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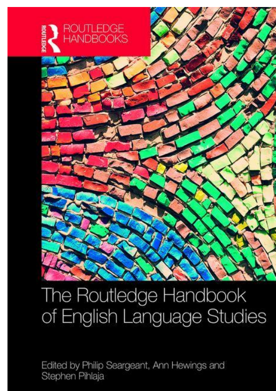

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The politics of English

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16

The politics of English

Joe Spencer-Bennett

Introduction

Politics has to do with the decisions we make about how to live together, how to distribute resources, and what course of action to take on significant collective issues. It is a response to the fact that we live in complex societies in which there exist people and groups with different – often opposing – values, interests, and practices. As Bernard Crick puts it, politics is a 'solution to the problem of social order' (1964: 18). And it is a particular kind of solution; one that involves, or at least aims to involve, a degree of *dialogue* between those people and groups. It is therefore a phenomenon that cannot help but involve language. Indeed, without language, it is difficult to see how we could have politics at all (Aristotle 1951). This chapter discusses some of the key relations between the English language and politics. My focus will be on the ways in which contemporary researchers in English Language have understood these relations, the concepts they have used to explore them, the questions they have asked, and the disputes that they have entered into.

Current issues: ideology, power, and normativity

Perhaps the two most prominent concepts in recent linguistic thought about politics are *ideology* and *power*. I will discuss each of these concepts in turn, before outlining the significance of an equally fundamental – but less often explicitly addressed – concept in the politics of English: the *normativity* of both language and politics.

Ideology

The language that people encounter, have, or use provides them with ways of conceptualising the world around them. In terms of linguistic theory, this idea was central to the structuralist linguistics of Saussure (1983), for whom a language was to be understood as a structured conceptual network shared by members of a society. It was also key to early twentieth-century developments in American linguistics, articulated most famously in the work of Whorf and Sapir, and later known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. As Sapir put it, 'Language and our

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thought-grooves are inextricably interwoven, are, in a sense, one and the same' (1921: 232). A version of this view was shared by the Marxist linguist Volosinov, who in most other respects was fiercely opposed to Saussure's anti-materialist 'abstract objectivism'. Volosinov saw human consciousness as the internalisation of social communication that takes place using language. Therefore, the linguistic sign was, for Volosinov, 'the ideological phenomenon par excellence' (Volosinov 1973: 13).

The political implications of this view were that ideas about what the world is like (and about what it should and should not be like) do not originate in direct understanding of that world. They are powerfully mediated by, and in some strong formulations, fully *shaped by*, language. This academic theorising about language had echoes in a much wider conception of language as an instrument by which 'the masses' could be controlled through processes of linguistic manipulation and 'brain-washing'. The spread of mass democracy in the early twentieth century and advances in communications technology such as radio and television led to concerns that political elites could increasingly manipulate such opinion and 'manufacture consent' (Lippmann 1932). The most famous articulation of such fears is that of Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Orwell 1954) and in essays such as 'Politics and the English Language' (Orwell 2004 [1946]). Orwell put forward a view of political language which is now often referred to simply as 'Orwellian', and which sees political language as a means by which those in positions of power mask the reality of the political situation by propagating a radically simplified or euphemistic linguistic representation.

In the case of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, this simplified linguistic representation is 'Newspeak', a semi-artificial language promoted by the tyrannical regime to control the thought of the population. In the fictional world that Orwell creates, 'The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits [of the regime] . . . but to make all other modes of thought impossible' (Orwell 1954: 241). Given this broad emphasis on the relations between language and ideological manipulation, it is not surprising that many political activists in the late twentieth century saw the critique of language as part of their political project. For example, Spender challenged what she saw as the patriarchal nature of English in her book *Man-Made Language* (1980). For Spender, English itself was a *man*-made language, and was thus structured in ways that embodied a patriarchal ideology. Features of English such as the *-ess* morpheme in words like *actress*, *waitress*, and *lioness* contributed to a naturalisation of male–female binaries, and of the idea that to be male is normal, while to be female is to be *marked*. (For further debate see Cameron 1992).

For many late twentieth-century scholars of English Language, an effect of such tendencies was to suggest that to investigate language was to investigate something saturated with ideology. This was a major impetus behind the development of critical linguistics (Fowler et al. 1979) and later critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk 1993; Fairclough 1995, 2015). In such work, the language in focus is generally that of explicitly political people and institutions – or 'elites' – as in the case of Fairclough's (2000) investigation of the discourse of the British Prime Minister (1997–2007) Tony Blair and his New Labour Party. For Fairclough, New Labour's language was characterised by a merging of traditionally right-wing and left-wing representations of the world, an attempt to linguistically tread what the party called (following Bill Clinton's Democrats in the US) 'the Third Way' (see also Farrelly 2010; Mulderrig 2011). Another prominent strand of work in this area has taken as its focus xenophobic, nationalist, and fascist ideologies in political and media discourse on immigration and Islam (e.g. Van Dijk 2015; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008; Richardson 2008). Such work shows how national and cultural groups are, to a significant extent, constructed or 'imagined' (Anderson 1983) using language.

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Recently, Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) have criticised the emphasis on language as a medium of ideological representation. What is important about political language, they suggest, is not what it says about the world, but what it is used to *do*. And what it is used to do is, for them, to engage in argument. Their emphasis on argumentation is a useful point of connection between critical linguistic research and the essentially deliberative nature of politics outlined at the beginning of this chapter. However, what is key about the broad-ranging focus on language and ideology that I have discussed in this section is that it highlights the extent to which the very language in which political actors argue – and which those with whom they are arguing use, as well as the audience for whom they argue – is saturated with ideology (Finlayson 2013). Since politics itself – obviously including practical argumentation – significantly takes place through language, the kinds of things that political actors say and write, and the ideologies that they articulate, or perpetuate, in doing so shape the kinds of political decisions that they are able to make. Language is constitutive of political possibilities; it is *the* medium in which political 'imaginaries' are articulated (Jessop 2004), even as politics necessarily involves reflecting on, developing, and, indeed, arguing about these possibilities.

Power

Like ideology, *power* has been subject to a great deal of attention in accounts of the politics of language. In particular, it is recognised that language is a means by which power can be claimed, maintained, and challenged (Van Dijk 2008; Thornborrow 2013; Fairclough 2010). This is implicit in much of the above discussion of ideology. For example, Spender argued that the 'man-made' nature of English was problematic not simply because it was imbued with ideas about the world, but also because these rules serve the interests of a powerful group – men – at the expense of a less powerful – women. These were not just any ideas, they were ideas in the service of *power*. In Thompson's classic formulation, they were 'ways in which meaning . . . serves to sustain relations of domination' (1984: 4). That is to say that they are not just ideological in the 'neutral' sense of the term, whereby all socially significant points of view on the world might be deemed ideologies. They were also ideological in the 'negative' or 'critical' sense, whereby to identify something as ideological is to say that there is something *wrong* with it, and usually that it contributes to relations of power and inequality (see Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).

The critique of power has also been applied to elements of communication that are less easily understood in terms of ways of talking or thinking about the world, and more to do with social identities or forms of social action. For example, the language that political leaders and institutions use is a means by which they are able to construct or present a political ethos, identity, style or 'message' (Aristotle 1951; Silverstein 2003; Coupland 2007). In this connection, a contemporary tendency identified by many political and cultural commentators (Fairclough 2000; Pearce 2005) is for an 'informalisation' or 'conversationalisation' of language. This involves political leaders using language associated with less formal registers in their public discourse, and is generally interpreted as a means by which these leaders are able to construct an identity as 'ordinary people', and an attempt to make a rhetorical appeal on the grounds of social solidarity, rather than superiority. Power is first relevant here in the obvious sense that the designers of such informalised political discourse clearly recognise that language is a means by which social relations of hierarchy and solidarity can, at least to some extent, be negotiated. But it is also relevant because, aside from the semiotic details of markers of 'ordinariness' such as constructions associated with spoken registers or with 'non-standard' dialects, the power relations between the informalised political leader and their

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audience are unaltered; they remain thoroughly hierarchical. Talking in (what is supposed to be) the language of everyday life does not break down the relations of power that characterise representative democracies (and many other political institutions), and it may serve to obscure those relations by giving the appearance of an equality that does not really exist. It is, as Fairclough puts it, '*synthetic* personalisation' (2015, emphasis added).

Power is also at issue when it comes to the workings of the genres and institutions of political communication. Shaw (2000) shows evidence, for example, that male Members of Parliament in the UK are disproportionately more likely to interrupt other speakers than their female colleagues, and, as such, 'have more control over the interaction ... and therefore more power in debates than female MPs' (416). Thornborrow (2001) investigates a rather different genre of political communication, BBC radio phone-ins where members of the public are invited to call in and put questions to Margaret Thatcher, who, at the time of the research, was British Prime Minister. Thornborrow finds that the host of such programmes mediates the interaction so as to reinforce the institutional power of the prime minister and limit the capacity of the callers to challenge her. A clear implication of such research is that people in positions of power are able to use language to limit and skew the decision-making practices of democratic politics in their own favour. This in turn warns against any conception of politics that sees such decision making as a *pure* matter of rational argumentation or abstracted deliberation. Power struggles shape who gets to say what and when. Who gets to use language to do politics is itself a political matter.

Normativity

Alongside power and ideology, a yet more fundamental – but less often explicitly acknowledged – concept that is central to understanding the politics of English is *normativity*. This term is used to capture the fact that politics involves taking an evaluative – normative – position on the world. It means saying things about what it is like, how good or bad that is, and how it should or should not be (Crick 1964; Sayer 2006). Ideology and power certainly matter politically, but they do so in so far as they relate to the articulation and enactment of normative conceptions of how the world should be. For Aristotle, it was the normative potential of language that allowed human beings to develop political practices and institutions, to argue about how things should be. This essentially Aristotelian point is emphasised in Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) argumentation-based approach, mentioned above. For Fairclough and Fairclough, political language is 'practical argumentation'. It involves claims about what should be done. Such normative claims need not necessarily take the form of extended argumentative oratory. Huntington (2016), for instance, shows how visual internet memes consisting of a picture and a few words are used in contemporary online communication to make condensed arguments. Such memes may include little in the way of high-flown rhetoric or lengthy disposition of claims and premises. What makes them political is their essentially normative nature. In common with other political uses of language, they have something to say about what we should, or should not, do, or about how our world should, or should not, be.

Language as political instrument and object

So far, this chapter has been concerned with ideology, power, and normativity as they are communicated or enacted in language use itself. In such cases, language is an *instrument* of politics. However, it is also often an *object* of politics. This is clearest to see in official, state-enforced language policy. For example, in the United Kingdom, citizens are subject to

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legislation and guidance in relation to a range of linguistic phenomena. Some of these have been the focus of a good deal of research. Others have not, but are worthy of investigation. They include:

- the linguistic incitement of racial and religious hatred and violence (Hate Speech legislation, see e.g. Waldron 2012)
- the structures, sounds and uses of 'correct English', as well as the best way in which this should be learned (the National Curriculum in England and Wales, e.g. Milroy 2001)
- what can and cannot be said on television and radio, by whom and when (Ofcom broadcasting guidelines)
- the English language competence required of applicants for British visas and citizenship (Home Office Visa entry requirements, citizenship test, e.g. Piller 2001; Blommaert 2009)
- what counts as an acceptable personal name (deed poll regulations)
- what counts as verbal evidence of 'radicalisation' and 'extremism' and what the limits are on the discussion of 'controversial topics' in schools (Prevent strategy)
- the ownership of words, phrases and texts (copyright laws).

In all of these cases, particular ideologies of language – understandings of what language is like and how it should work – are backed by the bureaucratic, legislative powers of the state. For example, the teaching and assessment of English as specified in the National Curriculum for England and Wales embodies ideologies of 'standard English' (Milroy 2001). Pupils – or, indeed, teachers – who are unable or unwilling to 'live up to' these standards will suffer in terms of educational qualifications, which it is within the power of the state to distribute. In the case of relations between English and immigration, the policies of the British government can be understood largely in terms of longstanding 'monoglot' ideologies, whereby a nation state is held to be a unit of linguistic order (Blommaert 2009). In the case of the British government, this monoglot conception is marked by an assumption – with a few exceptions in 'devolved' Wales and Scotland – of English monolingualism. The vast majority of people applying for a visa for 'skilled work' in the United Kingdom, for example, are subject to the following restriction:

> You must score 10 points for your English language skills . . . If you are unable to score 10 points for English language skills, your application will be refused, even if you have scored 50 points or more for attributes and have met all the other Tier 2 requirements.
>
> (UK Home Office 2015 Tier 2 of the Points Based Visa System – Policy Guidance, 131–132)

The political power that is important here is the power to shape the world in accordance with this normative ideological perspective, and the power to reward and punish people according to how well their practice fits with such a perspective.

Not all political decisions about language take this codified state-backed form. Cameron (1995) discusses numerous cases of 'verbal hygiene', normative debates about language in the media, education, the workplace, and day-to-day life that are also debates about a range of political issues, such as social inequalities. The Occupy movement of 2011 provides a good example of non-state action to shape language. The movement's 'retaking and rediscovering of words and language' (Sitrin and Azzelini 2012: 19; Graeber 2014) involved finding new ways of doing political debate. Many involved in the Occupy movement believed that

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representative democracy (whereby we elect political representatives to debate political issues on our behalf) should be replaced by direct democracy (whereby we all have an equal right – and ability – to speak for ourselves). To facilitate this direct democracy within the movement itself, new forms of communication were developed and codified, including sets of hand signals to indicate various types of agreement and disagreement. The idea behind these hand signals was that they afford 'horizontal' consensus-decision making in ways that traditional forms of political debate do not. A speaker, looking at a crowd, can supposedly quickly gauge the extent of (dis)agreement with what she is saying, and the communicative hierarchies associated with traditional forms of democratic discussion can be avoided. This was a political project that involved work on and with language, and shows how political processes are often productive, or constitutive of language itself. National languages, such as English, are formed in practices of nation building, by the printing press, dictionaries, and education and immigration policy (Hobsbawm 1992). The Occupy movement involved using language to say things about how the world should be. But it also involved arguments about how language itself should be. Language is itself a political 'product', and not just an instrumental part of the process (Cameron 2006). We can relate this to Crick's idea of politics as a 'solution to the problem of social order'. Using language is part of the solution. But it is a 'solution' which itself raises further problems, such as whose language is to be considered 'right' or 'appropriate' to particular practices and forms of identity (including national identity), what the right way of talking about the environment or economic inequality is, or how political debate should be carried out.

Current disputes and future directions

The politics of language is, by its very nature, constantly heading off in new directions and becoming embroiled in new disputes. Since the study of language and politics is always the study of historically and culturally situated practices, and it is always conducted by researchers who are themselves historically and culturally situated, this means that academic research in the field is likely to respond to these changes. At the same time, there are a number of striking continuities between Ancient Greece and Rome and contemporary thought. Throughout the years, for example, we have seen debates between those who would conceive of political language as an exercise in manipulation and those who would conceive of it as a more open deliberative process. Recently Chilton (2004) has called these the Machiavellian and Aristotelian conceptions of political language, respectively. In what follows, I do not hope to do justice to the full range of concerns and debates in which current and future researchers of the politics of English (will) find themselves involved, but I do wish to point to a few key tendencies.

The normativity of English language research

Perhaps the most prominent area of dispute when it comes to the politics of English has to do with the normativity of linguistic research itself. I have said above that politics itself is necessarily normative. Political actors make evaluations of the world in their language and in their other actions. That includes making evaluations of language. But should the academic study of language be normative in this way, too? Should, we, as linguists, make judgements about how language should and should not be used? For most of the scholars discussed so far in this chapter, the answer to both of these questions would be 'yes'. But it is not an uncontroversial answer. Avowedly normative, political researchers of language have often

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been criticised for being so by researchers who see no place for the supposedly subjective commitments of politics in linguistic research. Quirk (1990), for instance, disparagingly refers to 'liberation linguistics' in debates about English around the world, and the discourse analyst Widdowson (1995) considers the field of critical discourse analysis to rest on a contradiction in terms; one cannot be 'critical' *and* do 'analysis', since analysis cannot be 'subjective' (and political commitments are, he seems to assume we all agree, 'subjective' things). Both of these writers have been answered by scholars for whom there is simply no other way of researching the spread of English around the world or the uses of English to communicate politically significant world views than to be, in some way or another, politically committed (Kachru 1991; Fairclough 1995, respectively). Even to seek to avoid political commitment would be simply to reinforce the status quo, and that, in the end, is just as political as challenging it. From this perspective, questions about the politics of English are necessarily themselves political questions. When we see language in its social and political situation, the idea that we could – or should – simply *describe* that situation is as limited as the idea that we could – or should – simply describe any other aspect of human life, be it town planning, medical care, furniture design, music, or theatre. However, it might still be argued that many such critical researchers risk blunting their political edge somewhat by reproducing Widdowson's assumption that there exists something basically subjective about the normative stances they bring to bear (e.g. Fowler 1996), as if to be political about language is simply to be open about your own bias, rather than to claim that there is any particular merit in that supposed bias.

In relation to this equation of researcher normativity with bias and subjectivity, Sayer's (2011) critique of the avoidance of ethical argument in the social sciences offers a useful perspective. Sayer has suggested that a lot of social research is guilty of what he calls 'cryptonormativity'. By this he means that scholars write with a vague sense of political and ethical normativity, but without explicit and developed arguments about what is good, what is bad, or why. This goes too for explicitly critical work, which, as Sayer observes, often either simply takes the relativising position, 'Yes, I am bringing my political stance to bear, but I am doing so just because it is my political stance, not because I make any claim that it is right', or it avoids the need for ethical justification by assuming a shared political perspective in its audience rather than arguing for the particular form of socialist, feminist, anti-racist or whatever politics it is that underlies the critique. Sayer's own response to this is to suggest that critical social and political research be grounded in a more explicit sense of the moral or ethical significance of human life (2011). Others suggest that a form of 'immanent critique' is the best basis for political normativity, identifying and questioning *contradictions* in the existing linguistic, social, and political order (e.g. Fairclough 2010; Herzog 2016).

Reflexivity

Much of what I have written in this chapter so far is indicative of an important fact about the politics of language: it is not only we, as academic researchers, who are reflecting on and, potentially, evaluating it (e.g. Cameron 1995; Agha 2007; Zienkowski 2017) This has been a central tenet of recent linguistic anthropological research into political language (Hill 2008; Lempert and Silverstein 2012), as well as some discourse analytic work (e.g. Schröter 2013). Such work has shown how the meanings of speeches, interviews, press conferences, and other canonically political uses of language are continually recontextualised, remediated, and to a significant degree actually constituted by their discussion in the media. Hill's study of the racist 'gaffes' of US politicians is particularly revealing of the relationship between the things

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that political agents say and the language ideologies available to the media and public to make sense of their language. Such 'ethnoblooperology', as Lempert and Silverstein (2012) term it, is a useful measure of the significance of ideologies of interpretation that may otherwise go unnoticed. This, and more broadly naturalistic investigation of existing political meta-language, can also be a useful theoretical and methodological corrective to text-focused approaches to political language which sometimes treat political discourse as if it is not ordinarily subject to sophisticated practices of interpretation and critique (see Jones 2007).

Pride and profit

'Pride' and 'profit' are terms used by Heller and Duchêne (2012) to name two basic ideological orientations towards political choices about language, especially as made by nation states. The shift from 'pride' to 'profit' is of particular interest to contemporary scholars of the politics of English. As Heller and Duchêne see it, pride-based, or 'ethnonationalist' (Heller 2003) ideologies of language have played a vital role in the development of the nation state over the past few hundred years. Such ideologies see language as rooted in the tradition of a people, and suggest that political choices about language in the nation state and its institutions (parliament, courts, education, broadcasting, immigration office, etc.) should be geared towards the maintenance of such a tradition. More recently, though, profit-based, or 'commodified' ideologies have risen to prominence. These see language as an economic asset, and political choices about language as strategic profit-oriented decisions. These two ideologies in turn relate to wider political ideologies of ethnonationalism and neoliberalism respectively, and the relationship of commodified ideologies of language to neoliberal political ideologies is of particular contemporary concern. While, as Holborow (2015) shows, language has long been conceptualised in vaguely economic turns – Saussure, for instance, saw words as being like coins, and as having 'value' – this seems to be being intensified in many contemporary contexts, where whole languages, and particular linguistic competences, are evaluated by political actors largely in terms of what is perceived to be their actual market value. Such evaluations of language are in accord with, and constitutive of, the broader 'commodification of everything' that Harvey (2005) identifies in neoliberal politics. However, even while language is increasingly commodified, such commodification remains in complex relations with the better established, ethnonationalist ideologies. 'Traditional' languages and linguistic practices are part of what is being sold when language is commodified, for instance (Heller and Duchêne 2012). There is future work to be done in tracing the ongoing relations between these two (and other) ideologies of language, and in relating them to wider political changes. The recent intensification of nationalist politics in the United States and much of Europe presents a particular challenge in this regard.

As a broader point, it is worth noting here that if we conceive of politics as a solution to the problem of social order, then simply pointing out that these two ideologies *are* ideological is not a solution. The question, for political actors, including politically interested linguists, must also be how we *should* understand relations between language and national identity, or at least what is *wrong* with these particular ways of understanding it. This is likely to take us outside the boundaries of linguistics or English Language studies as currently conceived, but it will not take us outside politics or ideology more generally. This is because the politics of English is tied up in political debate more generally, and uses of English or arguments about English cannot be understood, assessed, or critiqued independent of this. If we want to argue with nationalist ideologies of English, for example, then we are arguing with a kind of nationalism. This may involve engaging with arguments of the kind that geographers, historians, political scientists,

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and philosophers are used to making. Yet more generally, to refer back to some other relations between politics and language, if we identify articulations of particular world views or constructions of leadership style in English, then evaluating these world views and styles is not simply a linguistic matter, and if we are critical of the linguistic practices of particular institutions, such as parliament, then that involves arguing about what those institutions should be like in a broader sense; for example, about how the power to speak ought to be distributed. In each of these cases, and any other that we might encounter, we cannot assume that the critical 'solutions' to situations that we find so troubling are simply obvious or that they are going to be matters of consensus. All of this might seem to be taking us very far from the 'linguistics' of things. Certainly, members of the public critical of the language of political debate have little concern for whether their criticisms are essentially 'linguistic' or 'political'. Discussing the politics of English is much like discussing the politics of anything else, an essentially normative, ideological matter, with little time for institutional boundaries (Graham 2003).

New media and political change

Another recent development that has caught the interest of English language researchers is the invention and rapid growth of online 'digital', 'new' and/or 'social' media (see Deumert (2014) on the terminology; see also Spilioti, and Neary and Ringrow, this volume). Few are in any doubt that such media have changed the ways in which many people do political talk, and have raised new questions about how political talk is, and should be, institutionalised. To give a single example, for the political theorist van Reybrouck, the fact that this new technology 'gives people a voice' makes 'the electoral system [of Western representative democracy] creak at the seams' (van Reybrouck 2016: 53). However, there is less agreement on how we should respond to such changes, and indeed on many of the communicative details of the changes themselves. It is these communicative details that English language researchers have tended to hone in on, asking what exactly people are doing with their apparently newfound online voices. Such research has often answered that social media communication is used in order to construct relations of identity and community (e.g. Zappavigna 2011; Seargeant and Tagg 2014). There is a challenge, perhaps, in bringing this perspective together with the larger political questions, so that we can understand the ways in which social media communication feeds into more macro-level political debate, if it does so at all (though see Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) for discussion of readers' comments on online news articles as political argumentation). It may give people a voice – though under some regimes it does not even do this – but how and under what conditions it allows those voices to be *heard as* contributions to large scale political debate is another question. What kind of political agency does engaging in online debate give people? How does what ordinary citizens say on Facebook or Twitter relate to the decisions made by political leaders? In one form or another, these are questions that have always been central to the politics of language. They are raised with particular intensity by forms of new media, but they are continuous with long-standing questions about who is to speak, and how. Democracy itself is centrally a theory of who should speak (and who should listen, Green 2010), and necessarily involves making decisions about the arrangements of rights and opportunities for people – the 'demos' – to speak and to be heard.

Conclusion

Politics is never very far away from the things that we say and write, in English or in any other language. Political decisions have shaped, and continue to shape, the language that we have

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learnt in schools and that we hear on television. They shape what we can and cannot be punished for saying and writing, and how the things that we say are evaluated as 'good' or 'bad' English. Such political decisions are ongoing, essentially normative, ideological, and inflected by and constitutive of social relations of power. Conversely, without us saying and writing things, we could not have politics at all. Politics depends on language, on our ability to use it to articulate conceptions of what the world is like, what it could be like, and what it should be like. This chapter has covered some of the key concepts and controversies in the ways that English language researchers (and some other scholars) have dealt with this complex but necessary relationship between language and politics. However, while some of these concepts and controversies are of considerable vintage, both politics and language are essentially open phenomena, bound to enter into new relations and to raise new difficulties and arguments.

Further reading

Joseph, J. E. (2006) *Language and Politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. This book takes in both political uses of language, and political debates about language. Joseph puts forward the argument that language is 'political from top to bottom', and, true to this claim, provides a wide-ranging account.

Chilton, P. (2004) *Analysing Political Discourse*. London: Routledge. This book puts forward a general approach to analysing political discourse. It is influenced by cognitive linguistics, but sufficiently broad that its insights can be put to use by researchers working in other fields too.

Fairclough, I. and N. Fairclough (2012). *Political Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge. This book argues for an argumentation-based approach to political discourse, drawing on insights from linguists, philosophers, theorists of rhetoric, and political scientists. Empirically, it focuses on British political discourse from the period following the 2007/8 financial crisis, but the real drivers of the book are the wider theoretical and methodological arguments about what political discourse is and how we should investigate it.

Cameron, D. (1995) *Verbal Hygiene*. London: Routledge. This is a seminal text which remains the best discussion of politics of debates about language. Those debates are generally slightly more 'micro' in their politics than the ones discussed in this chapter, but Cameron's general argument that language is necessarily subject to normative discussion is one that is useful for the investigation of the politics of language very generally.

Related topics

- English and colonialism
- Persuasive language
- Media, power and representation.

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