

## CHAPTER 10

# IDEOLOGY AND DISCOURSE

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## INTRODUCTION

IDEOLOGIES are largely acquired, spread, and reproduced by text and talk. It is therefore strange, to say the least, that both in the history of the notion as well as in the contemporary social sciences so little systematic attention has been paid to the fundamental role of discourse in the reproduction of ideology. The same is true for the important sociocognitive basis of ideologies as belief systems. This chapter therefore offers a sociocognitive and discourse analytical account of ideology and the ways ideologies are discursively used and reproduced in communicative situations and in society.

Ideologies have traditionally been studied especially in philosophy and the social sciences—despite the early proposal by Destutt de Tracy, more than 200 years ago, for a new discipline that would study ‘ideas’. Napoleon hardly liked such a philosophical-psychological discipline and Marx-Engels later further contributed to the negative image ideologies have had since then as systems of misconceived ideas. Until today, ideologies in everyday and academic discourse are typically attributed to Others, such as our ideological opponents or enemies: *We* have the truth, *They* have ideologies.

For the same reason, despite very similar functions, such as the cognitive representation of ingroup interests, ideologies are typically associated with systems of domination, and seldom with systems of dissent or resistance, called *utopias* by Mannheim (1936). Contrary to this biased conception of ideology as an instrument of domination, we propose a *general theory of ideology and its reproduction by discourse*—of which ideologies of domination, as is the case for racism, sexism, classism, or neoliberalism, are special examples. Indeed, anti-racism, feminism, socialism, pacifism, or environmentalism, among many others, are no less ideologies by our definition, but not with the function to found and legitimate domination, but precisely to provide the sociocognitive basis for the struggle against it (Van Dijk 1998).

## Critical Discourse Studies

The approach to ideology presented here may be seen as part of *Critical Discourse Studies* (CDS, often also called *Critical Discourse Analysis*, CDA), a movement of scholars in the field of *Discourse Studies* (usually also called *Discourse Analysis*) interested in the study of the ways social power abuse, such as racism and sexism, is (re)produced—and resisted—by text and talk (for introductions and other studies in CDS, see, e.g., Fowler et al. 1979; Fairclough 1995; Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard 1996; Toolan 2002; Weiss and Wodak 2003; Wodak and Chilton 2005; Van Dijk 2008b; Van Leeuwen 2008; Wodak and Meyer 2009; Machin and Mayr 2012;).

It should be emphasized though that *CDS/CDA is not a method of analysis*, as is often believed, but a social movement of scholars using a wide variety of (usually, but not exclusively, qualitative) methods of discourse analysis. These methods may include analysis of the lexicon, syntax, local and global meaning (semantics), speech acts, and other relations with the context (pragmatics), style, rhetoric, argumentation, narrative structures, or other conventional organization of discourse, on the one hand, and quantitative corpus analysis, ethnography, participant observation, or psychological experiments, among other methods, on the other hand. Unlike some other approaches to ideology in CDS, we combine a sociocognitive definition of ideology as a form of social cognition with a systematic analysis of a variety of structures of discourse that typically express underlying ideological representations (Van Dijk 1998).

One of our claims is that ideologies are largely acquired, expressed, and reproduced by discourse, and that hence a discourse analytical approach is crucial to understand the ways ideologies emerge, spread, and are used by social groups.

It should also be emphasized that this approach to ideology does not reduce the theory to a mere cognitive approach. First of all, discourses are social practices, and it is through such practices that ideologies are acquired, used, and spread. Secondly, as forms of social cognition, ideologies are inherently social, unlike personal beliefs, and shared by members of specific social groups. Hence, our approach to ideology is triangular: it relates discourse with society via a sociocognitive interface.

## IDEOLOGY AS SOCIAL COGNITION

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As suggested above, the history of the notion and the study of ideology generally ignored the cognitive nature of ideologies (but see, e.g., Malrieu 1999; Dirven et al. 2001). Rather vaguely, ideologies in philosophy and the social sciences were conceived of as ‘false consciousness’ and later as belief systems, but without an explicit psychological theory of the nature of these ideas or beliefs (Harris 1968; Thompson 1986). In fact, until recently, both cognitive and social psychology themselves rarely paid attention to ideologies, for instance in the form of complete monographs (see Jost et al.’s

chapter on \*Political Ideologies and their Social Psychological Functions[oxfordhb-9780199585977-e-024]\*). While cognitive psychology focused on knowledge, social psychology limited itself to such notions as stereotypes, prejudice, and other attitudes, often without examining their obvious ideological basis (Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Leyens et al. 1994; Nelson 2009). In other words, there is as yet no general *cognitive science* of ideology.

Yet, knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies are all forms of *social cognition*, that is, mental representations shared by, and distributed over, the members of social collectivities (Fraser and Gaskell 1990; Hamilton 2005; Augoustinos et al. 2006; Fiske and Taylor 2007; ). In the same way as there are no private or personal languages, there are no personal ideologies. And like natural languages, ideologies are forms of social cognition that are *used* by individuals. In other words, ideologies are first of all *socially shared belief systems*. They should be theoretically distinguished from the many ways these systems can be expressed, used, or implemented by individual people, as members, in discourse and other social practices.

Early on in the history of the notion and the theory of ideology a distinction was usually made between (true) *knowledge* and (false) *ideology*. Since both are a form of social cognition, we also need to distinguish between these notions, but not along the dimension of their truth value. We conceive of knowledge as socially shared beliefs that are justified within *epistemic communities*, and on the basis of special *knowledge criteria*, such as reliable observation, sources, or inference. Within such communities, knowledge consists of shared beliefs that are taken for granted, and hence typically presupposed in public discourse. Such knowledge is the basis of all other beliefs in society (Van Dijk 2012).

Ideologies, on the other hand, are belief systems that are only *shared by specific (ideological) groups of people*, and are typically *not* shared and taken for granted by the whole sociocultural community. In other words, they embody beliefs about which there are differences of opinion, and that hence are typically persuasively attacked and defended among members of different ideological groups. Thus, whereas ideologies may be beliefs that are taken for granted and presupposed within the own group, they are not so across groups and in society as a whole. This implies, as it should, that as soon as ideological beliefs are accepted and taken for granted by all members of a community, by definition they are no longer ideologies but will count as knowledge *in that community*. Conversely, and for the same reason, what once counted as generally accepted belief, and hence as knowledge, may later be challenged by special groups of people and thus come to be seen and used as an ideology, as is typically the case of religion.

Besides these social differences between the functions of knowledge and ideologies, there are also more sociocognitive ones. Whereas knowledge as socially shared belief systems is usually seen as ‘true’ belief, that is, as belief about ‘facts’, most ideologies feature beliefs that are based on norms and values. These general (community based) norms and values may be applied in different ways by members of different groups, depending on their goals and interests. Hence ideological beliefs do not have the same consensus nature as knowledge. For instance, the very general value of freedom may

variously be interpreted as freedom of the market, freedom of expression, or freedom from oppression, depending on the ideology and the interests of ideological groups. Hence the general consequence that ideological differences become manifest in ideological struggle.

## The Structure of Ideologies

Another topic neglected in traditional ideology studies is their very structure. Thus, we may discuss ideologies of liberalism, socialism, or pacifism, among many others, but it is obviously crucial that their analysis requires an explicit description of their 'contents' and their internal organization. As yet, we have no general theory of this cognitive organization of ideologies. However, their social functions as representations of the goals and interests of social groups, as well as the analysis of ideological discourse, offers some suggestions for what may be called an *ideology schema* that organizes the beliefs of an ideology. Such a schema may be seen as composed of the following fundamental categories (Van Dijk 1998):

- **Identity:** Who are we? Who belongs to us? Who is a member and who can join?
- **Activities:** What do we (have to) do? What is our role in society?
- **Goals:** What is the goal of our activities?
- **Norms and values:** What are the norms of our activities? What is good or bad for us?
- **Group relations:** Who are our friends and our enemies?
- **Resources:** What material or symbolic resources form the basis of our (lack of) power and our position in society?

This very general schema organizes the fundamental beliefs of an ideological group and hence may also be seen as the structure of the overall self-image of the group as well as its relations to other groups. Generally—though not always—such a self-image of the ideological ingroup is positive, whereas that of outgroups is negative. Hence the typical polarized structure of ideologies as organized representations as *Us* versus *Them*. This polarized nature of ideologies is obviously more prominent for ideologies where the goals and interests of social groups are at stake, as is the case for neoliberal versus socialist, or between sexist and feminist ideologies, and possibly less so for ideologies that are less polarized, as is the case for ideologies shared by groups of professionals (such as professors or journalists).

## Ideologies and Attitudes

The social and political functions of ideologies require these to be rather general and abstract. Thus, a feminist ideology needs to be applicable to any issue related to the

position of women in society, such as their role as citizens, workers, mothers, and so on. Hence, a feminist ideology must consist of fundamental, value-based beliefs about gender equality and human rights. It therefore makes sense to further distinguish between general ideologies, on the one hand, and socially shared *ideological attitudes*, on the other hand. The latter feature more specific beliefs about socially relevant issues in specific domains, as is the case for attitudes about abortion, divorce, or glass ceilings in hiring. In everyday life, ideologies tend to be experienced and applied at this more specific level of ideologically based attitudes. It may be a matter of theoretical dispute to include ideological attitudes as part of an ideology, or rather as separate attitudes influenced and organized by an underlying ideology. In the first case, the ideology is constantly changing, depending on social, political, or technological developments, whereas in the latter case the ideology is more stable, but with flexible application in variable social issues. It may be assumed that specific social attitudes (e.g. about abortion or capital punishment) are acquired by members before they are related to other attitudes and abstracted from in terms of a more general and abstract ideology.

## Ideologies and Mental Models

We have seen that ideologies are assumed to be shared by members of groups. This also enables ideologies to be used and applied in the social practices in the everyday lives of these members. This means that the general beliefs of ideologies and the social attitudes based on them need to be made specific for the individual circumstances, characteristics, and experiences of individual members. That is, social cognition should be related to personal cognition, including personally variable opinions about social issues and social practices (such as, for instance, abortion, divorce, euthanasia, or immigration). Such personal cognitions are specified in *mental models* that represent personal experiences in episodic memory (Tulving 1983; Baddeley et al. 2002), influenced not only by general ideologies and attitudes but also by earlier personal experiences (old models) of each group member (for the theory of mental models, see e.g. Gentner and Stevens 1983; Johnson-Laird 1983; Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983; Oakhill and Garnham 1996).

Thus, each member of an ideological group may be a socialist, feminist, or pacifist in her or his own way—as we also see in the variable ideologically based discourses and social practices in empirical research. Since, moreover, individual people may be members of various ideological groups, their experiences (mental models) may feature—sometimes contradictory—personal opinions and other beliefs as influenced by different ideologies: One may be a feminist, socialist ecologist—even when in specific social situations one or more of these ideologies will be more relevant, and hence more influential, than the others.

Ideologically based mental models are absolutely crucial to link ideologies with the social practices of group members. They are the interface between the social and the personal, between the group and its members, and between the system and its manifestations. In other words, all ideological practices of group members are based on specific

mental models that feature a subjective representation of events or actions observed or participated in.

For the same reason, all ideological discourse—engaged in by people *as group members*—is based on unique mental models. This accounts for the fundamental fact that on the one hand everyday practices can be planned and recognized as practices of a member of a group, and hence as ideological, whereas on the other hand they may still have the unique personal properties as influenced by people's personal history and social circumstances. It is this personal nature of the *use* of ideologies that has also been the object of research of ideology in contemporary psychology (Jost 2006; Jost et al. 2009). As it is theoretically important to distinguish between language as a socially shared system on the one hand, and the personal, contextually situated uses of language on the other hand, one should not confuse group ideologies with their personal acquisition and uses, as the latter are also influenced by personal biography, personality, and current context.

In sum, an adequate theory of ideology should account not only for overall, group-based social practices or systems of interpretation of social events, but also for the ways individual members may participate in, and hence reproduce ideologies in their everyday lives.

This distinction between ideology as system and its personal uses offers a very crucial condition for (usually slow) *changes of ideologies* when (initially small) subgroups of people develop new ideological ideas as variants or deviations from a prevalent ideology.

Concluding, we see that the underlying, sociocognitive system of ideologies consists of at least three layers: the general ideology itself, a set of variable ideological attitudes, also shared by social groups, and finally personally variable mental models representing individual experiences at the basis of personal discourse and other practices.

## DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

The sociocognitive system explained above not only provides a partial theory of ideology but also an explicit basis for the theory of the production and comprehension of discourse as well as other social practices. That is, talk and text are produced and understood, first of all, in terms of mental models that account for the subjective, personal nature of discourse and action. To plan or to understand a discourse or any other act is to construe a mental model. To do so as a member of a community or a social group, these mental models feature specific instantiations of socially shared beliefs such as knowledge and ideologies, respectively.

Ideological discourse usually exhibits the polarized structures of underlying attitudes and ideologies, that is, a structure that typically emphasizes positive properties of Us, the ingroup, and negative properties of Them, the outgroup. Such polarization may affect all levels of discourse, from the surface levels of sounds and visual structures, syntax, and the lexicon, on the one hand, to the underlying semantic and pragmatic levels of meaning and action, as well as the dimensions that cut through different levels, as is the

case for the rhetoric of sound (e.g. alliterations) and meaning (as in hyperboles, euphemisms, or metaphors), on the other hand. We shall illustrate and further develop this theory of ideological discourse in the rest of this chapter.

## Context Models

In order to account for ideological discourse, however, we first need another crucial level of cognition, namely the subjective representation of the communicative situation. Language users, and in general social actors, not only construe a subjective mental model of events they think or talk about, but also of the very actions and environment in which they are currently engaged. That is, they also need to construe subjective *context models*. The context models also consist of a spatiotemporal setting, a representation of the current identity and role of the participants as well as the relations between them, the current social action and its goals, as well as the knowledge and ideology of the participants (Van Dijk 2008a, 2009).

These context models are crucial to account for the socially *appropriate* production of discourse and interaction. Thus, an editorial in the newspaper may not only exhibit the ideology of the newspaper, but also needs to be appropriate as an editorial, as different from a news story, a letter to the editor or an advertisement, or a political speech.

For the account of ideological discourse, context models are especially relevant to explain how ideological discourse is adapted to the communicative situation. For instance, a feminist typically adapts her (or his) discourse to the current communicative situation, featuring her current identity or role, those of the recipients, the goal of current text and talk and especially the ideology of the recipient. Not quite trivially, this explains that a feminist does not always talk or write as feminist, and if so such discourse will be adapted to the audience.

This context dependence also explains, quite fundamentally, that the same discourse or discourse property may be intended or understood as racist (or sexist) in one communicative situation and not in another, as we know from jokes about blacks and the use of the N-word by black youth themselves and when used by white speakers. In other words, very few discourse properties are racist by themselves. They are always more or less racist as used in concrete communicative situations, featuring, for instance, the racist beliefs of the speaker (Van Dijk 1984, 1987, 1991, 1993).

This account of racist discourse also suggests that in general it makes sense not to speak of racist people but rather of racist (or anti-racist) practices. Racism as a system of domination is defined for groups who share racist beliefs. However, such beliefs are not continuously expressed in all discourse and other social practices of group members, but only in specific contexts. Hence, it is contextualized text, talk, and action that is at the basis of the daily reproduction of racism, as well as other ideologies.

As is the case for all mental models, context models as well may themselves be ideological. For instance, journalists may write a sexist or racist story *about* women or black

people, but also directly interact with women or black people in a sexist or racist way. In that case, they have a representation of their recipients that is based on a sexist or racist ideology, for instance feeling themselves somehow superior to their interlocutors. That may show not only in explicit derogatory terms, but also in quite subtle variations of tone of voice, intonation, volume, gestures, gaze, and other aspects of body language on the one hand, or subtle semantic implications on the other hand.

We now have the outline of a general theory of ideological discourse consisting of a sociocognitive basis of ideologies as socially shared belief systems, more specific ideological attitudes and personal mental models, on the one hand, and of socially situated ideological discourse and other social practices on the other hand. In other treatments of ideology, the social, political, and institutional aspects of the contexts of ideological discourse are made explicit, such as the acquisition and use of ideologies in parliament and by political parties, by journalists, and the mass media or by teachers and professors in textbooks and schools, among many other ideological practices and their social sites. Such broader, macro-sociological and political accounts of ideology can now be related to the details of discourse and other social practices at the micro-level, as well as to the sociocognitive nature of ideology of belief systems of groups and their individual applications in the mental models of individual group members. We thus account for the general, aggregate nature of ideological systems and the role of ideological groups in society, as well as of the way such systems are actually expressed, used, and reproduced by their members in concrete situated practices.

## Ideological Discourse Semantics

Within the theoretical framework outlined above, we are now able to provide a more explicit and detailed account of ideological discourse. We shall do so first with an analysis of underlying ideological meanings, and then proceed to the way such ideological meanings may be further expressed or signalled by the various kinds of surface structures of multimodal discourse. Our examples will be taken from a debate on asylum seekers in the UK House of Commons of 5 March 1997. Very similar debates have taken place since. The debate is initiated by Member of Parliament (MP) for the Conservative Party, Mrs Teresa Gorman, representative of Billericay, who argues against the abolition of the current immigration law, as proposed by Labour Party MPs.

*Topics.* As is the case for many phenomena, discourse may be analysed at a more global and a more local level. The same is true for discourse meaning. Thus we distinguish between (local) meanings of words, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs, on the one hand, and overall, global meanings of whole discourses, on the other hand. The latter are described in terms of *macro-propositions*, which may be seen as overall conceptual summaries of (larger parts) of a discourse, and are commonly described as (discourse) *topics* (van Dijk 1980). These topics are typically expressed in headlines, abstracts, and



summaries. A text may have several, hierarchical levels of such macro-propositions. This overall macro-structure also defines the *global coherence* of discourse. In other words, for a discourse to be globally coherent, local propositions always need to be related to a higher level topic.

The choice of topics of discourse may be biased by underlying attitudes and ideologies. Thus, in the usual polarized structure of ideological discourse, we may expect largely negative topics about Them, and neutral or positive topics about Us. To wit, the coverage of immigration and minorities in the mass media focuses on such topics as ‘Immigration is a threat’, ‘Integration of ethnic others is a huge problem’, ‘They are criminals’, etc. Meantime, ingroup members and institutions are globally represented as tolerant and as helping immigrants (or third world countries, etc.). Conversely, negative topics about Us (such as our racism and prejudice) are typically mitigated or ignored, and hence seldom reach (important) topic status. The same is true for positive information about Them, such as the contributions of immigrants or minorities to the national economy or culture. Thus, in her speech Mrs Gorman develops at length the topic that asylum seekers are abusing the British welfare system. Complementary to this topics, British taxpayers are represented as victims of such asylum seekers.

*Propositions.* Traditionally, meanings are represented as propositions, consisting of a predicate, some arguments, and modalities such as ‘It is necessary that...’. First of all, in ideological discourse, as we also have seen for topics (macro-propositions), negative meanings about outgroups may be emphasized, and such will also be obvious in the predicates of local propositions, for instance as follows in Mrs Gorman’s speech:

- (1) The Daily Mail today reports the case of a woman from Russia who has managed to stay in Britain for five years. According to the magistrates’ court yesterday, she has cost the British taxpayer £40 000. She was arrested, of course, for stealing. I do not know how people who are not bona fide asylum seekers and whose applications have been rejected time and again manage to remain in this country for so long at the expense of the British public, but the system clearly needs tightening up.<sup>1</sup>

We see in this example an accumulation of negative predicates and their negative implications and implicatures, such as ‘managed to stay in Britain for five years’, ‘she has cost...’, ‘stealing’, ‘not bonafide’, and ‘at the expense of’. These local predicates overall construe the predicates of ‘abuse’ and ‘criminal’ at the global level of topics—which is usually best remembered by the recipients.

*Modalities.* Propositions may be modalized in many ways. Facts may be presented as possible, probable, or necessary; as obligatory or permitted; as desired or hoped for; and so on. Obviously such epistemic, deontic, or other modalities may also be controlled by underlying attitudes and ideologies. Indeed, what Mrs Gorman does in her speech is extensively telling the MPs what in her view the government should (not) do, asylum seekers should (not) do, etc. In example (1) we see this in the last sentence: *The system clearly needs cleaning up*. See also the evaluative modalities ‘It is wrong that’ and ‘should

bear' in the following example, which also presuppose underlying ideological attitudes, not only about refugees, but also about paying taxes.

- (2) It is wrong that ratepayers in the London area should bear an undue proportion of the burden of expenditure that those people are causing.

*Local coherence.* At the semantic level of meaning, text and talk consist of sequences of propositions that also need to be locally coherent, from one to the next. Such coherence may be *referential* (when the facts referred to are related, for instance by a relation of cause and consequence) or *functional* (when one proposition has a special function with respect to another one, as is the case for a Generalization, Specification, Explanation, or Example). Referential coherence depends on the (subjective) mental model language users have of an event, and we have seen that these models may have an ideological basis. Thus, people of one group may see some event as a cause when others do not see a cause at all, or maybe even see just a consequence. In her speech, Mrs Gorman argues at length that the immigration of refugees causes taxpayers to pay more taxes—whereas her opponents may well argue that because many refugees do have work and do pay taxes, British taxpayers might well be paying less taxes as a result of immigration, or may have all kinds of menial jobs done by 'cheap' immigrant workers. This is how Mrs Gorman starts her speech, namely with a 'thematic' local proposition that may also function as a macro-proposition summarizing her speech:

- (3) I want to bring to the attention of the House the particular difficulties faced by the London boroughs because of the problems of asylum seekers.

See also her argument in the following passages:

- (4) I understand that many people want to come to Britain to work, but there is a procedure whereby people can legitimately become part of our community. People who come as economic migrants are sidestepping that. The Government, with cross-party backing, decided to do something about the matter. The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 stated that people whose application to remain in Britain had been turned down could no longer receive the social security and housing benefit that they had previously enjoyed. That is estimated to have cut the number of bogus asylum seekers by about a half. It is a great worry to me and many others that the Opposition spokesman for home affairs seems to want to scrap the legislation and return to the previous situation. I would consider that extremely irresponsible. It would open the floodgates again, and presumably the £200 million a year cost that was estimated when the legislation was introduced would again become part of the charge on the British taxpayer.

This passage is locally coherent because of the following relationships between the propositions expressed in its respective sentences. First of all, it is asserted as a fact

that ‘economic migrants’ are sidestepping the procedure and that *as a consequence* the (Conservative) Government enacted the Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996. Then, Mrs Gorman states that the number of ‘bogus refugees’ has been cut by about half *as a consequence* of that law. And finally she claims that the abolition of this law will have the opposed *consequence* of ‘opening the floodgates’ again, with dire *consequences* for British taxpayers. This causal sequence of events and actions is obviously only coherent with respect to Mrs Gorman’s current ideological mental model of the immigration situation in the UK, in which refugees are only represented as ‘bogus refugees’ who are abusing the system, as a burden for taxpayers, and so on. Alternative policies, as proposed by Labour (in that case), are not being considered. In other words, the coherence of discourse is closely related to the ideologically based view speakers have of political issues.

*Implications and presuppositions.* Discourses are essentially incomplete. Because of the presupposed shared sociocultural knowledge (Common Ground) of the participants, speakers may imply or presuppose—and hence leave implicit—propositions that can be supplied by the recipients—namely by inference from their socially shared sociocultural knowledge. The same is true for implicit information based on, and hence derived from underlying attitudes and ideologies. Indeed, much ideological discourse is largely implicit. Mrs Gorman is sometimes quite explicit about ‘bogus’ refugees and their alleged crimes. But in many other fragments her negative propositions about immigrants are only implicit—and hence her racism or xenophobia deniable. See for instance the following:

- (5) There are, of course, asylum seekers and asylum seekers. I entirely support the policy of the Government to help genuine asylum seekers, but to discourage the growing number of people from abroad who come to Britain on holiday, as students or in some other capacity and, when the time comes for them to leave, declare themselves to be in need of asylum.

Besides the obvious negative implications of this and many other passages, there is also a presupposition—that is, a proposition assumed to be true by the speaker and possibly to be shared by the audience. Such presuppositions are often handy ideological moves to indirectly state something that may not be true at all. Thus, in this example, Mrs Gorman presupposes that the Conservative Government actually helps genuine asylum seekers, a statement that others may well doubt.

*Actor descriptions.* People can be described or identified in many ways, for instance by their first or last name, as individual persons or as members of groups or categories, as well as with many possibly explicit or implicit attributes. In ideological discourse in which ingroup and outgroups are quite explicit, outgroups are typically identified and described in negative ways, as we already have seen in Mrs Gorman’s characterization of asylum seekers. Here is a selection of her negative, ideologically based characterizations of this group of immigrants:

- Asylum seekers (genuine versus bogus)
- People from abroad who come to Britain on holiday
- Economic migrants

- Benefit seekers on holiday
- Those people
- Not bone fide asylum seekers

Note that the negative meaning in some expressions may only be implicit, as is the use of the demonstrative in the distancing expression *those people*. Note that on the other hand, British taxpayers, especially in Westminster, London, which she here represents, are described as victims of bogus asylum seekers, as follows:

- (6) The truth is that, out of 100 000 households in Westminster, only 1500 are in Mayfair and only 3000 are in Belgravia. Many of those people live in old-style housing association Peabody flats. They are on modest incomes. Many of them are elderly, managing on their state pension and perhaps also a little pension from their work. They pay their full rent and for all their own expenses. Now they are going to be asked to pay £35 to able-bodied males who have come over here on a prolonged holiday and now claim that the British taxpayer should support them.

*Level and granularity of event and action descriptions.* As we have seen for the distinction between macro-structures and micro-structures of discourse, events and actions can be described at various levels of generality and specificity. Thus, Mrs Gorman may initially speak in very general terms of ‘the particular difficulties faced by the London boroughs because of the problems of asylum seekers’, but later in her speech she goes into many specific financial details. Similarly, at each level of description, a speaker may give many or few component descriptions or actions or events. Again, in ideological discourse, such variation may well be biased against the Others. Thus, what we typically find is that the negative actions or attributes of the Others are described not only in general, global terms (as topics) but also at very specific levels of description, and often in more detail, that is, with greater granularity—as a semantic-rhetorical means of emphasis. Our own negative actions, if described at all, will only be described at very general or abstract levels, and not in great detail. Here is another example of a relatively detailed description of an individual within a parliamentary speech that is normally expected to refer to groups or categories of people:

- (7) In one case, a man from Romania, who came over here on a coach tour for a football match—if the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms. Cunningham) would listen she would hear practical examples—decided that he did not want to go back, declared himself an asylum seeker and is still here four years later. He has never done a stroke of work in his life. Why should someone who is elderly and who is scraping along on their basic income have to support people in those circumstances?

Notice again that in addition to the detail of negative action and personal description of an outgroup member, such a description is rhetorically enhanced by opposition to an emotional ‘scraping along on their basic income’ of the elderly of our ingroup. Besides level and amount of detail, the same effect may be obtained by using more or less vague or precise

concepts to describe people. Thus, one may concretely describe someone as a ‘bogus asylum seeker’, but also as an ‘asylum seeker’ or as ‘people from abroad’, etc.

*Disclaimers.* Ideological talk in general, and racist discourse in particular, is replete with various types of disclaimers. Derogation of outgroups today is often seen as a violation of a norm or even a law, and hence may need to be hedged or otherwise mitigated. Classic examples are such disclaimers such as ‘I have nothing against blacks (immigrants, etc.), but...’ Such disclaimers have a first part emphasizing a positive characteristic of the speaker or the ingroup, and a second, contrasted part, typically introduced by *but*, in which the speaker says something negative about the outgroup. One of the functions of the first part is not only a form of positive self-description, but also to make sure that the second part is not interpreted as being racist or sexist, that is in order to *avoid* a bad impression. This specific form of ideological impression management in discourse is interesting because it shows that discourse is also organized by underlying norms, as well as by the possibly ambiguous attitudes and ideologies of dominant group members. On the one hand, they know and show they should not say negative things about Others, but at the same time they feel that the Others also have some negative attributes. In our view, such ambiguity is real when a discourse more or less evenly says positive and negative things about the Others. If the positive thing is limited to the initial denial of racism or the affirmation of tolerance, and the rest of the discourse is negative, then I interpret such a disclaimer only as a form of positive self-presentation and as an introduction of racist (or sexist) talk. Mrs Gorman uses such a disclaimer at the beginning of her speech, thus presenting herself (and her party and government) as humane and not against genuine asylum seekers.

- (8) I entirely support the policy of the Government to help genuine asylum seekers, but to discourage the growing number of people from abroad who come to Britain on holiday, as students or in some other capacity and, when the time comes for them to leave, declare themselves to be in need of asylum.

*Metaphor.* Conceptual metaphors are also powerful semantic means to bias text and talk ideologically (Lakoff 1987, 1996, 2002). Although deeply embedded in culture and the basis of multimodally based cognition, metaphors relate abstract notions to concrete experiences of people. In such cases, negative or positive feelings and opinions may be emphasized. For instance, the classic example of media discourse on immigration is in terms of *waves* of people, that is, as threatening amounts of water, in which one may drown—a sensation that has important emotional consequences and hence may seriously influence understanding, recall and general ideological learning from discourse. Not surprisingly, Mrs Gorman uses the same threatening metaphor to describe the immigration of asylum seekers:

- (9) It would open the floodgates again.. .

Concluding this section on the semantics of discourse, we see that both globally and locally meaning may be organized in many ways that are favourable for Us, and unfavourable for Them.

We have seen that text and talk are controlled by the context models of the participants, and hence the meanings being expressed (and how they are being expressed) are found to be appropriate in the current communicative situation, as is the case of the debate in the UK House of Commons. For the same reason, we may not simply assume a direct relationship between discourse structures and underlying attitudes and ideologies—especially not when these are obfuscated, for example by apparent ‘tolerance talk’, disclaimers, denials, and so on. However, when we notice that a discourse at all levels matches the polarized structure of underlying ideological attitudes or mental models, as is the case in Mrs Gorman’s speech, we may safely assume that such discourse indeed expresses such underlying ideological representations. Probably, in a less public and controlled communicative situation, the same speaker would be even more explicitly negative, where some of her expressions are still toning down her opinions.

We have particularly focused on the ideological semantics of discourse because these ‘contents’ have most direct impact on the mental models and the attitudes of the recipients. Propositions and especially macro-propositions are best recalled and directly used to build interpretations in terms of mental models. Other (e.g. formal) properties of discourse in that sense always only have an indirect influence via discourse meaning, for example by emphasizing or mitigating such meanings—as is typically the case for rhetoric.

## FORMAL STRUCTURES OF DISCOURSE

The meanings analysed above are expressed in many ways, such as sentences, clauses, phrases, words, sounds, visuals, gestures, and so on, as they are traditionally studied in grammar and today increasingly also in the social semiotics of multimodal discourse (Van Leeuwen 2005, 2008). Interestingly, the same or similar meanings may be expressed in many different ways, and this *variation* may have many interactional, communicative, and other social functions, as we know from stylistics, rhetoric, and sociolinguistics. Generally speaking, such variation depends on the *context*, or rather on the way the participants interpret or construe relevant parameters of the communication situation in what we called *context models*, that is, definitions of the communicative situation.

Since ideologies may be relevant properties of participants, these may be among the contextual conditions that influence the variation of discourse—not only its meanings or contents but also its variable expressions. In other words: Someone on the Left will often speak or write in a different way on social issues than someone on the Right, as might a feminist talk in a different way about women than an anti-feminist. Let us examine some of the ideologically based variants of discourse expressions, again using the parliamentary debate as example. Unfortunately, these data do not allow an analysis of the sound structures (such as intonation, volume, stress, etc.) of the MPs, nor an analysis of their gestures and other aspects of body language, but a complete ideological discourse analysis would most certainly also need to take these into account.

The analysis of variation expression in discourse usually presupposes, as we have just done, that something, such as meaning, remains the same. This is not quite correct, of course, precisely because a different expression usually also expresses, conveys, or implies at least a slightly different meaning or contextual function. This is, for instance, the case for such classical ideological lexical variants as *terrorist* versus *freedom fighter*. Obviously, these are not synonyms, and hence convey different meanings, also outside of context, but these expressions may be used to refer to the same people, and hence are at least *referentially equivalent*. The difference in that case, apart from a semantic one, is also contextual, namely the ideology or attitude of the speaker or writer. As we shall see, the same may be true for syntactic variation.

## Lexicon

The first and most obvious level of the expression of underlying discourse meaning is of course that of the lexicon: What words are being used to formulate this ‘same’ meaning or—as we just saw—to refer to the same things? Much traditional ideological discourse analysis barely went beyond such an analysis of words, even of words without their immediate co-texts, as is still the case in many quantitative approaches, such as content analysis or corpus studies. Apart from the semantics of discourse examined above, no doubt lexical variation is a very obvious and explicit way of expressing ideologically based opinions, and hence group-based attitudes and ideologies.

In Mrs Gorman’s speech, we find, as expected, many lexical variants to refer to the same people, as we have already seen: *refugees*, *asylum seekers*, *bogus asylum seekers*, *those people*, etc. As may be expected in such debate, a frequency count of all words of the whole debate has the pronoun *I* as the most frequent content word (appearing 144 times), followed by *asylum* (132), *people* (116), *seekers* (65), *government* (57), *country* (49), *London* and *Westminster* (both 42). Ideologically interesting are the uses of *genuine* (21), presupposing an ideologically based difference between genuine and non-genuine asylum seekers, and the frequent uses of *burden* (10), *benefits* (15), *million* and *cost(s)* (31), implicating that asylum-seekers are primarily being discussed in terms of what they ‘cost’ the country. Quite typical, as suggested before, is the use of *bogus* (9), *fraud* (6), *illegal* (6), *exploit* (6), *abuse* (5), and even *parasites* (1).

*Asylum seekers* (65) is the term obviously preferred over *refugee(s)* (15), not only because of their different status, but also because the word *refugee* is more closely associated with political refugees, whereas the use of the expression *asylum seeker* in the UK has become associated with economic refugees and false applications. Interestingly, it is the Labour opposition MP (Jeremy Corbyn) who particularly uses the notion of *refugee* in this case, which also suggests an ideologically based difference in the uses of this term. The term is often preceded by the word *genuine*, and refers to refugees in the world, and not only those applying for refugee status in the UK, for example in the following by Mr Corbyn: ‘The real burden of the world’s refugee crisis falls not on Western Europe...’

The strongly ideologically based term *bogus* is only used in combination with words such as *applicants*, *application*, *claim*, and *asylum seeker*.

It should be emphasized that although a quantitative lexical analysis may yield suggestions for a more detailed, qualitative analysis, such an analysis might overlook passages such as the following which have no or few significant ideological words, but which as a whole are very strongly negative, while attributing very negative properties to asylum seekers:

- (10) The National Assistance Act says that the assistance given to these people must be provided in kind, which means that Westminster city council has to use its meals on wheels service to take food to them, wherever they are placed, whether in the centre of London or in outer boroughs. In addition to the breakfast that comes with the bed-and-breakfast accommodation, they have to be given a packed lunch, presumably in case they decide to go shopping in the middle of the day or to do a bit of work on the black economy—who knows? They also have to be provided with an evening meal and snacks to keep them through the day because the assumption is that they have no money—they have declared themselves destitute.

In other words, ideological discourse analysis should not be limited to the lexicon, and examine words in their co-text, and whole clauses, sentences, and paragraphs and the local and global propositions they express. Examples such as (10) are the prototypical expression of stereotypical mental models prejudiced people have about asylum seekers. When formulated in parliament by MPs, such passages and their underlying models and attitudes are even more influential than when used by ordinary citizens in everyday conversations.

## Syntax

Although seemingly only a formal structure without any direct meaning, sentence syntax might seem a strange place to look for the expression of underlying ideological meanings or reference. Yet in the last decades many studies have shown that the syntactic form of sentences may well contribute to interesting aspects of the management of ideology in text and talk (Fowler et al. 1979; Hodge and Kress 1993). Syntax is about the order and other structures of constituents (such as words, phrases, etc.). Thus, word order may reflect such meaningful aspects of what is known and unknown, now in focus or not, and so on. In English, for instance, the canonical word order places words referring to known entities in beginning (topical) positions, and new information in later (focus) positions of the clause. Words expressing information that is now being focused on may come first, but in that case need to have extra stress. We have seen that ideological discourse structures in general are about emphasizing Our good things and Their



bad things, and this emphasis may also be implemented at the sentence level with such syntactic structures as word order or topic–focus articulation.

Most studied is the ideological use of passive sentences and nominalizations, which allow that agents are left implicit or placed in last position, for instance in order to mitigate their role in negative actions. The classic example is the difference between such headlines as *Police killed demonstrator*, *Demonstrator killed by police*, and *Demonstrator killed*, where the agent of the action of killing, the police, progressively receives less emphasis. Obviously, passive sentences may be used to express many functions, for instance when agents are unknown, have been mentioned already, or are less relevant. Yet, earlier studies have shown that ideological uses are quite common in discourse that mitigates the negative actions of ingroup members or its institutions, whereas such is not the case for outgroup members (such as black youths), whose active role is usually not mitigated but emphasized. Here are some examples from the speech of Mrs Gorman:

- (11) She was arrested, of course, for stealing.
- (12) people whose application to remain in Britain had been turned down
- (13) presumably the £200 million a year cost that was estimated
- (14) whose applications have been rejected time and again
- (15) the assistance given to these people must be provided in kind
- (16) in case they decide to go shopping in the middle of the day or to do a bit of work on the black economy
- (17) when the time comes for them to leave, declare themselves to be in need of asylum
- (18) People who come as economic migrants are sidestepping that.
- (19) I am sure that many of them are working illegally
- (20) Goodness knows how much it costs for the legal aid that those people invoke to keep challenging the decision that they are not bona fide asylum seekers.
- (21) a woman from Russia who has managed to stay in Britain for five years
- (22) In one case, a man from Romania, who came over here on a coach tour for a football match—if the hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham) would listen she would hear practical examples—decided that he did not want to go back, declared himself an asylum seeker and is still here four years later. He has never done a stroke of work in his life.
- (23) Such people should not be exploited by people who are exploiting the system.

These and many other examples first show that when asylum seekers are being mentioned, this typically happens as agents of negative actions, and that the syntax does not mitigate that role: they are referred to by expressions that are grammatical subjects in first positions of clauses and sentences. Sometimes, as in example (11), they are semantically ‘patients’ of the actions of others, but even then they are subjects and in first position—in which case the police remain implicit. Example (22) tells a mini story entirely framed in this active way, emphasizing the negative attributes of the asylum seeker.

These examples also show that many of the actions of the government or the state agencies that might be criticized are expressed in passive sentences: *have been turned down, have been rejected, etc.*

Example (23) is especially interesting because it has the two forms in one sentence: the passive form is used to refer to old people, thus emphasizing their role as victims, and the active form to asylum seekers.

The ideological management of syntax is not limited to active and passive sentences, but may also show in the use of nominalizations, which typically leave implicit or hide the agents of actions (see the debate on the assumed ideological aspects of nominalization initiated by Billig 2008). Classic examples are, for instance, nominalized verbs such as *discrimination*, without being explicit about who discriminates against whom. One of the typical effects of such nominalizations is that instead of specific actions, the expression seems to refer to a natural phenomenon, as something that simply *occurs*. Instead of referring to an action, there seems to be reference to a ‘thing’ (hence the use of the notion of ‘grammatical metaphor’ to refer to nominalizations that change the domain of reference). In this way, many social problems are being obfuscated by nominalized expressions, leaving responsible agents outside of explicit focus. Of course, as is the case for active–passive sentences, nominalizations may have a further ‘normal’ syntactic-semantic function when referring to actions of processes of which agents are unknown, irrelevant, or already mentioned. See the following examples:

- (24) people whose *application* to remain in Britain had been turned down
- (25) Goodness knows how much it costs for the legal aid that those people invoke to keep challenging the *decision* that they are not bona fide asylum seekers.
- (26) They also have to be provided with an evening meal and snacks to keep them through the day because the *assumption* is that they have no money—they have declared themselves destitute.

As is the case for passive sentences, the nominalizations also appear to be used to denote actions of the government or the authorities, and when repeating an action already mentioned before, as in example (24). Interestingly, the spokesman for the Labour Opposition, Mr Corbyn, also uses nominalizations to denote the actions of the government or its agencies, but in this case the actions of foreign governments, for instance when referring to oppression and persecution.

## Other Formal Structures

Whereas syntax has often been studied as the grammatical core of language and ideological language use, there are many other formal ways or formats that may be used to express, mitigate, or emphasize underlying meanings or convey other communicative functions. We already have seen that word order plays a special role in the management

of information and focus in sentences. More generally in discourse, order also applies to the whole text or talk, by mentioning information or topic first or last, high or low in the discourse.

Thus, many discourse genres have an *importance or relevance order*, in which more important or relevant information typically appears first, for instance in headlines, titles, leads, abstracts, and summaries that express macro-propositions (main topics). The same is true for the *foregrounding* and *backgrounding* of information, which again may be done by discourse order, but also by special letter type (as in headlines), pictures, gestures, and so on. Again, the ideological function of order and salience would typically be the emphasis on Our good things and Their bad things, and the mitigation of Our bad things and Their good things. It is also for this reason that Mrs Gorman begins her speech with a thematic sentence that not only expresses the main topic of her speech, but at the same time serves to foreground and emphasize the problems of (read: caused by) asylum seekers:

- (27) I want to bring to the attention of the House the particular difficulties faced by the London boroughs because of the problems of asylum seekers.

Formal discourse structures may organize the *conventional formats* of genres or types of text and talk, such as those of *argumentation* and *narration*. Note though that in the same way as sentence syntax such conventional structures apply to *all* discourses of the genre, and hence are *not subject to ideological variation*: a story has a story structure whether told by someone on the left or the right, and the same is true for an argument.

However, again as for sentence syntax, conventional schemas such as those of argumentation or narration may be transformed in many ways. For instance, in normal stories a Complication category follows the Summary and the Orientation categories, but storytellers may want to emphasize the relevance of the Complication by mentioning it first. Similarly, the canonical order of argumentation is that of one or more Premises followed by a Conclusion, but sometimes important Conclusions are mentioned first and then are backed up by arguments. In Mrs Gorman's speech, therefore, she begins with the Conclusion of the arguments that are later mentioned, namely that London boroughs financially suffer from the presence of asylum seekers.

Finally, at the boundary of formats and meanings, argumentations may feature *fallacies* that violate the rules of acceptable argumentation. Again, fallacies as such appear in any kind of argument, independently of underlying ideologies. The Left does not engage in fewer fallacies than the Right, for instance.

Yet, the *kinds* of arguments and fallacies may well be ideologically different. Thus, Mrs Gorman and the Conservatives use as their main argument that unrestricted immigration of asylum seekers would cost the British taxpayers a lot of money, with the further supporting argument that such asylum seekers abuse the welfare system and do not work. The presupposed normative statement (warrant) is that we are not obliged to help people who abuse the system and do not work. On the other hand, Labour argues that

the UK is bound by international laws about refugees, with the further argument that many refugees are persecuted in their own countries—an argument that presupposes the normative statement as a warrant, namely that we should help people who are persecuted. On the Conservative side, one of the fallacies of this and related arguments is that it is presupposed as a fact that asylum seekers cost more money to the state, and hence to the taxpayer, than their tax contributions. The fallacy on the Left is that it is presupposed that most asylum seekers come to the UK because of political persecution. Similarly, Mrs Gorman has recourse to authority arguments by citing British laws and evidence from agencies, whereas Mr Corbyn cites international agreements and authorities, such as Amnesty International.

## CONCLUSIONS

Ideologies form the shared sociocognitive foundations of social groups and their social practices. They are organized by schemas consisting of fundamental categories for the existence and reproduction of social groups, such as their identity, activities, goals, norms and values, reference groups, and resources. Their contents are often polarized by positive properties attributed to the ingroup and negative ones to the outgroup. Ideologies control and are formed by more specific socially shared attitudes about social issues that are relevant for the group and its reproduction. These attitudes in turn control the personal mental models group members form about specific events and actions, whereas these mental models again control actual social practices, such as the production and comprehension of discourse.

Conversely, therefore, ideologies are generally acquired by text, talk, and other forms of communication. Special ideological structures of discourse facilitate this formation of ideological models, attitudes, and ideologies. Given the polarized nature of underlying ideologies, attitudes, and mental models, ideological discourse too tends to be organized by such polarization. Thus, in text and talk negative properties of outgroups and positive ones of ingroups tend to be emphasized and, conversely, Our negative properties and Their positive ones tend to be ignored, suppressed, or mitigated.

This general ideological strategy takes place at all levels of discourse, such as the selection of main topics, local coherence, implications, descriptions, lexical choice, as well as syntactic structures (active versus passive, nominalizations) and overall ordering, backgrounding, and foregrounding of information. In addition, conventional discourse formats, such as those of narration and argumentation may thus be transformed so as to emphasize or de-emphasize information or arguments.

In conclusion, we need to repeat and emphasize again that a general, multidisciplinary theory of ideology needs to feature a detailed theory of ideology of social cognition, on the one hand, and a theory of discursive ideological expression, acquisition, and reproduction, on the other hand. We are able to understand the many social and political functions of ideologies only when these fundamental sociocognitive and discursive dimensions of ideologies are made explicit.

NOTE

1. All quotes from Parliamentary debates taken from *Hansard*, 5 March 1997.

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