation).

A series of phenomena and concepts are involved here. Let us consider the examples discussed in Gumperz 1992. He analyzes job-training program interviews. That is, people who are being tested whether they are able and whether it is useful for them and society as a whole to attend determinate classes paid for by the government. Gumperz shows that success or failure in an interview depend to a large extent on the way the applicants handle language. Particularly, and this is the point that interests us here, it is not the propositional content of the answers that matters (which is already known by the interviewers since the applicants have to fill out a form beforehand), but the way answers are given, concerning phenomena such as intonation, turn-taking at the right point, etc. This can be retraced to a determinate ideology known and shared by the native speakers, but not known by foreigners. An ideology that could be formulated as follows: 'the context of this linguistic interaction is that of an interview. As an applicant I have to be polite, answer the questions as well as I can, show that I'm respectful, reliable, but also determined to take the class and thus convinced that this is exactly what I want', etc., which then is - unconsciously, to some extent - conveyed into certain linguistic behaviors, not only

propositionally, but intonationally, gesturally, etc. And, as Gumperz points out:

> when bilinguals must face such unaccustomed communicative complexities, they tend to fall back on rhetorical strategies acquired in their own native language environment, mapping these onto their English speech in dealing with what, for them, are novel circumstances. Native English participants in turn, who find their communicative expectations violated and have difficulty in following non-native speaker's arguments, react with interpretations characteristic of minorization situations. As a result, the bilinguals' chances of achieving their communicative ends are likely to be jeopardized. (Gumperz 1992, pp.303-304)

Some, I think, interesting considerations can be extracted from this excerpt.

First of all, ideology is an important element in language, i.e. we can't think of language as non-ideological as soon as we analyze language in its daily use. That is, a certain situation allows only a certain number of permissible linguistic behaviors. Which involves that users of a language have beliefs on how they should behave themselves in a particular situation.

Secondly, as the problems in interlingual situations show, these beliefs are culture-specific and might need a long time to be learned; in fact it can be argued that the ideologies of performance are among those famous and infamous aspects of language on which non-native speakers stumble and fall without ever completely acquiring them [13].

A third important point, which has to be dealt with more extensively, is the aspect of meaning: if applicant A, a

[13] A similar study has been made with bilingual Argentinian-Italian speakers: their Cocoliche dialect of Spanish is perceived by monolingual Spanish speakers to be deficient. But what is the case is that their stylistic variations are not as articulated as the monolinguals'. It is not a matter of command of syntactic or lexico-semantic structures. (Lavandera, B. 1978. In: The variable component in bilingual performance. In: Alatis, J. (ed.). International dimensions odf bilingual education. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, pp. 391-411).

native British English speaker and applicant B, a native Urdu speaker with a good knowledge of English syntactic and semantic structures, state the same things propositionally, why should the first be more advantaged than the second? Why do the examiners come to different conclusions? Putting aside racism as a possible cause, the only explanation is that it must have something to do with language. In fact prosodic and gestural elements are decisively important, as pointed out above. But what I want to come at now is that meaning is not pre-given and not only based on the words used, but heavily dependent on the context of use in general (job-interview, e.g.) and of the more specific situation itself (the answer to a particular question). Meaning has thus to be seen as an on-line process, construed by all the participants to the linguistic interaction. As Habermas puts it: language is the 'Medium, mit dem die Beteiligten das Verständnis subjektiver Gehalte intersubjektiv teilen können. Das Zeichen „x" ist (...) Element eines gemeinsam benutzten Repertoires, das den Beteiligten ermöglicht, dieselbe Sache auf dieselbe Weise zu verstehen.' (Habermas 1988, p.136ff.[14], quoted in Knoblauch 1995, p.34) Through determinate questions, answers, remarks, gestures, delivered with determinate emphasis, pitch, etc. the interaction is construed by all the participants and the goal can be achieved only if all the participants (are able to) understand what is going on. 'Understanding what someone says depends on construing the context in the same way and applying the same complex interpretive principles that link context and interpretation' (Gumperz 1996a, p. 359). Or, in other words: 'Sprachliche Kommunikation kann... nie verstanden werden, wenn die konkrete Situation nicht in Betracht gezogen wird; sie lebt und entwickelt sich in konkreter Kommunikation und nicht in den linguistischen Sprachformen oder in der Psyche der

[14] Habermas, Jürgen 1988. Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Sprechenden.' (Knoblauch 1995, p.37, summarizing Volosinov 1975, p.142 ff. [15]).

Every set of utterances is embedded in a determinate context, which might be pre-given, or even created by language use. What might have started as a simple request for explanation might become an angry verbal fight [16].

This involves that during the interaction itself the speaker(s), in some way, give(s) hints as to how to understand and interpret what is being said. This is what Gumperz defines contextualization cues: these are metapragmatic signs that 'represent speakers' ways of signaling and providing information to interlocutors and audiences about how language is being used at any one point in the stream of talk' (Gumperz 1996a, p.366) or, more precisely, they are

> those verbal signs that are indexically associated with specific classes of communicative activity types and thus signal the frame of context for the interpretation of constituent messages (Gumperz 1992, p.307).

Contextualization cues are the way the speaker signals how what she is saying is supposed to be (or not to be) understood. They can thus be seen as the way ideology of performance is conveyed in linguistic interaction.

So, the use and the success of language in a certain situation depends on ideological factors that determine first of all what is said and secondly how what is said is connected to the larger context. Ideology thus determines to a large extent the indexicality of language. In this sense it can be said that 'Any linguistic configuration is potentially indexical' (Silverstein 1979, p.206) This is true 'from „phoneme- or morpheme-sized" chunks of language all the way „up" to choice of particular „language" itself.'(S., p.206).

[15] In this regard, see also Morris 1994, especially section one.
[16] See Gumperz 1996b, p.392 for an example

From this we can also derive the assumption that a particular language can be indexical in various ways at the same time and thus we can speak of multifunctionalism$_2$. Through function$_2$, language as a signaling system 'makes contact with other systems of conventional social praxis' (S., p.207), the study of which is the aim of pragmatics in a scientific sense. What people believe language use to be and how it works out is defined by Silverstein as native pragmatic ideology, or ethno-metapragmatics (S., p.207)

Ideology, reference and performance

Summarizing what has been said so far on ideology: our concept and use of language depend on certain beliefs, values, points of view that are central to our view of language as a general system and also to our linguistic behavior in single situations of interaction.

I discussed ideology of reference by which a certain connection between language as a system and the 'world out there' is established (what I termed the ontological assumption), and ideology of performance by which the production and the interpretation of language in certain situations are guided. In this respect I distinguished a first aspect of language use, which is to achieve certain goals, labeled function$_1$, and a second one which is to connect what has been said to a larger context of use, i.e. the indexicality of language, labeled function$_2$.

These aspects of language are central to its functioning and are present in the users' minds, consciously or unconsciously, and represent what we could label the ethno-metapragmatics of language.

These two kinds of ideology, though, are not to be seen as distinct phenomena; they are the two faces of the same coin.

Silverstein discerns, in this regard 'the tendency to rationalize the pragmatic system of a language, in native understanding, with an ideology of language that centers on reference-and-predication. That is, native pragmatic ideology explains or rationalizes about function$_2$ ... by analogically projecting basic structures of reference-and-predication (propositionality) as units of functional$_1$ effectiveness.' (S., p.208). To make this point clearer: 'referential ideology values a speech form as a „metonym" of the referent projected from it, seemingly a speech independent entity existing „out there" which language merely reflects' (S., p.208); similarly, 'appropriate language use is ... constituted as a „metonym" of its context, a making explicit of what one can purportedly know independent of the occurrence of speech'. (S., p.208).

That is, the ideology of reference, the belief that language reflects in some more or less direct way the world 'outside' is central also to the other concepts discussed above. What we labeled function$_2$, concerning the indexicality, context-boundedness and context-referential aspect of language, is not seen as arbitrary and artificial, but as given and natural.

Gumperz 1992 again is a good example for this: the communicative problems in the interview situation between the interviewers and the foreign applicants arise because the former consider the latter not to understand them, or not to be acting following the co-operation principle. The result is that the interviewers think that their opposites are not able to understand the content of their questions, or that they are not interested in the class itself but only in the economic advantages connected to it. According to what we said above on ideology, though, the misunderstanding can be traced back to the native speaker's knowledge of how to behave in a certain situation, and the belief that this behavior is shared by any other speaker of that language. To state it more specifically: the interviewers (as any speakers of any language) have a set of 'inbuilt' beliefs, specific to their culture and language,

that help them interpret their linguistic surrounding, their movements and actions in the linguistic world.

This appears to be quiet intuitive: if we consider how complicated linguistic interactions are (even the simplest every day life ones), it is obvious that situations have to be analyzed with a certain rapidity to permit efficient communication. A net of beliefs connected to a certain situation which permits us to analyze it more quickly and more efficiently than considering it all again every time, is what can be considered to be a central aspect of the ideology of performance. Once a situation is identified ideologically, and thus the permissible linguistic options, the goal-oriented aspect of language, what we labeled function$_1$, enters the scene and can be applied. Success or insuccess thus depend on the employment of the 'right' ideology in that particular situation.

The matter of unconsciousness/consciousness

An important notion still to be developed here is the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness with regard to linguistic ideology. We have already encountered it in Hymes 1972 (quoted before on p.8), in the discussion of Luhrman 1989, and in several other occasions. The problem had already been discussed by Whorf:

> every person ... carries through life certain naive but deeply rooted ideas about talking and its relation to thinking. Because of the firm connection with speech habits that have become unconscious and automatic, these notions tend to be rather intolerant of opposition. ([1940] 1956, p.207).

Di Luzio&Günthner (to appear 1997, p.7) similarly 'use the term ideology as a part of the common sense of a sociocultural group (cf. Gramsci) whereby common sense is displayed in terms

of judgments without reflection (Vico).' Thus ideology is 'a form of everyday knowledge or spontaneous philosophy'. This kind of ideology, which they label ideology (1), 'is in general an unconscious and spontaneous feeling.' (ibid., p.8)

Gumperz 1992 discussed above again can be used as an example; the examiners are not aware that the applicant who does not speak their variety of English might interpret their contextualization cues differently than in their intention; from the point of view of the applicant, the contextualization cues she gives might be interpreted differently from what she unconsciously intends them to be[17]. This notion will also play an important role in the discussion of 'politically correct language' further on.

If ideology were a purely unconscious matter, we would have to come to a rather pessimistic conclusion: understanding is a matter of luck, when the interactants share the same ideology, and impossible elsewhere [18].

The very fact that I am writing about these beliefs shows, though, that it is possible to consider them consciously, just as Gumperz 1996a consciously discusses the problematical elements in linguistic interaction involving different ideologies among different speakers. This process of making conscious what usually is unconscious also plays a central role in the discussion about PC.

It is necessary to explain the relationship consciousness/ unconsciousness more deeply from a theoretical viewpoint, which will be done considering ideas developed in sociology (Berger&Luckmann, Bourdieu) and philosophy (Foucault).

Before turning to this, I will consider the problem left open discussing ideology of reference (cfr, p.9 and footnote 10

[17] For another example and discussion, see Gumperz 1996b, pp.388 ff.
[18] This 'deterministic' view has often been found by critics of linguistic relativity in Whorf's work; see, e.g., Kay 1996.and, critically discussing these critical views, Lucy 1992.

above): is there a relation between the structure of a language and the linguistic ideologies of its users?

The Sapir - Whorf hypothesis: the classic approach

The idea of linguistic relativity, the principles of which are probably best known as the Sapir - Whorf hypothesis, is 'the idea that culture, through language, affects the way we think, especially perhaps our classification of the experienced world.' (Gumperz&Levinson 1997, p.1).

Much empirical research has been done to answer this question, most of which on 'language and perception or „cognitive processing" (Rumsey 1990, p.346[19], his emphasis), or, according to Silverstein 1979 (p.202) 'about sensation and perception at the level of the individual's physiological-psychological processes'.

Among the first data available in this direction, Brown&Lenneberg 1954 seemed to confirm the hypothesis. After studying the semantic color fields of native speakers of English and Zuni (an American-Indian language), the conclusion was that 'it is clear that language can be described as a moulder of thought since speech is a patterned response that is learned only when the governing cognitive patterns have been grasped.' (p.462) The idea behind is that what we perceive through the senses (what we see, hear, feel, etc.) cannot be understood and communicated without determinate structures which have to be learned. To a certain extent, the structures given to us by language determine the latter process. The authors noticed that 'Within the realm of color vision there are colors that can be named by a single word and

[19] Who refers to Lucy, John A. 1985. Whorf's view of the linguistic mediation of thoght. In: Mertz, Elizabeth & Parmentier, Richard J (eds.). Semiotic mediation: sociocultural and psychological perspectives. Orlando, FLA: Academic Press, pp.73-97.

other that require a phrase. This kind of difference in the length of name (measured in words or syllables) was found to be 'correlated with the latency of naming response' (p.462). This basically means that speakers of English, a language possessing the word 'orange', will find it easier to perceive the color orange than a speaker of a hypothetical language Alpha who has to use a periphrasis such as 'the color of the fruits that have that delicious juice in them'.

The classic study on color terms by Berlin&Kay 1969[20] denied this possibility stating that what matters is the perception of colors and not the linguistic structures to express it. While a comparison of different languages might show a difference in the basic color terms available (the notion of basic color term involving several aspects, such as monolexemity, range of application, distributional potential and others, see B&K pp.5-6) varying from two to eleven according to a rigid procedure which they map, the perception of all these colors is not dependent on any single language. Their conclusion: 'There appears to be no evidence to indicate that differences in complexity of basic color lexicons between one language and another reflect perceptual differences between speakers of those languages' (B&K, p.5).

This analysis received a large favorable echo and was so authoritative that Kay&McDaniel 1979 could state that 'subsequent research has substantiated B&K's findings', nevertheless pointing out 'some errors of fact and theoretical equivocation' (Kay&McDaniel 1979, p.615) which they correct and explain. The main findings of Berlin&Kay were not questioned by this.

A different approach to the discussion of decontextualized language structures and perception is the one represented by Bloom 1981 who set out to analyze the differences between the way Chinese and English speakers think based on the

[20] In the following: B&K.

differences in hypothetical, counterfactual constructions. The core of his study was that 'in the particular case of the Chinese counterfactual, there was some rather compelling evidence to suggest that the lack of a distinct linguistic device to signal counterfactual thought might have cognitive consequences' (Bloom 1981, p.16), basing this finding on the evaluation of questionnaires given to Americans and, translated, to speakers of Taiwanese.

Au 1983 vehemently attacked these findings basing her argument on the procedures of Bloom's research. After conducing five different studies on monolingual and bilingual Hong Kong Chinese and English students, she concluded that 'Chinese speakers who do not know the English subjunctive will still give counterfactual interpretations to a counterfactual story readily as long as it is in idiomatic Chinese' (Au 1983, p.182), which basically means that Chinese people are as able as English people to interpret counterfactuals as long as these are formulated in Chinese and not simply a translation of English structures.

These two strands of research, the lexical one including Berlin&Kay and the semantico-syntactic one including Bloom and Au, represent what we can label the 'classic' research on the linguistic relativity hypothesis. What they have in common is empirical research based on decontextualized structures (by using questionnaires or tables of colors, e.g.). As the long discussion between Bloom and Au shows, these approaches could not avoid the problem of being based 'on the experimental assessment of individual performance ... the connection of these experiments to habitual everyday behavior remained unclear' (Lucy 1992, p.255) [21]

[21] For brief discussions of this point see Lucy 1992, p.185-187 (studies on color) and p.255-256 (Bloom and Au). Also to be mentioned is the anthropological approach of the 40s and 50s by Lee and Hoijer (among others), which I believe is not important for the present discussion. For a brief and rather harsh discussion see ibid., p.82-83.

Gumperz & Levinson 1996 justly point out that the battle might be more fruitful if fought on different grounds: we have to consider language in its daily use, in a larger context. And here the concept of linguistic ideology becomes important again.

Linguistic ideology and the hypothesis of linguistic relativity

From Boas' point of view (Silverstein 1979, p.195 ff.) the question to be discussed is the relationship between primary ethnological phenomena, i.e. the cultural pattern organizing the range of personal experience, and the secondary reinterpretation, the rationalizations about these cultural patterns. Does the second depend on the first?

Rumsey 1990, trying to find an answer to this question, discusses reported speech in English and Ungarynin, the language spoken by an Aboriginal people in northwestern Australia, the Ngarynin. In English, reported speech can grammatically be conveyed by direct or indirect discourse. There is a functional difference between the two: 'the use of direct discourse makes the report or narrative more „vivid", „dramatic," or „theatrical"' , inviting the other participants to focus also on how something is said in addition to what was said (Rumsey 1990, p.347[22]). This is not the case with Ungarynin, where all reported speech, 'from an SAE viewpoint looks like direct quotation' (R., p.347). This does not mean that it 'lacks' this distinction. It simply does not exist. (R., p.348)

The difference in grammatical structures is attributable to differing secondary rationalizations. In SAE, the dominant ideology (what we termed ideology of reference) is that of a

[22] He lists a series of authors to make this point. This article will be referred to in the following as: R.

‘dualism of words and things; talk versus action; real world vs. ways of talking about them. Words in this view are not things. They only stand for things’ (R, p.352). This is not the case with Ungarynin, where such dichotomies do not exist, as exemplified by personal names. According to Stanner 1935 (p.301)[23], ‘names are thought to partake of the personality they designate ... names are not symbols so much as verbal projections of an identity which is well known in the flesh’.

Thus the English functional opposition between direct and indirect reported speech can be traced back to the distinction meaning vs. wording (which originates in the distinctions mentioned above). In Ungarynin, where this distinction does not exist; ‘wording in this view is not opposed to „meaning“, but is included as one of its dimensions’ (R., p.354, his emphasis). Reported speech is not used to refer to something said before; it is saying the same thing again.

Rumsey thus sees a relationship between linguistic structures and the secondary rationalization, which he expects to be ‘a dialectical rather than a unidirectional one’ (R., p.355) [24].

Rumsey represents a different approach to the relativity hypothesis than the authors discussed above: not perceptive patterns are considered, but the broader cultural patterns are analyzed and related to the linguistic ones [25].

This approach considers a more sociological perspective. People do not live as hermits in caves, but interact with a number of other people in different circumstances. Thus we have to deal, everyday, with family members, friends, colleagues, neighbors, fans, etc. That is, we are part of

[23] Quoted in R., p.354. The original: Stanner, William E. H. 1935. Aborigenal modes of address and reference in the north-west of the northern Territory. Oceania 5, pp.300-315.
[24] The same view of Boas, Whorf, Bourdieu and Silverstein (R., p.355).
[25] For research in the same direction, see Silverstein’s studies of linguistic etiquette in Javanese (1979) and gender structures (1985).

different social networks, each of which might have some characteristic different from another. Certainly, the (linguistic) interaction with my father will be different from that with my girlfriend, or with my noisy neighbor who wakes me up every night at 3 a.m. listening to techno-music. There will be a different context of interaction in each of these cases, and, since the meaning of our verbal interactions is at least partly determined by the context of use, there might be big differences.

What is important to bear in mind here is not only the meaning that is intended by the producer, but also the meaning intended by the receiver. Meaning must be seen as the result of an interaction, and not as completely pre-given or predetermined. The interactants can only understand one another the right way if they share, to a certain point, the same background knowledge.

> Understanding what someone says depends on construing the context in the same way and applying the same complex interpretive principles that link context and interpretation...meanings are relative to contexts, and contexts and principles of interpretation...are relative to shared networks (Gumperz 1996a, p.359).

A notion which is implied in this approach is that speakers who do not share the same background will not be able to (fully) understand what is being said. This opens a new dimension in the discussion of linguistic relativity: since the emphasis is on use and shared knowledge and not on structures, linguistic relativity does not apply anymore to languages in Saussure's sense of langue (eg Hopi vs. English), but is internal to single languages itself, on the one hand, and can cross linguistic borders on the other - as the famous study of Kupwar village in India, where four languages are spoken without affecting understanding, shows (Gumperz 1971). Gumperz 1996a:

> We can have speakers of the same language fractionated by interpretive subsystems associated with distinct social networks in complex societies, and conversely, we can have social networks that transcend cultural and grammatical systems to create shared interpretive systems beneath linguistic diversity (p. 361)

Let us now consider more closely this concept of shared knowledge. Let us imagine two persons, Giuliano and Francesco, who interact with each other on the basis of what Clark 1996[26] terms common ground, which is composed by two parts: communal common ground which 'represents all the knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions they take to be universally held in the communities to which they mutually believe they both belong', (C., p.332) and personal common ground, which 'represents all mutual knowledge, beliefs and assumptions they have inferred from personal experience with each other. Let us say, strongly simplifying the matter, that Francesco is Italian, a philosophy student living in the German town of Freiburg and a soccer fan ('People belong to an immense number of distinguishable communities, and each has its own set of believes, perspectives, practices, and understandings.' C, p.334) He will share something with each of the following groups: as a philosophy student he knows that Kant lived in Königsberg 200 and something years ago, or that Plato was Socrate's pupil, common and taken-for-granted knowledge among philosophy students (hopefully). As an Italian, he probably knows the comedian Totó and the soccer-player Gianfranco Zola, etc. So, if he talks to another Italian on February 13, 1997, he'll just need to say: 'did you see Gianfranco's exploit yesterday?' and the other person will know that he's probably referring to a particular soccer-game, without this information being mentioned explicitly. In addition to this background knowledge, as a friend of Giuliano's, there will be a personal common ground constituted by 'joint conversational

[26] In the following: C.

experiences or joint perceptual experiences' (Clark 1996, p.334, his emphasis). So, when one of the two says 'what about eianda' the other will immediately know that what is meant is a particular record with the emphasized word appearing in the refrain of one of the songs. The important point here is that each particular social group not only has its own terminology, such as the technical terms offside, categorical imperative or something like eianda, but that, from group to group, basic vocabulary can change its meaning in a significant way. A word like murder will have different meanings for a member of the army, an anti-abortionist, primary school children or lawyers (and even among English-speaking lawyers the meaning will be different if they are British, American or from New Zealand). (C., p.339).

Thus it can be argued that we have a case of linguistic relativity passing from one group to the other; the differences might be more or less big and so the incommensurability in understanding. If we then consider not only the lexicon and the semantics of words, but take into account the various prosodic phenomena, accent, etc., the gap widens even more. The course-application example by Gumperz briefly discussed above can be explained more satisfactorily from this point of view. With regard to ideology we can say that it depends not only on the context of use, but also on the participants of the linguistic interaction. If the common background is not wide enough, misinterpretations and misunderstanding will be a fairly predictable result.

Briefly summarizing what has been said so far: users of language have ideological beliefs that act on the concept of language as a general system (its relation to the 'world out there') and also in specific situations of use (the context and the participants to the interactions). These beliefs (both referential and performative) are at least partly language and culture specific. Not only; some beliefs seem to be less

general than others and group or network specific. Thus we cannot speak of ‘one language one Weltanschauung’ as the romantic tenet goes (See Di Luzio&Günthner 1997), but of more or less common ideologies according to social factors such as geography, education, hobbies, etc. These beliefs might be conscious or unconscious. I will discuss this matter now. Parallelly, another question will be discussed: what is the relation between these more or less different ideologies?

The ‘objectification’ of linguistic ideology

Let us start with what can be considered to be a commonsense notion in the linguistic investigation of this century: ‘primitive’ languages do not exist (with the exception of pidgins, maybe; still, they involve the knowledge of mother languages, although different ones, by the speakers communicating by them)[27]. Structures might vary in a wild array of ways, but, in a way or another, any language has a complicated and complete way of structuration. Saussure defined linguistic signs as arbitrary; whether we call the object tree ‘tree’, ‘arbor’ or ‘arbre’ is just a social convention; there is no natural or inherent connection between symbol and world (Saussure 1968 [1915], p.99ff.). So far I have been trying to argue in the opposite direction; of course we can say that the sign is arbitrary; representation is not the object, as René Magritte tried to convey in two famous paintings of his (‘ceci n’est pas une pomme’ and ‘ceci n’est pas une pipe’), but we also have to ask the question to what extent this is the case[28]. From the point of view of language

[27] In the last century, the notion of evolution was borrowed from biology and applied to linguistics; this involves that there are qualitative differences between languages. See Sampson 1980 for a discussion.

[28] In discussing certain PC terms such as *African-American* for *Black*, we will see that Saussure’s observation has a foundation. But this is not a general case, and the process of substitution is not an immediate one on the level of structure. It is determined by use and the result of a process.

use arbitrariness is not sustainable. It matters which words, structures, prosodic features are used; what matters is not the ontologic connection between sign and 'object', but the meaning of the symbol in the social world.

Several authors have discussed the issue of 'objectification', i.e. the process by which these supposedly arbitrary structures and symbols come to be considered as being a reflection of or ontologically connected to the 'world out there' (ideology of reference discussed above).

Berger&Luckmann 1971 [1966][29] dedicate a chapter to 'Society as objective reality'. The following excerpts generically discuss social order; since the notion of language used in the thesis is that of a structure used in daily interaction, or better: the instrument by which social order is communicated, discussed, perpetrated and at least partly created, what is said can be applied to language as well:

> Social order is not biologically given or derived from any biological data in its empirical manifestations ... Social order is not part of the 'nature of things', and it cannot be derived from the 'laws of nature'. Social order exists only as a product of human activity. (B&L, p.70, their emphasis)

This reflects what has been said so far; more interesting now is the way an originally arbitrary sign or social convention becomes objectified. B&L invite the reader to imagine two persons, A and B, living on an island (just like Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Friday); the culture to which A belongs to is different from B's and there is no mutual knowledge of the respective other culture when they first meet.

> As A and B interact, in whatever manner, typifications will be produced quiet quickly. A watches B perform. He attributes motives to B's

[29] In the following: B&L.

> actions and, seeing these actions recur, typifies these motives as recurrent. As B goes on performing, A is soon able to say to himself, 'aha, there he goes again.' At the same time, A may assume that B is doing the same thing. From the beginning, both A and B assume this reciprocity of typification. (B&L, p.74)

By observing each other, A and B learn how the other behaves in a certain situation. Once the behavior is registered or known, A will know how B behaves in a certain situation and vice-versa, which leads to typification. By repeating the same action again and again, models of behavior are reciprocally construed. Typifications are thus habitualized, which leads to the formation of institutions (B&L, pp.61 ff.). To understand this last concept, let us now imagine that A and B, in some way, have children.

> The institutional world, which existed in statu nascendi in the original situation of A and B, is now passed on to others. In this process institutionalization perfects itself. The habitualizations and typifications undertaken in the common life of A and B, formations that until this point still had the quality of ad hoc conceptions of two individuals, now become historical institutions. With the acquisition of historicity, these formulations also acquire another crucial quality, or, more accurately, perfect a quality that was incipient as soon as A and B began the reciprocal typification of their conduct: this quality is objectivity ... the institutions are now experienced as possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as external and coercive fact ... The 'there we go again' now becomes 'This is how these things are done.' (B&L, pp.76-77)

Institutions thus appear to be pregiven, objectively existing facts, although their existence is not biological but social (remember Silverstein's observations above in the discussion on the ideology of performance: these structures, and the beliefs connected to them, are conceived as being

metonyms of reality, and this gives them an 'absolute meaning', independent of particular situations or individuals). Institutions here have to be understood both in an ordinary way (e.g. parliament, universities, etc.) and as models of behavior that were originated by historicized (i.e. transmitted) typifications and habitualizations. What they have in common is what Max Weber terms legitimation, which means they are 'subjectively meaningful' (B&L, p.110) to all members of society.

Following this discussion, a convention might be arbitrary at its genesis; but, as soon as it enters the realm of social interaction and is transmitted or communicated, it becomes a fact - an existing entity. One could go a step further stating that even this process of creation is not arbitrary: new conventions come into use, or old ones are changed, when this is needed; thus even this process is determined and guided by the already existing social facts and therefore is not arbitrary at all.

This concept has been discussed by various authors. It is central in the definition of what Foucault terms discourse as opposed to language (in the sense of Saussure's langue)[30]:

> a language (langue [Foucault's emphasis]) is ... a system for possible statements, a finite body of rules that authorizes an infinite number of performances. The field of discursive events, on the other hand, is a grouping that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that have been formulated; they may be innumerable, they may, in sheer size, exceed the capacities of recording, memory or reading: nevertheless they form a finite grouping. The question posed by language analysis of some discursive fact or other is always: according to what rules has a particular statement been made, and consequently according to what rules could other similar statements be made? The description of the events of discourse poses a quiet different question: how is it that one particular

[30] Discourse is language (langue) which is rendered meaningful by being situated in social context (Graddol&Swann, pp. 161 ff.)

> statement appeared rather than another? (Foucault 1972, p.27)

In other words: from a grammatical point of view anything can be said anytime following the (grammatical) rules. But it doesn't necessarily mean anything. If some Roman had stated 20 BC (in Ciceronian Latin): 'Hey guys, it's not the sun evolving around us, but us evolving around the sun', he would not have been understood since his statement, in the social context of that time, with certain beliefs and institutions (in the sense described above), would not have been possible because it would not have part of that discourse. As Foucault states, in a somewhat preachery tone, 'this means that one cannot speak of anything anytime; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open up our eyes' (1972, p.44). Discourse, then, just as Berger&Luckmann's objectification and legitimization, involves a set of beliefs, behaviors, etc., which guide social actions and the 'creation' of the new (Kuhn's 1976 [1962] and 1977 (especially chapter 7) concept of paradigm, in connection to the fields of scientific study, can also be considered in this context).

Hierarchies of linguistic ideologies

Of course this is a highly simplified and somewhat detached picture of social processes; societies are not simply constituted by two people on an island, but - as discussed above - individuals are part of a set of networks, each with specific institutions, typifications, etc, some of which might be in common and some of which might differ.

That is, institutions are not equally distributed among all members of society, but vary according to the position of the

individual in what Bourdieu terms social space[31], which can be pictured as a graphical representation:

> this space is constructed in such a way that the agents, groups or institutions that find themselves situated in it have more properties in common the closer they are to each other in this space; and fewer common properties, the further they are away from each other. Spatial distances - on paper - coincide with social distances. (Bourdieu 1990, p.127)

In reality, though, these positions are not absolutely fixed; members of different social groups meet, interact, generally: have to do with one another, so there is a circulation in this space. Structure, therefore, is not equal to interaction. But what determines the position in social space?

Bourdieu here introduces the concept of different forms of resources which he terms capital, which has not to be understood only in terms of economic capital (material wealth, i.e. money, stocks, property, etc.), but also as cultural capital (knowledge, skills, educational qualifications, etc.)

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[31] Of course it is not possible to pass nonchalantly from Berger&Luckmann to Bourdieu without considering the differences in their approaches. While B&L (and to a certain extent Habermas, quoted before) build up their arguments and discussion on Husserl's and subsequently Schütz' phenomenology for which the individuum, the subject is the central point of discussion, and therefore social action has to be explained from the individual's point of view, Bourdieu takes a more 'objectivist' standpoint connectable to Saussure and particularly Levi-Strauss (although his work is aimed at transcending them both establishing a dialectic relationship between them), postulating the existence of particular, pre-given structures which the individual cannot (or only very hardly) influence. I won't develop this point here any further. Suffice it to say, in the simplified way the argument is exposed here, that the concept of linguistic interaction in Berger&Luckmann and Habermas rests on a very simplified notion of context. Meaning here can be considered to be mainly semantic and language is a given fact and its development is only of marginal interest. Bourdieu , instead, using concepts related to those mentioned above - typification, habitualization - such as habitus, tries to show that language is not only a social fact, but ***a particular*** social fact, where social, economic, cultural status and therefore the membership - or non - membership in particular social networks are of decisive importance. These differences have engendered a long and prolific discussion in the field of sociology. See for example Knoblauch 1995 (chapter A III), John B. Thompson's introduction in Bourdieu 1991 and Bourdieu himself: 'Social space and symbolic power' (1990, pp.123-137)

and symbolic capital (accumulated prestige or honor). These capitals are related to one another to a certain extent: high educational skills can be used for a lucrative job and can lead to high prestige, e.g. They are the fundamental social powers. The amount of possession of each capital determines the individual's (agent's) position in this social space:

> agents are distributed in the overall social space, in the first dimension in accordance with the overall volume of the capital that they possess in different kinds and, in the second dimension, in accordance with the structure of their capital, that is, in accordance with the relative weight of the different kinds of capital, economic and cultural [and symbolic], in the total volume of their capital. (Bourdieu 1990. p.128)

The positions in this space, involving the membership in a particular social group determine and are determined by what Bordieu terms habitus, i.e. 'dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any rule.' (Thompson 1991, p.12)

This notion has several characteristics: inculcation, which means that particular dispositions are acquired by a myriad of processes of learning and training; structuration, which means that they reflect the social conditions in which they were acquired; duration, which means that they endure throughout an individual's life; (Bourdieu goes as far as to say that they become a part of the body); finally, generation and transposition, which means that they can be applied to and can generate other fields besides the ones in which they were originally acquired. 'As a durably installed set of dispositions, the habitus tends to generate practices and perceptions, works and appreciations, which concur with the conditions of existence of which the habitus itself is the product' (Thompson 1991, pp.12-13). This explains

> what appears as a universal property of human experience, that is, the fact that the familiar world tends to be 'taken for granted', perceived as natural ... As perceptual dispositions tend to be adjusted to positions, agents, even the most disadvantaged, tend to perceive the world as natural and to find it much more acceptable than one might imagine, especially when one looks at the situation from the eyes of the dominated through the social eyes of the dominant. (Bourdieu 1990, p.130-131).

Habitus is thus a set of legitimized institututions, not from the point of view of social space as a whole, but of sub-groups, clusters in it; it gives the agents the tools to live in the social world and to have a self-identity. He is not arguing from a purely structuralist point of view, though: the individual, with what Clark has termed communal and personal common ground, is essential in the picture he traces of society. The idea is that the networks to which the single individual belongs express her position in social space; 'just as feathered animals are more likely to have wings than are furry animals, so the possessors of a sophisticated mastery of language are more likely to be seen in a museum than those who don't have this mastery.' (Bourdieu 1990, p.133). It might be difficult for a professor to become a member of a Los Angeles street-gang, as it might be difficult for a gang member to become a professor; their habitus, set of dispositions, will be different to a very big extent (although having some commonality, of course, like being fans of the same football-team, or being supposed to obey the same traffic regulations).

Thus there are different discourses in social space, interacting to a certain extent with one another and organized in a hierarchical structure. 'There is an official point of view, which is the point of view of officials and which is expressed in official discourse' (Bourdieu 1990, p.136). As such, it is the official point of view, transcending the individuals point of view and becoming legitimate through

directives, laws, codifications with universal values (school diplomas, etc.).

What role does language play in all this? Bourdieu sees language as expression of the power structures in society (in fact the problem of how the habitus is transmitted - since it is not always neatly expressed but findable mainly in between lines - is left unresolved by Bourdieu. Knoblauch 1995 pp.39-40 briefly discusses this issue). I have been trying to show, though, that ideology is a central feature of language, and is not just an outer influence applied to an independent structured system. We can thus speak of a variety of languages within a language on the base of the different identifiable linguistic ideologies.

The more the social networks of the users (speakers and hearers) are the same, the more are the ideologies, and thus the chance that the mutual understanding is on a high level.

The existence of different sociolects (as they might be called), though, does not involve differences in the capabilities of the speakers to use it; Labov tried hard to demonstrate that Black English is not more unstructured or more crude than Standard American English, but just having structures on its own, which are applied and followed by its speakers just the same way as any speaker of any other language applies the particular rules of her language. The distinction between a dialect and a national language, or even between languages, is not based on structural differences or on completeness, but on social elements. That is, certain linguistic ideologies will have a more recognized, socially admirable or acceptable dimension than others. Using Bourdieu once again:

> Through a complex historical process, sometimes involving extensive conflict...a particular language or set of linguistic practices has emerged as the dominant and legitimate language, and other languages

> or dialects have been eliminated or subordinated to it. (Thompson 1991., p.5).

The political, social and linguistic levels of investigation seem thus to blend into one another.

Linguistic ideology: some considerations and summary

Before going on to consider political correctness and how what has been said so far can be useful to understand this discussion, let us summarize the main arguments developed above.

At the beginning I tried to show that the traditional linguistic approach, consisting in the discovery and explanation of structures on different levels - phonological, syntactic, semantic, etc. - , although having a considerable and glorious past to display[32], has encountered some serious problems that question its ability to answer some basic questions.

The more technical equipment is available to record and analyze actual spoken material (conversation, all kinds of interactions) it becomes clearer and clearer that speaking not only involves the application of some structure learned in childhood (if on universal basis or not doesn't matter here), but also a knowledge of when to apply which part. The meaning of what is said does depend only partly on the semantics and the syntax of the composition; the context of use and the general and personal background of the interactants to the linguistic situation play determinant roles as well.

I have used the term ideology to describe that part of the knowledge of a person which enables her to produce and

[32] Saussure and his American counterpart Bloomfield have certainly been deeply influential thinkers; determinant for the development of linguistics, they have played a major role also in other fields of research. Let us just think of Jacques Derrida in philosophy, Claude Levy-Strauss in anthropology/sociology, Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco in semiotics and literary criticism.

understand linguistic formations (well-formed or not as they may be). We cannot overestimate the importance and the extension of this knowledge; the meaning of anything said depends on an impressive amount of variables; it is not just the semantics or the syntax of an utterance that matters; it is also who speaks, who is spoken to, their social background, their personal relation and the context of utterance that play a fundamental role.

Meaning, though, is not simply an equation in which to each variable a value can be attributed. Considering only one of them, context: how can we ever fully and exhaustively describe every element composing or being part of it? This is a problem raised by Jacques Derrida answering John Searle in a discussion of Speech Act Theory (and later on summarized by Culler 1982). Austin, of course, has had the great merit to have convincingly explained the importance of context for the meaning of a utterance[33]. The problem (for a scientific study of meaning) is that the contextual factors in which a linguistic action takes place might be infinite. Austin makes the example of a wedding ceremony in church, a familiar and well-known context. But, even if the setting seems to be right, the priest a real one (not like the case in England in January 1997 where a couple was married by an apprendice), a man and a woman, etc., there might be endless possibilities in which the performative 'I now pronounce you man and wife' might not be valid: it could happen that all the requirements were 'met but that one of the parties were under hypnosis, or again that the ceremony were impeccable in all respects but had been called a rehearsal' (Culler 1982, p. 75), etc.

If we consider the interactants, the problem becomes even worse: consciousness, unconsciousness, amount of alcohol, pre-exam stress might all determinantly influence a linguistic

[33] Although he tried to leave out the intention of the speaker. Only 'serious' utterances were considered, and taken to be the norm (Austin 1971, pp.9 ff.). This certainly is a limitation which cannot be accepted without deeply influencing the result of the discussion. But this problem will not be developed here any further.

interaction. To repeat the point: infinite variables might play a role in the simplest situations. Since a linguistic interaction is not a game of chess (which is simple by comparison), where each single move can be studied for hours, even years, but where a single exchange takes a fraction of seconds most of the time, we must explain the capability by the interactants to analyze the situation with astonishing rapidity. The origin of this rapidity, as I have tried to show, depends on the shared social background of the interactants; two professors of linguistic will nonchalantly be able to discuss the paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels of analysis while sipping a beer; Jürgen Klinsmann and Giovanni Trappattoni would be able to discuss offside strategies and on how to kick a penalty while sleeping. These people share a certain background which enables them to individuate what can be called the 'main meaning' of what is said on the basis of a determinate knowledge which is a set of dispositions, a habitus.

From the point of view of structuredness or complexity, a discussion of soccer schemes might be on the same level as one of Derrida's differance, although the latter will socially be considered to lie on a higher intellectual level. Which interactions and which linguistic beliefs are hierarchically higher than others is not a matter of structure; it is a matter of social recognition, of political meaning.

To say that all languages are equal considering structural completeness misses the matter; this doesn't explain why 'English' (or better, certain varieties of it) has eradicated most native American languages, and the cultures connected to it[34]. These power struggles are an important element in the

[34] Rossi-Landi 1973, p.72 observes rather boldly: 'It is not without significance that the ideology on which linguistic relativity rests is projected and expressed precisely in certain generalizations drawn from the study of the American Indian languages. Both the invitation to better understanding them, to avoid overwhelming them metaphisically, and the defence of their *Weltanschauungen* from scientific progress manifest the guilt feelings of American whites for having savagely destroyed the Indians beyond any possible need, I do not say of expansion, but even personal defence.' (his emphasis).

study of language from a social perspective; the discussion of political correctness is in my opinion a good viewpoint to observe the battlefield.

Part 2: Political Correctness

Introduction

The discussion on Political Correctness (PC) has been a very fruitful one in the last ten years, especially for magazine and newspaper editors, publishing houses and many authors, famous and less famous, who all have contributed in some way to make it an important issue [35].

It is not possible here to illustrate all the details, also because the phenomenon PC is really a compound of a series of issues not all of which seem to be interconnected. I will briefly consider the history of the discussion and the main issues involved, and then focus on the linguistic aspect which I think has (unfortunately) not been appropriately considered so far [36].

McDonald's is not PC

A Berkeley professor for Linguistics, Robin Laikoff[37] remembers:

[35] Three books can be recommended for an overview of the discussion; the first is Hughes 1993, who takes a rather ironic position in discussing both the pro and contra issues; the other two are Aufderheide 1992 and Berman 1992, anthologies of articles and other material by PC supporters and attackers.

[36] Lampert 1995 (p.247): '*Sprach*wissenschaftler haben sich zur PC-Problematik bislang praktisch nicht geäußert.' He mentions two articles; one is: Cameron, Deborah 1994. 'Words, words, words: the power of language. In Dunant, Sarah. The war of words: the Political Correctnes debate. London: Virago Press. The other is Weinreich 1994.

A research on the MLA-CD-ROM updated to August 1996 was not fruitful either. As we shall see, though, there are two discussions regarding language that have to be considered: on the one hand the lexico-semantic and syntactic one to which much attention has been paid; on the other the issue of 'speech codes', which has been neglected.

[37] Whom insiders can certainly identify with Robin *Lakoff*.

> Es ist überflüssig zu sagen, daß alles mit gutem Humor und gutem Willen getan wurde. Wahrscheinlich war auch ein gewisses Maß an Gehässigkeit enthalten. Aber letztlich verstanden das die Leute, schließlich arbeiteten wir alle auf ein Ziel hin, so daß wir uns ein paar Späße um die Ohren hauen konnten. (quoted in Bonder 1995, p.9)

Two important elements can be extracted: first of all, before things became serious with the ignition of the (to a large extent pseudo-) debate by saviors of the country and of the freedom of the individual, word-creations such as vertically or horizontally challenged, referring to persons with a height or a weight in the first case above and in the second case below the norm had a kind of comic implication (not regarding these persons, but the lexico-semantic composition).

Secondly, the debate evolves around the same goal by each (serious) participant to the debate: namely abolishing inequality in society and thus reaching what became the motto of the French Revolution: Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. Other quotes seem to confirm this interpretation: E.g.:

> „Politically correct“ was originally an approving phrase on the leninist left to denote someone who steadfastly toed the party line. Then it evolved into „P.C.“, an ironic phrase among wised-up leftists to denote someone whose line-toeing fervor was to much to bear (Berman 1992, p.5[38])

This meaning was taken over to the United States in the 1960s during the battles for the rights for women and the abolishment of ‘separate but equal’ legislation. Other authors (Perry 1992, p.72, e.g.) find its origin in the ‘Red Book’ by Mao Zedong; the main idea here is that the only method of settling questions on controversial issues is by having people discuss about them.

[38] Quoted in Schenz 1994, p.27.

Any way, how was it possible to pass from an ironic meaning[39], or an invitation to discuss, to an entry in the Encyclopedia Britannica 1992 Book of the Year, describing PC as:

> [A] pejorative term to describe a loose connection of feminists, Marxists, multiculturalists and deconstructionists together with their assorted left-wing position on race, sexual orientation, class the environment and related issues (quoted in Schenz 1994, p.23)?

When the debate expanded from college campuses to become part of the more general political struggle (starting with the Black Muslims and the feminist movement in the 60's/beginning of the 70's and then on to the gay&lesbian movement, Latino movement etc.) and the development and introduction of policies to support minorities, a second, conservative front rapidly developed, taking over the term without its original connotation, but identifying with it all evil great and small.

Let us now explain these two positions, concentrating on three main areas: affirmative action, change of curricula and correct speech. The last one will be dealt with more exhaustively and connected to what has said on linguistic ideology.

The guideline of the whole discussion, and it is important to bear this in mind in order not to get lost in its at times harsh tones, is the common goal to build up a free and democratic society, where each individual, regardless of race, creed, gender, sexual orientation has the possibility to be fulfilled (basically what is stated in the Declaration of Independence). 'No controversy, of course, about benign goals such as pluralism or diversity, but there is plenty of

[39] Maurice Isserman (quoted in Perry 191, p.75) remembers 'It was always used in a tone mocking the pieties of our own peninsular counterculture, as in „We could stop at McDonalds down the road if you're hungry, ... but it wouldn't be politically correct"'

controversy about how these goals are being pursued' (D'Souza 1991b, p.14).

The arguments pro-PC

The main arguments can be summarized as follows:

Let's face it. After 200 years of America the main ideals which are to be found in the Constitution have not nearly been realized. Only 16.5% of tenured professors are women and they averagely gain $3000 a year less than their male counterparts in the same position (Schenz 1992, p.45)[40]. There are more young African-Americans in prison than in college, and murder is the main cause of death among male African-Americans under the age of 25. This shows that 'equal possibilities' and 'equal opportunities' are just hollow ideals. We have to change the system if we want to change society.

Let us take a look at this system: due to different familiar and social backgrounds, the Whites and the Asians are advantaged compared to Latinos and African-Americans, males compared to females and heterosexuals compared to homosexuals. The fault does not lie in the individual (lazy, stupid etc.), but in the environment in which she grew up. If we want a change for the better we have to give minorities (basically any person not being a white, male, heterosexual or a combination of the three) the same chances.

First of all, since instruction has a fundamental value in regard to social development, everybody has to have a chance to obtain a university degree. At American universities, in fact, a test (like the Scholastic Aptitude Test, SAT) must be passed with a certain score in order to be eligible for college studies. Taking the University of Berkeley, CA as an example: the highest average scores are achieved by Whites and

[40] These figures refer to the beginning of the 80's.

Asians, distantly followed by Latinos, Chicanos and African-Americans [41].

The only way to have a proportional representation at universities that reflects the one in society is to introduce quotas, that is, accepting different tests averages depending on the ethnic group one belongs to. This way, the number of Hispanic and African-American students in 1987 was twice as high as in 1984, while the number of Whites diminished by over 20% [42].

The idea behind this unjust treatment ('reverse racism' it is labeled by the anti-PC movement) is to give minorities a self-identity and the belief that they can reach the same positions and results as the socially more favored groups. Basically: an injustice that will (hopefully)lead to social equality [43].

Once minorities have the chance to attend college, another problem arises, though: the material on which classes are based, i.e. reading lists, explanations by professors (not to mention the professors themselves, mostly white and male) are Eurocentered, which means that European culture in general and philosophy, literature and theories in particular are those of white dead males.[44] Shakespeare, Dante, Aristotle are often cited in this regard.

This way, students are given the impression that cultural achievements in any field of study are mostly European. This, of course, is not permissible, considering that America's population is a mosaic of peoples, and focusing on European male culture only is arrogant, racist and sexist. It would be good for Whites and for minorities if the curriculum

[41] The exact figures can be found in Schenz 1994, p.32-33, who takes them From Sarich, Vincent: The institutionalization of racism at the university of California at Berkeley, AQ (Winter 1990-91), pp.73-77.
[42] See preceding note.
[43] For a feminist critique of quotas, seen as the way to achieve formal equality without reaching social equality, see Delphy 1997.
[44] A term which still conserves, despite the development of the discussion, a somehow sarcastic tone, I think.

comprehended, beside these classic authors and philosophies, also other points of view.

Therefore, course offers, reading lists and curricula should be changed in such a direction, and the teaching and researching staff should be complemented with women and minority members.

The Anti-PC argumentation

The main arguments can be summarized as follows:

First of all, it is despicable that there is inequality between the races and the sexes. These differences have to be overcome.

But universities are not the right places for this. Universities do not have the function of schooling or parenting their students; they are the engine of society and the people working and studying at these institutions should be admitted only on the basis of their capabilities (i.e. fulfillment of academic standards), regardless of creed, race, gender.

> The admission of seriously unprepared students creates unrealistic expectations and frequently leads to frustration and resentment. Moreover, policies that target specific minority groups unfairly stigmatize all students in such groups, reinforcing negative stereotypes. (National Association of Scholars [45] 1991, p.8)

It is the individual that matters, not her being part of a particular social group. The introduction of quotas at universities not only does not solve the problem; it makes it even worse. The motto that has made America, 'E Pluribus Unum'

[45] The National Association of Scholars (NAS) was founded on a nationwide scale in 1987. It has its own journal, *Academic Questions*, and certainly is the most powerful and influencial anti-PC association. See Weisberg 1991 for a brief history and a critical discussion.

is being converted into 'E Pluribus Plure'; society is being split up in many subgroups, each of which seems to compete for being the most oppressed by 'the system' and the other groups (if you're a Latino lesbian you're basically the lowest a person can be in social hierarchy).

The final result will be a 'Balkanization of America'[46], because the ideals on which America is based, 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', will be substituted by a myriad of divergent ideals and clashing interpretations. 'A war of everybody against everybody', as Thomas Hobbes described stateless social life.

Of course, there are authors and philosophies beside the classic Western ones that are important and which should be taught and learned; but we always have to remember that our society is based on Western values[47]. They represent the glue that holds together our multiethnic society, and therefore these ideas and values have to be taught and learned. If we substitute them with non-European works, these values will be lost, and then God help us.

The niveau of teaching, researching and studying will be lower (since not the most capable individuals are present, but the most capable representants of many subgroups), and the themes to be developed, taught and discussed strictly censored

[46] The main point in Schlesinger 1992. He firmly condems 'the fragmentation of our culture into a quarrelsome splatter of enclaves, ghettos and tribes', p.16

[47] 'If American students were truly exposed to the richest elements of other cultures, this could be a broadening and useful experience. A study of Chinese philosophers such as Confucius or Mencius would enrich the student's understanding of how different peoples order their lives, thus giving a greater sense of purpose to their own. Most likely, a taste of Indian poetry such as Rabindranath Tagore's ***Gitanjali*** would increase the interest of materially minded young people in the domain of the spirit. An introduction to Middle Eastern history would prepare the leaders of tomorrow to deal with the mounting challenge of Islamic culture. It would profit students to study the rise of capitalism in the Far East. But the claims of the academic multiculturalists are largely phony. They pay little attention to the Asian or Latin American classics... At Stanford, for example, Homer, Plato, Dante, Machiavelli and Locke are increasingly scarce ... Instead the students are offered topics such as popular religion and healing in Peru, Rastafarian poetry, and Andean music.' (D'Souza 1991b, p.14-15, his emphasis)

because they have not to be valued based on objective importance, but on percentual representation. In an extreme formulation:

> The doctrine that only blacks can teach English and write black history leads inexorably to the doctrine that blacks can teach and write only black history as well as to inescapable corollaries: Chinese must be restricted to Chinese history, women to women's history and so on (Schlesinger 1992, p.105[48]. Author's emphasis)

So the harsh critique to PC is: not only does it not solve the problems that already exist; what its supporters do is to create even new ones, mining the best solution available: everybody, as an individual, through, and despite of, cultural differences, has to do her best to be a harmonizing part of society. The western democratic values: equality, freedom of speech and of thought and equal opportunity for all are the best basis to achieve this.

Some considerations on the debate

What amazes is the polarization and the harshness of the debate: one is either pro-PC, and therefore a left-winged communist and feminist radical whose only wish is to destroy a social order that, even with some problems, manages quiet well to regulate the lives of 260 million people in a more or less satisfactory way (so the opponents), or a right-winged (white, male) racist, member of the Ku Klux Klan and Pat Buchanan supporter (so the PC side).

There might be several causes for this polarization which do not have very much to do with the issue itself; the incredible number of publications (Schenz, researching in the Library of Congress, the (dpa)-archive in Washington and several other

[48] Also quoted in Schenz 1994, p.64

libraries found more than 800 titles - books and articles - up to 1993) for a relatively short period of time, considering that the discussion basically started in the mid-80s, is telling. Emotivity certainly plays a role; but a legitimate doubt comes up when finding out that many of the publications are simply summaries of what has been already said, without new viewpoints to offer; these publications again might be taken up by a new one, which is then taken up again, and so on. Fame and money can surely be achieved by getting notorious this way (a good example for Bourdieu's symbolic and economic capital).

The story of a (white) schoolboy of the age of eight being suspended from school because he kissed one of his female companions (at her own request) made the news in November 1996, and similar anecdotes come again and again from the United States. The issue, as comic or funny as it might seem sometimes, is a serious one, though.

A sure positive aspect is that some of the points, such as equal opportunity and equal rights in everyday life (and not only in some lawbook) have become important also abroad. Even if the American discussion might not have engendered the European one, its tones have certainly awakened the attention of the Europeans.

Finally, the situation post-PC, if we consider real data, is not as apocalyptic as it has been described. Interestingly, there is no 'pamphlet' of the PC-movement; what started with an ironic undertone (as I pointed out at the beginning) certainly had some practical effects.

The strong and radical countermovement is based more on anecdotal stories than on real facts. The 'bible' of the PC opponents, Dinesh D'Souza's Illiberal Education[49] - discussing

[49] A reason for his success among anti-PC supporters is certainly his personal background. 'One charge that cannot be used against the author of *Illiberal Education* is that he is a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. He is in

the situation at six American universities among the most famous and established - was a highly successful book. PC supporters, later interviewing the 'victims' of this 'oppressive, McCarthyan regime'[50] showed that the way he had represented their stories was absolutely exaggerated[51].

Regardless of these columnistic, political and economic reasons that determine the discussion, the hard core of the issue deserves to be discussed in more detail. The question now to be answered (considering what was said before on linguistic ideology) is: what is the function of language in this issue? What is the difference between Black and African-American ?

The 'purification' of language

The role of language is central in the PC discussion. One of the important issues in the feminist movement in the 70s and 80s was to show that the inequality between (or among) genders could be directly observed in language;

> Every language reflects the prejudices of the society in which it evolved. Since English, through most of its history, evolved in a white, Anglo-Saxon, patriarchal society, no one should be surprised that its vocabulary and grammar frequently reflect

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fact an immigrant from India with a secondary schooling in Bombay who did not arrive on our shores until 1978' (Woodward 1991, p.28).

[50] The parallel between the McCarthy era and universities under the 'control' of left winged 'tenured radicals' is often made. E.g. D'Souza 1991b (p.13): 'Donald Kagan, dean of Yale College, says: „I was a student during the days of Joseph McCarthy, and there is less freedom now than there was then." As in the McCarthy period, a particular group of activists has cowed the authorities and bent them to its will.'

Statistically seen, there is no evidence for this opinion. According to *Usa Today*, the percentage of teachers considering themselves as being 'moderately or strongly conservative' rose by 6% in the period 1969-1984 (from 27.5 up to 33.8%), while the 'liberals', in the same period, dropped from 40.6 down to 33.8% (Kelly, Dennis. College teachers aren't as liberal' In: *USA Today* March 8, 1993. Quoted in Schenz 1994, pp.49-50)

[51] His detractors are reported to refer to him as 'Distort D'Newza'.

attitudes that exclude or demean women (Miller&Swift 1981 [52]).

To understand better what is meant, let us look at some cases where inequality might be expressed. Since we are not discussing the position of women only, but also the position of minorities (non-White and non-Anglo-Saxon) we will broaden the notion of inequality also to these, although 'gender' is a distinction that, from a structural point of view, is more evidently expressed than the others.

The critique regards three related aspects which I will consider separately.

The first is the syntactic-semantic structure of 'generic anaphoric he (/his)'. An example could be a teacher asking her (mixed) class 'did everybody get his lunch', where his refers both to male and female pupils.

The second is lexico-semantic. In certain pairs of words, the male form includes the female one. 'Dog', e.g. includes 'bitch' unless specified differently; 'mankind' refers to human beings in general and not only to male ones. Also, lexical gaps can be found, especially in vocabulary related to sexual intercourse: there is no female counterpart for 'virility', e.g.

The third can be considered to a generalization of the discussion on which the first two are based, including forms such as 'African-American' for 'Black'; 'Navajo', 'Cherokee', 'Mohican', etc. for 'Indian' or 'Native American'; 'exceptional', 'inconvenienced', 'mentally challenged' for 'mentally retarded'; 'aurally inconvenienced' for 'deaf'; 'person with alternative body image' for 'fat person' etc.

[52] Quoted in Graddol&Swann 1989, p.95.

The discussion of this point will be based on Silverstein 1985[53]. Three interrelated levels have to be distinguished: the structural, the pragmatic and the ideological, which constitute 'the total linguistic fact' (S.2, p.220-221), as I argued in the first part of the thesis.

First, the level of language as a system of reference-and-predication. Here gender

> is just a formal categorization of nouns or noun phrases like any other such formal categorization associated with certain semantic characteristics. What is called the gender system of English is a categorization of every basic singular noun stem in the language by what replacive anaphoric pronoun it selects in the syntactic system of reference maintenance (S.2, p.225).

So, 'man' goes with 'he', 'woman' with 'she', 'tree' with 'it'. Gender categorization, moreover, seems to be universal:

> in many (perhaps all) languages, certain nouns, regardless of any grammatical category membership, refer to gendered entities; certain verbs also predicate states and activities of gendered entities, with a kind of implicit, semantic categorization represented. (S.2, p.224)

Three levels are relevant to distinguish one system from another:

The FORMAL, that attributes grammatical labels to noun categorizations in referential linguistic structure. Categories are, e.g. ANIMATE, PERSONAL, MASCULINE, FEMININE. They have the property to include the following term and being included in the preceding (S.2, p.225). Thus, PERSONAL is included in ANIMATE, and at the same time includes MASCULINE.

Each FORMAL category has a notional (semantic) core, 'a definable class-specific property in a system of conceptual or

[53] In the following: S.2

notional categories associated with the FORMAL categorial distinctions'(S.2, p.226). So we have MASCULINE (notionally 'male'), FEMININE (notionally 'female'), among others. 'These notional categories permit us ... to recognize which formal category we are dealing with in any specific language, as compared with other possible ones.' (S.2, p.226) In English tables are conceptualized as objects of utility. As such, 'table' is FORMALLY a THING, with the notional core centered on this class; in French, though, '(la) table' is formally FEMININE.

The third level is represented by differential reference categories. While notional cores tend to be inclusive (the notional core of ANIMATE, which is 'large being', includes the notional core of PERSONAL, which is 'human'), 'differential reference categories tell us what in particular the given formal category, but not any of the others, typically is used to refer to' (S.2, p.227). So the differential reference of FEMININE is woman, the one of MASCULINE man.

In English, the notional cores of the gender system differ among one another in regard to markedness, which is asymmetrical (S.2, p.227). This is shown, e.g., by a possible Standard English sentence such as

> A customer must have dropped his/her scarf. The norm has been to use his as the pronoun maintaining reference to the passenger about which referent we are not given any information in the subject of the sentence beyond human ... that is, that it is a seemingly PERSONAL coding [which contains both MASCULINE and FEMININE]. (S.2, p.228. His emphasis)

Thus, he in a context like the one above, is the unmarked form applicable to any potential human referent, while the second form her is marked and more informative: it conveys the information that the noun it refers to is FEMININE.

At the level of discourse implementation, the categories MASCULINE and FEMININE can occur in two ways: one is the indefinite explained above, where the first category includes the second (thus it is PERSONAL and not MASCULINE). The other is the definite one, 'where the referential range of the unmarked category MASCULINE is really being contrasted with that of the marked category FEMININE.' (S.2, p.229)

Thus there is an ambiguity of discourse implementation which derives from the contrast between the notional core and the formal categorization.: notionally, as seen above, MASCULINE includes FEMININE, while, differentially, he denotes referents of the male sort and she female ones.

Similarly, there is a contrast between he/she and it. In some cases, words like infant, baby, cat, dog, which traditionally are formally NEUTER, become personalized (dog takes he and cats take she, e.g.). Silverstein defines the feelings people have when using the traditional, neutral forms as 'queasiness', which

> comes from translating the FORMAL categories directly into terms of typical differential reference, rather than from having conscious knowledge of the implicit and analyzable structure of gradually inclusive notional principles and FORMAL categories (S.2, p.229, his emphasis).

So, 'at the level of ideological reflection about gender, MASCULINE vs. FEMININE is understood as equal and opposite differential „male" vs. „female", markedness asymmetry notwithstanding.' (S.2, p.230)

Cultural ideology and the referential system

Let us summarize what was just said on 'generic he' on the basis of the discussion of ideology in part one.

Standard English does not mark gender in the noun itself; i.e., there is ‘no local formal indication like a prefix or a suffix that always must accompany the stem in a full word to indicate gender class of the noun’ (S.2, p.225) [54].

The gender of a noun becomes evident when it is referred to anaphorically. We have seen that the male anaphoric pronoun he can take up the function of denoting human. On the other hand, he can refer to male as opposed to she which refers to female .

Two different phenomena are at work here: in the first the focus is on the notional core of the formal category of gender; in this case MASCULINE tends to include FEMININE and the gender opposition becomes ANIMATE vs. THING (non-animate).

In the second the focus is on differential reference: thus MASCULINE is contrasted by FEMININE.

The distinction between these two aspects is unconscious, a part of the linguistic knowledge of native (or, at least, fluent) speakers of English.

With the analysis, and the criticism, of the role between men and women in society, the notion of ‘male as the norm’ developed: women are paid less, have fewer job chances, etc. This (cultural ideological) notion was in opposition to the culturally ideological notion that these differences are natural and given (and divine, some would add).

One focus of the struggle that developed was on language. In daily use, it was discovered, the pronoun he which, from the point of view of differential reference as discussed above contrasts with she, was also used as a generic construction, thus disfavoring the FEMININE form.

These unequal distribution of uses thus became conscious; the generic use of he, which structurally is different from the differential one, was interpreted as the reflection of the prejudices against women. This form became stigmatized and ideologically laden. ‘To „he“ or not to „he“’ as Silverstein

[54] Although a few derivational suffixed, such as -*ess* do carry feminine gender (S.2, p.225).

(S.2, p.220) points out. To use or not use of this form became the signal whether a person is on the side of feminist struggle or not, ‘an index of a certain absence or presence of ideological solidarity with the reformers’ (S.2, p.253).

This can be reconnected to what was said on the ideology of reference and of performance.

The structure of a language, as I have tried to claim, is seen as connected to how the world „out there“ is (the ontological belief; recall also the quote from Miller&Swifts on page 50).

The unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women is thus reflected in the structures of language. Generic he is the typical case: the anaphoric pronoun employed to refer to male gender is also used to refer to human beings in general, unless it is explicitly stated that the noun which is being referred to is female. The asymmetry in society is projected onto the referential system of the language via the use in daily interactions.

To make this process clearer we have to consider more closely the pragmatic aspect involved, as pointed out on p.51.

‘Male’ vs. ‘female’ language use

Language, as pointed out before, is not only an abstract structure, but a social phenomenon. Generic he was discussed on a structural level; the tie of reference[55] connecting it to the noun (whether PERSONAL or MASCULINE) has been discussed on a semantico-syntactic level.

There are forms of gender distinction, though, that can only be observed on the level of interaction. We will start considering the indexical aspect of language which was termed function $_2$ on p.12.

[55] In Halliday&Hasan’s sense. See Rumsey 1990 p.349 for a brief discussion.

Some languages indexically mark the gender of the interactants in the speech situation[56]. These overt gender indexicals can be contrasted with covert statistical indexes (S.2, p.235). A well known example is Labov's (1972) study on New York /r/ (whose results were confirmed by similar studies. See, e.g. Trudgill's (1974) on Norwich /-ing/).

He analyzed the linguistic behavior of social classes in regard to Standard norms. He came to the result that the higher the class appartenance of the individual speaker, the more Standard forms are produced. The exception is represented by the social group just underneath the highest social level (in his study the Lower Middle Class); the general tendency discovered is that the higher the level of formality, the higher is the percentage of standard forms. Interestingly, the Lower Middle Class produced, on a highly formal level (such as reading word pairs) a higher percentage of standard forms than the socially higher ranked Upper Middle Class. This was explained by the notion of social insecurity, related to the desire of the speakers to be accepted by the socially higher-ranked.

Considering the gender distinction inside each social class, it was discovered that women behave in a similar way as the one just described in regard to men, i.e. they tend to use more standard forms. Even more interesting, the speakers of the higher classes, when interviewed, declared that they used the standard form more often (and the non-standard form less often) than they actually did. Connected to this were phenomena such as hypercorrectism and a generally higher sensitivity to what was standard and what was not[57].

[56] A few examples: in Koasati, an American Indian language spoken in what today is Alabama, the gender of the speaker is marked as male or female in verb paradigms; Yana (an American Indian language from California) has a form of words only used from males speaking to males,and a different one for all other gender combinations (both examples are from S.2, p.233-234).

[57] See also S.2 pp.239 ff. for a discussion.

These results showed that in English[58] women are linguistically more insecure than male representants of the same social group. This is an example of a covert 'woman's language'.

> It is a statistically ... indexed orientation to the Standard language, the explicitly codified norm of society, with an indexically significant frequency of productive differentiation from men that almost makes us expect women to talk more correctly than men ... women are to men as relatively lower is to relatively higher status group (along the dimension of socioeconomic class). Hence, we might say, it might be puzzling that those who speak „best" - and are more oriented to do so, - do not also enjoy the power of those usually at the top in the conventional appreciation of the benefits of „Standardized" demeanor and behavior.(S.2, p.240)

As I have tried to show here, a gender distinction can also be found at the level of pragmatic inquiry[59]. These differences, in English, are not overt indexical uses, but covertly statistical, related to the higher frequency of Standard language use which signals social insecurity.

It is on this level that awareness of inequality is perceived. 'Feminist theory of language ... seems correctly and accurately to perceive the pragmatic metaphorical relationship between gender identity and status' (S.2, p.240). This awareness of indexical asymmetry is 'projected' onto the system of reference-and-predication. Thus we can complete what was said at the end of the discussion of generic he: the asymmetry in society is projected onto the referential system of the language via the indexical use of language in daily interactions.

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[58] and other languages spoken in social situations comparable to the American or British.

[59] See Graddol&Swann, especially chapters 1-4 for case studies and discussions of single phenomena.

Let us briefly consider another issue raised in the discussion on 'ideology and performance' regarding purposivity, or goal-orientation (function $_1$) of language.

On the pragmatic level of analysis regarding contextualized language use (discourse) we distinguished it from indexicality (or function$_2$). These two are interconnected, or more specifically: the ability to reach a goal linguistically is related to the indexical function of language. Here the discussion can be widened to other 'social categories' such as ethnicity.

Let us first consider gender. Baron 1997[60] discusses the difference in behavior of male and female professors in a highly specific speech situation: opening, criticizing or leading the discussion on a presentation of an oral paper at a conference[61]. The results of the analysis of empirical work confirm the relation between differences in the indexicality of language ('men's' vs. 'women's' speech). The issue at stake is indirectness :

> Whereas many men with a distinctive virtuosity instrumentalize this custom for a specific kind of „face-work" by first commenting on the previous speaker's remarks in a rather encomiastic way and then , gradually, trying to dismantle its foundation, thus showing both their lack of appreciation for the hypotheses being attacked and their familiarity with academic rituals, most women do not use indirectness to disguise something they would have later made explicit ...
>
> The female scientists ... despite being well known as experts, tend to use certain strategies of self-deprecation which are not found in the majority of utterances by males ... The parameters of gender, age, status, prestige, race, etc. interact in complex ways, of course, but there is evidence for the assumption that women with a lower hierarchical rank

[60] This issue was discussed in a workshop the University of Konstanz with the title 'Gender in interaction' on Nov. 1-3 1996.

[61] For a more general discussion of 'women's talk' in formal situations see Holmes 1992.

> are even „more handicapped“ in verbal „territorial fights“ than men of the same professional status, and that women of high status do not receive the same verbal space as their male colleagues ... [Furthermore,] they themselves do a lot to devaluate their expertise’ (Baron 1996[62]).

Therefore, by language uses that differ from the (male) Standard one, the possibility to successfully reach the goal seems to be challenged.

A similar point was made by discussing Gumperz’ 1992 interview situation (see p.13-15, 18-19).

Finally, an example which is directly connected PC; recently a rather harsh discussion developed on teaching ‘Ebonics’, or Black English, at some schools in California[63] on the basis of the scores of African-American pupils which were lower than those of pupils of other ethnicities. Even famous PC supporters like Jesse Jackson and Henry Louis Gates vehemently opposed this decision with the explanation that this would not be of advantage to the pupils[64]. This, certainly, is not a criticism of ‘Ebonics’ on a referential-and-predicational level; it refers to the social dimension of language use, from a Standard point of view seen as socially inferior (certainly to a much more conscious degree than ‘women’s speech’), and thus not able to elevate its speakers to higher social positions in general, or to be effective in single linguistic interactions (when speakers of Standard language are involved)[65] in particular.

We have discussed the semantico-syntactic, the indexical and, briefly, the purposive power of Standard English. Let us now turn to the lexico-semantic one.

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[62] This quote is taken from a handout distributed at the conference above. For a more extensive discussion, see Baron 1997.

[63] See Heuer 1997

[64] Henry Louis Gates: this decision is ‘dumm und lächerlich: Als Afro-Amerikaner versuche ich verzweifelt nach Wegen, um das Analphabetentum in den Griff zu kriegen, aber das ist keine Lösung.’ (in: Heuer 1997)

[65] Besides, the scores of ‘Ebonics’ pupils turned out to be even lower than before.

Ms. vs. Miss or Mrs.

Related to the discussion on generic he is the one on the semantico-lexical system, where an asymmetry favoring the male forms as the generic (formally PERSONAL) can be found in various cases [66]:

- In certain pairs of opposites where the male and the female form are different lexemes, the MASCULINE form is unmarked while the FEMININE is marked; dog thus denotes the animal regardless of sex, unless specified that it is male, while bitch denotes female dogs only.
- In pairs of words in which the FEMININE form is derived from the MASCULINE, the first is unmarked; examples are actor vs. actress, manager vs. manageress. duke vs. duchess, governor vs. governess , etc.

In both these sets, the female form is not only marked; sometimes meanings are added to 'female': bitch has an additional meaning of 'a malicious or spiteful woman',[67]; duchess refers to the wife of a duke; mistress can not only refer to a female master (the head of the household) but also to 'a woman (other than his wife) to whom a married has a (usu. prolonged) relationship' (COED); actress seems also to have an additional meaning of prostitute [68].

- man used to refer to human beings in general; e.g. manpower, man-made, prehistoric man; used as a verb, man a post; to denote certain jobs which are not only a male domain: states man , fire man , chair man , etc.
- Lexical gaps. Verbs denoting sexual intercourse, e.g., are either neutral (such as to have sex, to have an orgasm) or

[66] The following examples are taken from Graddol&Swann 1989.
[67] According to The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (COED)
[68] See Graddol&Swann, p.102, for a newspaper excerpt that discusses this issue.

require a male subject (to penetrate, e.g.). Similarly, there is no feminine term for virility .

- The problem of title. While men are always titled Mr., a distinction that is made with women is Mrs.(married) vs. Miss (unmarried).

Other asymmetries such as boy vs. man as compared to girl vs. woman could also be considered[69]; the examples above are sufficient to show, though, that a phenomenon of ideological reinterpretation such as for generic anaphoric he is taking place.

Asymmetries in the distribution of gender forms are being reinterpreted in terms of differential reference only, while the notional core is being disregarded. This applies especially to the man example; forms like mistress or actress, which at the origin only seem to have had the meaning of 'female master' in the fourteenth century and 'female actor' in the eighteenth[70]; the negative meanings which have been added later (notice: not to the male form) can be seen as the effect of a male-dominated society with 'male as the norm'.

Homeless vs. involuntary undomiciled

To recall the quote from Miller&Swift on p.51 once again, (Standard) English is not only considered to be sexist ('patriarchal'), but also racist ('white') and Eurocentered ('Anglo-Saxon'). If we substitute the cultural-ideological position 'male as a norm' with 'white as norm' and 'Eurocentered as a norm', we understand the mechanism of Political Correctness. In fact there seem to be many norms that discriminate some social group compared to others. Thus, if we take 'young and productive as a norm', retired persons

[69] See Graddol& Swann 1989, pp.114-120, Lakoff 1974 and Miller&Swift 1980, pp.74-84 for discussions on this issue.
[70] Graddol&Swann, p 113 and 102.

are disatvantaged; if we take 'slim as the norm', overweight persons are discriminated; if we take 'working as the norm', then persons without a job (and, in more extreme cases, without a home) are discriminated, etc.

All these biases are considered to be implicit in the standard, white, male WASP culture. In the case of ethnic minorities, the bias finds expression on the level of language use (see pp.59-60); the criticism on the use of certain terms, though, is on the semantico-lexical level.

In English differences of ethnicity or sexual orientation are not encoded syntactically (differently than for gender, as we have seen). The semantico-lexical level, from the point of view of language seen as a system of reference-and-predication, is the one that is most susceptible to change. Moreover, since meaning is at least partially determined by the actual situation of use, it is the most difficult to pinpoint down[71]. The bias to be eliminated is perceived to be on this level in certain terms (such as Black, Miss, etc.) and alternative terms are suggested for alternative use.

There are several problems with this: first of all, since discrimination comes from many sides (from any bias that might be found) it becomes difficult to find terms that are absolutely 'unbiased': e.g., the PC terms for Indians was Native Americans at first. But this term too is Eurocentered, since it contains America (which derives from the Italian discoverer Amerigo Vespucci and, more importantly, is the term given to the continent by the Europeans). To be politically correct, one must now use the single tribe denominations (Cherokee , Navajo , etc.) [72].

If we take a look at the development of the terms used to refer to what today is termed African-American, we detect

[71] For a brief discussion of these points and a description of changes in the lexicon of Standard Italian after WWII see Dardano 1993.
[72] In a similar way, *Latino/Latina* and *Chicano/Chicana* are used instead of *Hispanic*

another problem[73]. The first 'neutral' term, which appeared in the sixties, was Afro-American in the place of Negro; soon this term became connotated negatively as well, and another term was introduced, Black (although both terms might have introduced parallelly; the first one, though, disappeared soon[74]). The latter still seems to be used, parallelly with persons (or people) of color, but these two seem to regress as African-American becomes the standard PC form.

Similar is the case of server, the gender-neutral term introduced at the place of waiter and waitress. As S.2, p.252 points out, 'this reform does not actually deal with the existence of a semantic category of gender as such, but only with some of its overt examples that have explicit, affixal expression of formal GENDER'. The consequence, in this case, is that the term server is interpreted, outside its original context of use, as the stem of a derivational set, and the category of GENDER is reconstructed; in fact, a FEMININE form serveress has appeared.

Thus: lexical change does not seem to solve the problem of discrimination (or bias), as pointed out by many PC-opponents[75]. That is, in use the new term simply tends to substitute the old, taking over all its negative connotations, although being originally distinct on the semantico-lexical level [76].

Let us try to explain this in terms of ideology. A term is considered to have a negative connotation (is biased). As we

[73] This development is briefly described in Papcke 1995.
[74] The use of both can be found, e.g., in Gumperz introduction to Hymes 1972 where he writes about 'Afro-American speech' (p.36) and 'black children' (p.37)
[75] As well as Pc supporters. Barbara Ehrenreich 1992 (p.336): Now, I'm all for verbal uplift. I like being called Ms. I don't want people saying „man" when they mean me, too. I'm willing to make an issue of these things. But I do know that even all women are Ms, we'll still get sixty-five cents for every dollar earned by a man. Minorities by any other name - people of color, or whatever - will still bear a huge burden of poverty, discrimination, and racial harrassment. Verbal uplift is not thee revolution.
[76] Which only apparently seems to confirm Saussure's arbitrariness of the sign.

have seen, what is perceived as a social injustice is projected on the linguistic system of reference-and-predication. As (and if) it is diffused, i.e. being used outside the original social group via social networks, the old term is stigmatized, that is: it becomes an overt, or conscient, ideological expression of bias and prejudice. The aim of both PC-supporters and critics is to reach a more just and equal society. The alternative term loses its originally 'left' connotation as it gets used also from representants of other ideologies. But, as Ehrenreich (quoted in footnote 70) justly points out, if the social situation of the referent of the term, has not changed, the term will slowly substitute the old one. Thus it becomes negatively connotated and is substituted again.

A good example is the term PC itself: its negative connotation seems to have spread also among those who support it. A new proposed term to use now is culturally sensitive .[77]

Can we say, then, that these processes of alternation are useless, if all that happens, finally is the substitution of one term by another? Before answering this question, let us consider one more way in which the semantico-lexical system is consciously changed.

'On guitar I got my nigger Earnie C'

Hughes 1993 (amongst many) argues that the failure of PC terminology is demonstrated by the fact that African-Americans use the term nigger in linguistic interactions among one another. He comes to the conclusion that if the biased groups themselves use terms that are considered to discriminate them, the whole issue is nonsense.

This is not true, because there is a process of redefinition underlying. First of all, the term is used differently than in

[77] See Lampert 1995, p.257.

Standard English, so that these standards cannot be applied[78]. Secondly, the term has undergone semantic change. The title on this page is an utterance by the African-American singer and actor Ice-T presenting his band. The term nigger here is not denigratory, but a compliment to express the toughness or 'coolness' of his guitarist. This change in meaning is determined by the context of use (in this case a concert) and the interactants involved (in this case two African-Americans [79]).

This kind of 'connotational inversion', as we might call it, is typical also for other social groups that perceive themselves as being treated unjustly by the Standard, such as lesbians calling one another dykes (or German homosexuals terming themselves as Schwule[80]). This process is explained by Silke Burmaster, the editor of a German feminist magazine: the idea is 'negative Begriffe in positive umzudrehen. Das Wort „Titten" ist kein schönes Wort und lange gegen Frauen benutzt worden. Wenn ich diese Wort selbstbewußt formuliere, nehme ich die kränkende Wirkung.' (Daiber 1997, p.24).

This is a different ideological strategy than using alternative terms; the aim of using African-American is to eliminate the negative connotation of Black in Standard English use. In this other case, the aim is to widen the self-consciousness of the individuals belonging to the stigmatized social groups. If used by individuals belonging to different social group, though, the connotation is the old derogatory one. [81]

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[78] See Labov's 1972 discussion on Black English.

[79] And the audience or the listeners to the record, of course.

[80] At the beginning of the 70's 'waren „Pioniere" dabei, die den Spieß umkehrten und sich aus dem reichen Sprachschatz der Homofeinde bedienten. „Schwul" sollte es sein, „so häßlich, abstoßend, unsympatisch wie das", schrieb der Schriftsteller Felix Rexhausen, „wofür die Leute eben dieses Eigenschaftswort genau passend schmälich finden." (Kraushaar 1996, p.16)

[81] To make a grotesque example, imagine George Bush saying on TV during the gulf war: 'In the Pentagon I got my nigger Colin Powell'. It certainly would not have been perceived the same way as Ice-T's statement!

We have now looked at several ways a cultural ideology, that of Political Correctness (or better: a set of ideologies grouped under this label) consciously criticizes language.

The starting position is that the dominating social and cultural system is constituted in such a way that men are in a superior position in regard to women, Whites in regard to other ethnicities, heterosexuals in regard to homosexuals (and many more pairs of opposites could follow).

These discriminations can be found in language too: men speak Standard English differently than women, and persons of other ethnicities who do not speak Standard (including here also prosodic phenomena) are disadvantaged.

On the structural semantico-syntactic level, generic he is perceived as being discriminating because it also comprehends the FEMININE form and on the structural semantico-lexical level, discriminations of all sorts come to expression, as we have seen.

Several proposals have been made to make the system more equal, or at least more neutral.

On the semantico-syntactic level, alternative terms have been proposed. But, these alone do not seem to be effective: the new terms, if they are distributed outside their original network of employment, seem to substitute the old ones since their referents' social situation has not significantly changed.

The case of generic he is more complicated because the pronominal anaphoric function cannot simply be deleted[82]. Alternative forms are he/she, she or he, simply she (as in this thesis) or they or, and this is probably the most complicate one, an equal distribution of he and she; these forms are easier to use in written language than in daily

[82] See S.2, pp.253-256 for a discussion.

interaction (especially the last one). The case of 'women's' vs. 'men's' talk is even more complicated. A woman using 'men's speech' is perceived as being 'masculine' (while the contrary applies to men) [83].

Considering language in use (with indexical and purposive functions), I tried to argue in part one of the thesis that it is not simply a matter of consciously changing the rules making up communicative competence; as discussed on pp. 6-7, these differentiation's are elaborated in the context of use itself rather than being pre-given. A change, interpreted in one way in a certain context of use, might be interpreted differently in another, as the example server vs. waiter/waitress showed.

Furthermore, making language symmetrical, that is equal, or neutral, might be an inherently impossible endeavor. MASCULINE vs. FEMININE is only one of many asymmetrical relations on the semantico-syntactic level: ANIMATE (including the former two) is marked compared to THING (non-animate) and all of these in SINGULAR form are marked compared to PLURAL (S.2, p.230).

Saussure 1968 (pp.166 ff.) defines linguistic signs as differentiel, which means they cannot be understood or taken by themselves, but can only be considered in a larger system that includes them all. A sign has thus to be observed in its relations to other signs.

Derrida 1974 and 1983 discusses the implications of this model. Meaning, from a systemic point of view, is not only the result of the interrelations among the signs. Discussing Levi-Strauss' approach to structuralism, he points out that the system is based on an underlying center constituted by oppositions such as truth/error, health/disease, male/female, nature/culture, philosophy/literature, speech/writing, seriousness/play, reason/practice. As we have seen with the male/female opposition, the first has a hierarchically superior position, thus including aspects of the second.

[83] S.2, pp.252 ff.

Making language equal would mean to identify all these unequal relations and 'deconstruct' them, which means to '„explode" (in Derrida's metaphor) the original relationship of „superior" and „inferior" that gives rise to the semantic horizon - the possibility of particular „definitions"' (Davis&Schleifer 1994, p.301). The problem arising through deconstruction, i.e. the dissolution of the hierarchical oppositions on which the system is based, is that a definition of meaning becomes impossible. Eliminating the center means to eliminate the possibility to differentiate the signs. Any linguistic production becomes thus undecidable .[84]

Thus: the change of language structure cannot be directly a way to achieve equality. Language is a system that is inherently 'unequal' (or better: asymmetrical) as it is based on hierarchical oppositions. To repeat the question on p.64: is the whole discussion hopeless, then?

Let us consider the following terms with their PC form: seminar vs. ovular[85], emancipation vs. efemcipation, herpes vs. hispes. These forms, rather than being alternatives, are clearly polemic opposites. While -man in (e.g.) fireman can be ambiguously interpreted as 'male' firefighter or firefighter without specifying gender, man in emancipation (which derives from Latin manus) and her in herpes (which is of Ancient Greek origin) represent a different case. The intent of these opposing forms is to raise attention to how the cultural system, the source of all the biases and inequalities acts upon its members in an unconscious and rather twisted way.

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[84] This is a main criticism moved to Derrida and his followers. What are we to do with these conclusions? His system of thought, at the end, involves that nothing can be understood; it is impossible to transcend the linguistic system because any center we base it upon will be arbitrary, just as the male/female opposition. Inequality is a linguistic and cultural construction, but it is not possible to eliminate it.

[85] 'a [feminist] professor at Washington University In St. Louis holds an „ovular" rather than a seminar' (Woodward 1991, p.44, discussing what he terms PC 'absurdities').

The argument by PC critics that these alternative or opposing forms are nonsense because, etymologically, there is no discrimination, misses the point[86]. It is not the history (or herstory) of the form that matters, but how it is perceived in the linguistic interaction. Once a term or structure is given overt ideological value, the use of it has an overt ideological function and thus is perceived according to that ideology. Thus generic he will be perceived as sexist by PC supporters. Recalling what was said about how social conventions come into use (Berger&Luckmann, discussion on pp.29-32), we can say that a certain use is typified, might be habitualized through repeated use and finally institutionalized[87]. This process implies a change on three levels: cultural/social, pragmatic and structural.

These three levels seem to be interconnected. According to Rumsey (on p.24-25 above), they influence one another reciprocally; thus it is cultural ideology that projects inequality (in this case), via language use, on certain structures or terms that subsequently are stigmatized; on the other hand, certain structures might be the expression of certain ideologies and in dialectical relation to it[88]. As Graddol&Swann 1989 (p.146) point out.

> attempts to change the structure of language (by inventing new words, for example, or banning the use of existing ones) will not lead to women's [or any other social category's] emancipation. What must be

[86] An example is Hughes' 1993 (p.37) discussion of the affix *man*. Everybody who knows the history of English, he writes, knows that -*man* was gender-neutral in OE and had (as it still has today) the neutral meaning of *person*; to express gender, one had to use a composite, such as *wifman* for *woman* and *waepman* for *man*. Therefore *chairman* is a perfectly gender-neutral expression and the whole discussion senseless.

[87] For a detailed description on how this might happen, see Milroy's 1992 description and explanation of the distribution of phonoligical features in Belfast.

[88] Rumsey 1992, p.355: 'Linguistic ideologies in which there is a strongly valorized distinction between speech and action, words and „things", are most likely to develop in conjunction with languages in which there are formal distinctions between (1) direct and indirect discourse; (2) „reference and Ellipsis/substitution in the sense of Halliday and Hasan [we have not discussed this second point; the original text is in italics]'

> changed are the ideologies which create and sustain oppressive behavior ... In this sense, a strong and traditional distinction can be mantained between language structure and language use and 'language reform' is only of value if it applies to the latter.

Let us now look at another highly debated issue in the PC discussion: the issue of speech codes.

Speech codes

At the end of the 80s several American universities adopted speech codes [89] with the intent to punish

> any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era status.

The basis of the discussion is the First Amendment to the US Constitution which states that 'The Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech or of the press'. But, as the Supreme Court decided in 1942, this Amendment does not apply to fighting words which were defined as words 'likely to provoke the average person to retaliation, and thereby cause a breach of the peace.' [90] In the speech codes fighting words were interpreted as

> derogatory references to „race, sex, sexual orientation, or disability ... These are the kinds of words that are „inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction, whether or not they actually do." (Hentoff 1991, p.55, his emphasis)

The legislative basis of these codes was also found in the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, Section 1, which

[89] Among them the University of Michigan, University of Buffalo Law School, Brown University, the University of Connecticut, Stanford and other universities in California. The one quoted is by the University of Michigan (in: Woodward 1991, p.41).

[90] Quoted in Fish 1992, p.236.

guarantees ‘equal protection of the law’ to all its citizens. Since some members of society are more vulnerable to be offended by language use than others, it was argued, laws were to be made in order to protect the less favored. Linguistic behaviors to be punished, e.g., were those expressing lookism, judging people by their physical attractiveness; ableism, connected to their being differently abled; laughism, inappropriate responses to racist or sexist jokes (Harvey 1991, p.146).

A harsh discussion followed. The opposers’ position is probably best stated in a speech by George Bush[91] (still President of the US, then) and in a speech by Benno Schmidt, President of Yale College:

> Freedom of thought must be Yale’s central commitment. It is not easy to embrace. It is, indeed, the effort of a lifetime ... Much expression that is free may deserve our contempt. We may well be moved to exercise our own freedom to counter it or to ignore it. But universities cannot censor or suppress speech, no matter how obnoxious in content, without violating their justification for existence ...
>
> On some other campuses in this country, values of civility and community have been offered by some as paramount values of the university, even to the extent of superseding freedom of expression.
>
> Such a view is wrong in principle and, if extended, is disastrous to freedom of thought ... The chilling effects on speech of the vagueness and open-ended nature of many universities’ prohibitions ... are compounded by the fact that these codes are typically enforced by faculty and students who commonly assert that vague notions of community are more important to the academy than freedom of thought and expression.(quoted in Hentoff 1991, pp. 56-57, who is also responsible for the omissions)

This position is comparable with the one opponents of quotas have taken:

[91] An excerpt can be found in Aufderheide 1992, pp.227-228.

It is despicable that certain persons use language to offend other, socially less favored people. This is the negative aspect of the possibility to express anything freely. But: the offended part has the possibility to reply and counterattack (verbally). The possibility to say whatever one wants to say is more important than the risk of someone being offended. There is another danger: if we prescript what kinds of speech are allowed and which not, we create a 'thought' police which determines what we can say and what not. Furthermore, since the speech codes are formulated in such a vague way, anything said can result being offensive to someone. As George Orwell makes one of his characters in 1984 say:

> Don't you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it. Every concept that can ever be needed, will be expressed by exactly one word, with it's meaning rigidly defined and all its subsidiary meanings rubbed out and forgotten...Every year fewer and fewer words, and the range of consciousness always a little smaller. Even now, of course, there's no reason or excuse for committing thoughtcrime. It's merely a question of self-discipline, reality-control. But in the end there won't be any need even for that. The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect. (Orwell [1948] 1984, p.49).

The position of those favoring speech code is best expressed by Fish 1992 (who also seems to be one of its most fervent supporters) [92].

His argument starts with a discussion of Aereopagitica, in which John Milton celebrates toleration and unregulated publication. With the exception of popery and superstition which, in Milton's view, have to be extirpated. From this follows that

[92] The title of his article, 'There is no such thing as free speech and its a good thing, too' is rather suggestive.

> all affirmations of freedom of expression are like Milton's, dependent for their force on an exception that literally carves out the space in which expression can then emerge. I do not mean that expression (saying something) is a realm whose integrity is sometimes compromised by certain restrictions but that restriction, in the form of an underlying articulation of the world that necessarily (if silently) negates alternatively possible articulations, is constitutive of expression. Without restriction, without an in-built sense of what it would be meaningless to say or wrong to say, there could be no assertion and no reason for asserting it. The restriction or the exception comes first, and the expression, shaped by the exception, then follows. It is in relation to the underlying and constituting exception that speech is recognized as intolerable. Speech, in short, is never and could not be an independent value, but is always asserted against the background of some assumed conception of the good to which it must yield in the event of a conflict. (Fish 1992, p.233, his emphasis)

The notion is that freedom inside the system is only possible against the background of a limitation. It is this limitation that makes language possible and meaningful (see also the discussion on Derrida on p.67). Fish considers Schmidt's position (that limitation of language would mean limitation of thought) a failure to realize 'that expression is more than a matter of proffering and receiving propositions, that words do work in the world of a kind that cannot be confined to a purely cognitive realm of „mere" ideas' (Fish 1992, pp.240-241).

This last argument seems to be connected to what I have tried to claim throughout the thesis: that language is not simply a system of reference and predication, but a system of communication, where culture and system interact. Also, the position that this cultural-linguistic system is constrained and limited in the ways Foucault[93] and Derrida described has been discussed. Where he errs, though, is in starting from Milton's position, which can be considered as being merely an

[93] See discussion on pp. 31-32 above and Kuhn's works I referred to there.

opinion or a desire. The limitations in the system of discourse are, as he himself points out, ‘underlying, silent, inbuilt.’ For this I used the term ‘unconscious’. Speech codes, which have the aim of substituting white, male, heterosexual prejudices which are taken as the norm of judgment whether an expression is offensive (or not) - unconscious norms which have come under discussion and brought to the level of consciousness - are hardly unconscious. Rules are made to stay on a conscious level - they can always be applied and to break them means to be punished.

Unconscious norms are the inbuilt boundaries of the system. Changing them means to make them conscious first (e.g. ‘male as the bias’). Through a process of typification, habitualization and institutionalization, these changes might become unconscious, and thus (partly) constitute the new center of the system. But, as stated above, rules are hardly the way to achieve this result.

Another criticism comes from what has been termed ‘victimization’ (see e.g. Hughes 1993): through speech codes ‘hierarchies of innocence are created.’ (Boyte 1991, p.179) Fighting words were defined in terms of the ‘average person’s reaction’, which implies a standard by which offenses can be judged. As Lampert 1995 (pp.252 ff.) points out, the problem with speech codes lies in the fact that which language use might be offensive is to a large extent determined by the individual. As Hughes 1993 (p.26)[94] discusses, teachers at universities have to be attentive to ‘ever reminding themselves to use high-school women instead of high-school girls, African-Americans instead of Blacks or a hundred or more politically correct phrases’ (his emphasis). The problem lies in the fact that anything said is potentially offensive.

At the place of language as a social convention comes language as a purely subjective perception, which finally

[94] Also quoted in Lampert 1995, p.253.

leads to the impossibility to communicate[95]. At the place of multiculturalism, Lampert argues, will follow a logocentric ethnocentrism, with no common culture, and a race for reaching the place of the most oppressed in society - 'victimization', as stated above[96]. Quoting Lewis Carroll (Through the Looking-Glass, p.190):

> 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.'
> 'The question is,' said Alice,' whether you can make words mean so many different things.'
> 'the question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be the master - that's all.'

This excerpt nicely expresses the point that speech codes are the attempt to gain that (political) power that has not been achieved yet.

It should be noted that the discussion seems to have outlived most of the codes themselves; soon after it was adopted, a court ruled that the speech code of the University of Michigan was not valid. The motivation: speech that is 'offensive and unseemly' only to the individual is not to be punished because it does not represent a danger to public order. Speech codes, thus, are not compatible with the First Amendment. [97]

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[95] The central theme in David Mamet's *Oleanna*, a play which contrapposes a university teacher and a student of his; the incapability to understand one another finally leads to a dramatic final - for both parts.

[96] As Boyte 1991 (p.179) rather theatrically puts it: ' A friend of mine who teaches in a liberal college has her students line up by how they see their relation to power. They compete for the end.'

[97] See Lampert 1995, p.253.

Part three: Conclusion

My aim in this thesis was to show that language and culture are not two distinct entities. In order to do this, I critically discussed, in the first part, some of the assumption that are at the basis of an important part of the linguistic investigation in this century: the distinctions between langue and parole, i.e. (abstract) language structure and language use; the notion of linguistic structures and signs being arbitrary; the approach to linguistic relativity that considers relations between perception and decontextualized language structures (thus excluding context to a large extent) [98].

I tried to show that users of a language (interactants, or participants to a linguistic interaction) not only possess a background knowledge of grammatical structures (what Chomsky terms competence), but also the ability to use this knowledge in specific situations. This ability is not a simply a context-independent set of rules (what Hymes termed communicative competence), but highly elusive and shifting from situation to situation. I used the term ideology to describe this ability because it is based on beliefs or sets of beliefs.

I distinguished two levels (following Silverstein 1979 and 1985).

The first I termed ideology of reference, meaning that the assumption we must make as speakers is that there is a connection between what we say and the 'world out there' (the ontological assumption). To deny this assumption would mean to deny the possibility to say anything meaningful.

The second I termed ideology of performance. The meaning of what we say depends, to a large extent, on the context of use.

[98] For a critical discussion of the distinction diachrony vs synchrony see Labov 1972 and Milroy 1992.

Context that includes other interactants, the speech situation (seminar, discussion in a bar, etc.), the place, etc. Our ability to use language in other ways than only uttering propositions about the world out there, performativity (or goal-orientation) heavily depends on our ability to interpret the context.

This ability is the result of interaction with our environment; the ability to use language is thus seen as a cultural phenomenon and based on conventions. These conventions become habitualized and institutionalized (Berger&Luckmann). They become unconscious and considered to be 'objects', i.e. 'really' existing and not cultural conventions.

Moreover, we cannot speak of 'one language, one ability to use it'. Taking the single speakers as the basis of discussion and not language as an abstract system (considering the users as abstract figures) involves that beliefs depend on each single speaker's interactions with other persons and 'the world out there'. Beliefs thus depend on social variables such as social class, geography, etc., or, using a more refined model, networks of interaction (Milroy 1992 and Clark 1996). The more the social, geographical, educational, etc., background of two or more interactants coincide, the higher is the chance that 'understanding' is achieved. 'Objectively' seen, these differences do not differ in quality. Some linguistic beliefs, or ideologies are 'more equal than others' (to borrow George Orwell's brilliant expression), depending on what Bourdieu terms economic, social and symbolic capital. Thus there is a standard that is taken as the norm of reference for the other.

I tried to discuss the concepts above by applying them to the issue of Political Correctness. The process underlying the criticism of certain language forms such as Ms., herstory or African-American are cultural beliefs (cultural ideologies)

that have detected discriminations of members of society according to gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, etc. in certain language uses. These inequalities were projected onto language structure following the belief that language structures, in some way, reflect 'reality'. Thus, if language is unequal it has to be made 'equal'. Changes on the semantico-syntactic (we considered the case of generic he) and the lexico-semantic level are to be interpreted from this point of view. But, as Silverstein 1985 (and Derrida) point out, The linguistic system is inherently asymmetrical; eliminating or neutralizing all asymmetries leads to the impossibility to communicate.

This is not a pessimistic conclusion, though, because we can look at the matter differently; language-and-culture is not a static system: cultural conventions can be reinterpreted. The way to do this is to make them conscious. Political Correctness can be considered to be the way by which speakers of English (and of other languages) are made to consider that the ideals on which their society (-ies) are based, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, are not the same for every member of society depending on criteria of judgment such as gender, etc. That is, equality can not be reached by changing language only; by language change, though, certain beliefs can be brought to consciousness and , maybe, changed into something better. This means to change the Standard (since, as we have seen, hierarchies themselves cannot be eliminated).

Volosinov/Bakhtin claimed that signs are inherently ideological[99]. We might deepen this notion by saying that the relation between the sign (or the structure), its use and the world out there is determined by the beliefs of the speaker, beliefs which are unconsciously shared by a number of other speakers varying from one to all. But signs can also be

[99] See Morris 1994, also for the - apparently insoluble - question whether the writings published under the name of Volosinov and Medvedev were all by Bakhtin himself.

overtly ideological in some social networks. An American male university teacher (of whom we can almost definitely be sure that he has knowledge of the PC debate) who addresses his unmarried, female colleagues by the title Miss is overtly signaling his opposition to a gender-equal ideology.

These claims I made are strong and I am not sure that I have expressed them clearly (and much less that I have made them convincing). A problem, from the empirical point of view, is to prove them. Of course, we might compare different languages as has been done in the past. Taking gender as the object of research, we would find many different forms of differentiation. The PC discussion has had wide echoes outside the US, and attempts have been made to modify the structures of other Standard languages, some of which have been incorporated into the Standard[100]. The problem is, though: if, as I have claimed, language and culture cannot be absolutely distinguished on the level of use, and if our perception of the 'world out there' depends at least partly on culture, how are we to compare these systems? Of course, these systems are not perfectly distinguished, and a person might be able to pass from one system to another and back again, as described by Cohn 1987 (from feminist ideology to nuclear strategy ideology). But to what extent is this possible? The problem has already been addressed by Whorf ([1941, 1942] 1956): if, through our language and culture, we already have a distorted view of 'reality', how can we analyze a culture and language that has a different view of 'the world out there'? It would be a distortion of a distortion.

Culture, then, would act like the Panopticon described by Foucault 1977 (pp.195-228). The Panopticon is the model of a

[100] Evident changes on the semantico-syntactic level have been made in (written) German. See Samel 1995 for an introduction to the issue. In Italian, the changes have been mainly on the semantico-lexical level. See: Codice delle comunicazioni scritte. Published by: Ministero della Funzione Pubblica in 1995. Roma: Istituto poligrafico dello Stato.

prison or therapeutical institution[101]. The inmates live in rooms disposed in a circle; each room has two windows: one to the outside, to let light come in, and one to the inside, which makes them perfectly visible to the control tower situated in the center of the circle. It is impossible for the inmates to discern if there is a guardian present; perfectly visible, they are guarded by what for them is perfectly invisible. It is even useless to have a guardian: as time passes, this function will be internalized by the inmates on an unconscious level. In Foucault's view, discourse[102] acts like this invisible guardian.

Does culture affect us this way? Is culture a prison, an ever-changing one, but still a prison?

The answer is difficult, maybe impossible to find, just as the questions given at the beginning of part one.

I hope to have shown, at least, that an answer certainly can only be found if we consider culture-and-language as a linked concept. Cross-linguistic, from this viewpoint, does not mean (Standard) English structure vs. Hopi (e.g.); it means to study culture-and language in daily use, in specific context and to focus less on the notion of language as an abstract entity. Linguistic relativity exists below this level of inquiry, inside what is usually considered language .

[101]The original conceptis by Jeremy Bentham (*Panopticon*, first published in 1787).

[102]See discussion on p.34-35 above.

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