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Language and Power in the Work of George Orwell

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Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Autor se ve své práci zaměří na vybrané romány a esejistickou prózu britského spisovatele George Orwella. Cílem práce bude zmapovat způsoby, jakými Orwell ve svém díle nahlíží na jazyk. Práci uvede kapitola, ve které autor představí vhodné nedávné úvahy o povaze jazyka, diskursu a rétorice. Na tomto základě autor provede detailní analýzu Orwellových dopisů, deníků, esejů (Politics and The English Language, New Words, atd.) a pozdních románů (1984, Animal Farm). V kontextu nástupu radikálních ideologických systémů během třicátých a čtyřicátých let bude v těchto textech sledovat Orwellovo pojetí jazyka, zejména jeho postoje ke vztahu mezi diskursem, mocí, manipulací a jedincem. Práci završí kapitola, která z předchozích dílčích zjištění vyvodí obecnější závěry.

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis focuses on Orwell's views and opinions on language and its connections with power, thought, reality, truth etc. With the aid of modern linguistics and philosophy, these connections and other concepts regarding language are described in the first part of the paper. On the basis of this theoretical framework, the second part of the paper analyses Orwell's views on language and power, thought, reality, truth etc. and the way Orwell implements them into his last novel *Nineteen Eight-Four*, particularly in the form of its artificial language Newspeak.

KEYWORDS

George Orwell, language, discourse, reality, truth, thought, signs, power, Newspeak, *1984*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, linguistics

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na Orwellovy názory a postoje k jazyku a jeho spojení s mocí, myšlením, realitou, pravdou apod. Za pomoci moderní lingvistiky a filozofie jsou tato spojení a další koncepty týkající se jazyka popsány v první části práce. Na základě tohoto teoretického rámce je provedena analýza Orwellových postojů k jazyku a moci, myšlení, reality, pravdy apod. a způsobu, jakým tyto myšlenky implementuje do svého posledního románu *Nineteen Eight-Four*, zejména pak ve formě umělého jazyka Newspeak.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

George Orwell, jazyk, diskurz, realita, pravda, myšlení, znaky, moc, Newspeak, *1984*, *Devatenáct set osmdesát čtyři*, lingvistika

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“It is the powerful who made the names of things into law.”

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the first unintelligible utterances of ancient cavemen, some 50, 000 to 100, 000 years ago, humankind has used language with various intentions to this day. Though its exact origins and purposes still remain subjects of discussion, one thing is clear; language is one of the distinguishing marks that differentiates people from animals, and constitutes an inseparable part of their everyday life.

Language has been used for many diverse reasons; to form new friendships, profess love, pray to God, express innermost desires, voice fears and incite hatred. It has been a site of wonderful human creations, but it is also a powerful instrument that often becomes a weapon in the hands of those who realize its potential. In this day and age, when disputes are provoked and settled with words rather than guns, language gains an unprecedented importance.

George Orwell, the famous British novelist, essayist, journalist, and critic, definitely realizes the potential of this metaphorical weapon that resides in the human mind and shoots its bullets from the larynx in lieu of the muzzle. Language and its connection with thought, reality, power, truth etc. thus represent recurring themes in his novels and essays.

This paper sets to explore and analyze Orwell’s thoughts on language and power in his work on the basis of theories that have been proposed and developed by linguist and philosophers over decades from all over the world.

The first chapter, divided into six subchapters, thus provides a general theoretical background from diverse sources relevant to Orwell. Drawing on this, the second chapter, divided into seven subchapters, scrutinizes and analyzes Orwell’s views and opinions on language and its connections with reality, thought, power, society, and the truth. The third chapter, which includes three subchapters, explores some of these hypotheses as Orwell implements them in his famous novel *1984* and its artificial language Newspeak. The paper is concluded by a chapter that summarizes the outcomes of both practical chapters.

1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LANGUAGE

1.1 Language and Thought

For the sake of further analyses, this subchapter examines the connection of language and thought, which remains a controversial issue among scholars. This link plays a crucial role in Orwell's theory and hence this chapter focuses on the level of dependency between language and thought.

David Crystal lists two extremes. Either "language and thought are totally separate entities" or "language and thought are identical – that it is not possible to engage in any rational thinking without using language."¹ The former theory views language as "an autonomous component of the mind, independent, in principle, from other kinds of knowledge."² However, this is criticized by many linguists, who claim that even though language does not determine all thought, it may still influence and steer at least a part of it.

The latter theory, also known as linguistic determinism (sometimes referred to as a strong version of Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) was held by Wittgenstein who contended that "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world."³ Nonetheless, this theory is now largely dismissed, for research has revealed that complex thinking is possible without the presence of language.⁴ Hence, the absence of words in language does not mean that as Wittgenstein argued: "what we cannot speak about we must pass over silence."⁵ As Fromkin demonstrates, different linguistic items can be used instead of those that are missing.⁶ Furthermore, speakers can grasp the concept even if they lack the word for it.⁷

Since both hypothesis are mutually exclusive, Crystal maintains that the truth lies between those two theories. One of the most popular theories residing in the middle is linguistic relativity,

¹ David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 14.

² John R. Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization Prototypes in Linguistic Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ix.

³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge Classics, 2002), 68.

⁴ Phillip Wolff and Kevin J. Holmes, "Linguistic relativity," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 2 (May 2011): 254, DOI: 10.1002/wcs.104.

⁵ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 89.

⁶ Victoria Fromkin, Robert Rodman, and Nina Hyams, *An Introduction to Language* (New York: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2013), 23.

⁷ Crystal, *Encyclopedia of Language*, 15.

one of whose assumptions is that “the semantics of a language can affect the way in which its speakers perceive and conceptualize the world.”⁸ In particular, language may have a significant effect on linguistic categorization, which is the process through which humans understand the world around them.⁹ Studies suggest that particular categories may “augment certain types of thinking”¹⁰ and possibly lead to making “erroneous presuppositions in problem solving and in making judgements.”¹¹ Thus, though the absence of categories may not prevent thinking about the concept, research indicates that “having a label seems to make it easier to store or access information in memory”¹² and subsequently elaborate on it.

1.2 Language and Reality

As shall be developed later, Orwell frequently touches upon the unstable connection of language and reality and the need to strengthen it by making language more physical. For this reason, the following section focuses on this connection.

Saussure believed that language is a system of signs and distinguished two components that each sign comprises; the signifier and the signified - the sound-image of the word and the concept.¹³ There is no need to go into further detail, but it should be noted that Saussure argued that “the relation between the signifier and the signified is unmotivated, arbitrary.”¹⁴ Words do not come naturally from the physical objects. It is participants of culture that ascribe meanings to things and when they do so, they do not reflect or mirror reality but contribute to its construction.¹⁵ Without language, objects would be “visual and tactile sensations.”¹⁶ This theory of meaning, often

⁸ Wolff and Holmes, “*Linguistic relativity*,” 253.

⁹ Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*, 1.

¹⁰ Wolff and Holmes, “*Linguistic relativity*,” 253.

¹¹ P. T. Smith, “Thought and Language,” in *Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language*, ed. Peter V. Lamarque (Exeter: Pergamon, 1997), 90.

¹² Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams, *An Introduction to Language*, 24.

¹³ David Holdcroft, *Saussure Signs, System, and Arbitrariness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 51.

¹⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 116.

¹⁵ Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 9.

¹⁶ Willie Thomson, *Postmodernism and History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 42.

called “constructionist approach,”¹⁷ denies the “reflective approach”¹⁸ which assumes that language reflects the true meaning in the world.

The implication that there is no natural connection between the signifier and signified may have far reaching consequences, for it may lead to the assertion that “the relationship between language and reality is also arbitrary.”¹⁹ Therefore, Saussure’s model “brackets the referent”: excluding reference to objects existing in real world.²⁰ Though Saussure strived to emphasize the arbitrary nature of signs, some critics interpreted this as an absolute denial of non-linguistic reality²¹ and “scientific methods of verification.”²²

Hence, while signifieds are currently still regarded as psychological concepts constructed in the mind, it is acknowledged that signifieds *indirectly* ensue from and refer to the experience and objects in the real world.²³ Thus, Saussure’s system has been altered to be more physical, and signs are now mostly regarded as relatively arbitrary.²⁴

However, as Hall explains, though the mind concept of a rose bears some resemblance to the rose in reality, it should not be mistaken as being the same. As Chandler notes, signifieds are solely “conceptions [...] not the things themselves.”²⁵ Moreover, there are many words denoting things which do not physically exist and still are meaningful solely because similar codes for interpretation are shared.²⁶ Nevertheless, since meaning is largely constructed than found, there is no “guarantee that things will have “one, true meaning” or that meaning won’t change over time.”²⁷

¹⁷ Stuart Hall, “The Work of Representation,” in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 25.

¹⁸ Hall, “*Representation*,” 24.

¹⁹ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 10.

²⁰ Daniel Chandler, “Semiotics for Beginners: Signs,” Visual-memory.co.uk, last modified March 7, 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem02.html>.

²¹ Daniel Chandler, “Semiotics for Beginners: Modality and Representation,” Visual-memory.co.uk, last modified April 7, 2017, <http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel/Documents/S4B/sem02a.html>.

²² C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (New York: A Harvest Book, 1923), 6.

²³ Chandler, “Signs.”

²⁴ Chandler, “Signs.”

²⁵ Chandler, “Signs.”

²⁶ Hall, “*Representation*,” 24.

²⁷ Hall, “*Representation*,” 9.

1.3 Ambiguity and Vagueness in Language

However, for early structuralists, the intricate structure of signs was fixed and unchangeable.²⁸ Poststructuralists criticized this fixedness and stability: “In post-structuralist theory, signs still acquire their meaning by being different from other signs, but those signs from which they differ can change according to the context in which they occur.”²⁹ For example, it is impossible to determine what even a simple word such as “brass” denote outside the context, for it may be the metallic alloy in one context and the musical instrument in the other. Moreover, signs are dependent on other signs surrounding them (i.e. co-textual context). As Lakoff observes, adding one word to another results in a “metaphor” that no longer has the same denotation and connotation as the separated words.³⁰ Signs also differ in their connotations. As Edelman explains, some words may be less evocative and thus less influential than others.³¹

Nevertheless, signs not only vary in regard to textual context but also in regard to the individual interpreter and the social context in which the interpretation is undertaken. They are “historically and culturally specific.”³² For example, a mental concept of the word “car” will be similar among people, for otherwise they would not be able to understand one another, but it might not be the same. There may be considerable differences in colour, make, size etc. Now the word “car” points to a concrete physical object relatively uniform among people. There is not much space to deliberately modify it.³³ However, an abstract word such as “democracy” does not point to anything specific in the physical world nor does it have one meaning. It does not even elicit any specific and definable concept, but rather a collection of various overlapping and merging images and frames which are highly relative to individual users and their experience, for “no two people have the same biography.”³⁴ Such words are sometimes referred to as “floating signifiers,” which are important signs that have “a vague, highly variable, unspecifiable or non-existent signified.”³⁵

²⁸ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 10.

²⁹ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 10.

³⁰ George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant!* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), 4.

³¹ Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 13.

³² Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 5.

³³ John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (London: Routledge, 1990), 41.

³⁴ Murray Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 101.

³⁵ Chandler, “Modality and Representation.”

Some linguists argue that floating signifiers are exploited to conceal the absence of reality behind them.³⁶

Poststructuralists thus reveal even greater ambiguity and vagueness in language until then ignored by structuralists. The question of how this complexity and ambiguity are simplified will be examined later.

1.4 From Language to Discourse

The following paragraphs address the connection of language with the society – the point touched upon in Orwell’s essays and hence relevant here.

Arguably the first to propose that language is socially structured was Nietzsche, but it was again Saussure that developed this theory. He insisted that natural language be divided into two sub-domains; a particular language – langue and speech – parole. Saussure maintained that langue is the social side of language unlike parole which is purely dependent on the individual’s choice.³⁷

However, this dependency on individual choice was later criticized by poststructuralists, who hold that “language can never be wholly a private game. Our private intended meanings, however personal to us, have to enter into the rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood.”³⁸ Such codes and structures are parts of background knowledge³⁹ or, in Fairclough’s terminology “member resources” (shortly “MR”).⁴⁰ Most linguists now hold that “it is in concrete language use that the structure is created, reproduced and changed.”⁴¹ Structuralists were unable to explain this process of change and, due to that, most linguists of today prefer the term “discourse”, while respecting the social distinction between langue and parole.

Critical discourse analysts thus no longer see language as a purely linguistic concept somehow external or prior to society as some structuralists implied, but as an inseparable part of it – as “social practice determined by social structures.”⁴² Hence, while admitting that the link between signifier and signified is ontologically arbitrary, they argue it does not follow that signs

³⁶ Chandler, “Modality and Representation.”

³⁷ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 20.

³⁸ Hall, “Representation,” 25.

³⁹ George Yule, *The Study of Language* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 131.

⁴⁰ Norman Fairclough, *Language and power* (New York: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989), 11.

⁴¹ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 11.

⁴² Fairclough, *Language and power*, 16.

are socially and historically arbitrary. They claim there are different degrees of arbitrariness and motivations with which signs are established and changed and maintain that it is ideology that plays the crucial role in this process.^{43 44}

1.5 Language and Power

The following paragraphs scrutinize the presence of ideological power in language, its naturalization, preservation and reproduction. All these concepts are necessary for the subsequent analysis of Orwell's theory of language.

Language is not pure; it is messy and contaminated by ideologies; "beliefs system which are held either collectively or individually by social groups."⁴⁵ Despite being taken for granted, ideologies are often false and clouded⁴⁶ and thus may deceive by providing an erroneous view of the world.⁴⁷ Ideology, in this traditional Marxist sense, becomes a creator of "false consciousness, meanings and ideas."⁴⁸ However, Hutcheon notes that the perception of ideology as "false consciousness" or as an "illusory belief system" is rather old-fashioned and states the current notion of ideology is that of "a general process of production of meaning."⁴⁹ The latter definition is intentionally cautious, for linguists are generally reluctant to differentiate between ideological and non-ideological meanings.

As will be demonstrated in the final subchapter, it is mainly this problem that divides scholars. Nevertheless, Fairclough and some other critical discourse analysts take a clear stance and view ideology as "meaning in the service of power."^{50 51} It is this definition that is employed in this paper.

⁴³ Chandler, "Signs."

⁴⁴ Taylor, *Linguistic Categorization*, ix.

⁴⁵ Paul Simpson and Andrea Mayr, *Language and Power: A Resource Book for Students* (London: Routledge, 2010), 4.

⁴⁶ Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 87.

⁴⁷ Mark Robson and Peter Stockwell, *Language in Theory A Resource Book for Students* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 8.

⁴⁸ Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, 165.

⁴⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1988), 178.

⁵⁰ Andrew Goatly, *Washing the Brain – Metaphor and Hidden Ideology* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), 1.

⁵¹ Andrea Mayr, *Language and Power: An Introduction to Institutional Discourse* (London: Continuum, 2008), 11.

In order to function properly, ideology must be concealed; it must be naturalized. Naturalization is an important means of control in political discourse, whose participants are always ready to provide the right, appropriate images and indisputable meanings of words.⁵² Yet meanings are also a matter of common sense; it is taken as a fact that a word means what it means. In reality, however, since meanings are not fixed in nature, they are constantly changing, shifting and overlapping, creating complex structures that Fairclough calls “meaning systems.”⁵³ Fairclough warns that any effort to fix a particular meaning from the meaning system is an effect of ideological power and that it is the goal of the dominant class to sustain and consequently naturalize those meanings as if they were the only possible interpretations despite them being one of many.⁵⁴ It is stressed that the main goal of the powerful is to transform their beliefs and meanings into the legitimized common-sense of others⁵⁵ and suppress those that do not comply with them.⁵⁶ As Robson notes, the momentarily fixed meanings, sometimes called “moments,”⁵⁷ are “illusions of permanence” that establish “historical and cultural periods of repression and control over group regarded as marginal.”⁵⁸

Thus, vagueness is seen as an innate property of language, from which a great deal of creativity stems and which should not be suppressed but actually reinforced.⁵⁹ Edelman stresses that exaggeratedly precise language is undesirable, for it is through vagueness that humans are able to create new meanings and criticize the current ones.⁶⁰ Clarity and rigidity would inevitably lead to orthodoxy and reduced thinking: “pure, unproblematic use of language, such as ritualized, consensually understood language, poses no mental challenges and so makes for mental vegetation rather than alertness.”⁶¹ Typical examples include meaningless political slogans and phrases that solely function as “buttresses of a ritualized position.”⁶² Such language is desired by those who seek to control society, for it might lead to the reproduction of discourses as opposed to production of new ones.

⁵² Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 14.

⁵³ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 94.

⁵⁴ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 95.

⁵⁵ Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies*, 95.

⁵⁶ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 90.

⁵⁷ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 26.

⁵⁸ Robson and Stockwell, *Language in Theory*, 18.

⁵⁹ Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 81.

⁶⁰ Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 103.

⁶¹ Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 103.

⁶² Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 83.

The task of naturalization largely depends on social institutions and is accumulative. By being exposed to an enormous number of discourses which cannot all be sorted and subjected to criticism, the brains of unaware people are rewired to serve the interests of the powers that be.

Since interpretation is not simply a matter of decoding what is in the individual words but rather a complex process between meaning systems, metaphors, frames, the situational and cultural context, brains must make sense of this complexity to categorize into memory. Human brains therefore: “dispense with the mass of its detail and reduce it to the skeletal shape of the familiar pattern.”⁶³ A pattern, such as a “schema” and “script”⁶⁴, already naturalized in MR which bears “the ideological imprint.”⁶⁵ Language in this sense works as a “compressing device.”⁶⁶ Thus, even though people produce their seemingly own discourse, it is inevitably shaped by naturalized ideologies in their MR. This way, they support and reproduce already existing discourses with little or no adjustment at all, for they are unaware of the ideological nature of MR.⁶⁷

Hence, despite there being innumerable ways of saying something, or as Chomsky frequently cites Humboldt’s words: “infinite use of finite means”⁶⁸, a substantial number of discourses are excluded and might never be uttered. Consequently, statements produced within a particular discourse are rather repetitive, similar and ritualistic.⁶⁹ Bourdieu declares this is the result of self-censorship by means of which people subconsciously produce language that is anticipated rather than consciously thought by themselves.⁷⁰ Edelman adds that as a result of ritualistic speech, subjects hardly think when they speak.⁷¹ Fairclough, however, warns against exaggeration, for “the subject is both created and creative.”⁷² This is obvious, for if there were no creativity of subjects, the whole culture would be stagnant.

⁶³ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 160.

⁶⁴ Yule, *The Study of Language*, 132.

⁶⁵ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 160.

⁶⁶ Smith, “*Thought and Language*,” 90.

⁶⁷ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 39.

⁶⁸ Noam Chomsky, *Language and Thought* (London: Moyer Bell, 1993), 49.

⁶⁹ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 13.

⁷⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thomson. trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 19.

⁷¹ Edelman, *The Politics of Misinformation*, 88.

⁷² Fairclough, *Language and power*, 104.

1.6 Language and Truth

The following paragraphs address the importance of awareness and critique – the point explicitly emphasized by Orwell and hence relevant here. The end of this subchapter is then focused on whether or not the absolute truth devoid of ideology can be achieved and how contemporary thinkers distinguish between various claims for truth – both issues of which are of importance to Orwell.

Being aware of common sense is crucial, for when people interpret the world around them, they must employ their member resources - and they do so largely automatically and unconsciously. In fact, studies indicate that more than 98 percent of thinking and reasoning is unconscious and thus automatic.⁷³

Hence, it is stressed that creative production of new discourses is dependent on critical awareness and self-critique.⁷⁴ Such awareness and critique is needed to produce “social struggle”⁷⁵ and original, creative discourses, for as Steinberg argues, it is in creative and persuasive arrangement of words that can affect and change culture.⁷⁶ Otherwise, ideological uniformity, the main objective of the powerful, could be attained.

According to most postmodernists, ideology is omnipresent. It is dispersed in literature, music and even history and science.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, is it possible to escape discourse and reach some external truth devoid of ideology? Most postmodernists’ opinions diverge.

In Foucault’s, as well as Derrida’s view,⁷⁸ no one can escape discourse. Since truth and subjects are created in discourse and serve to support established power relations, it is futile to seek the absolute truth, for what counts as truth is dependent on the current “regime of truth.”⁷⁹ Nonetheless, Fairclough and some critical discourse analysts retain the possibility of escaping ideology while stressing the importance of awareness and critical thinking.⁸⁰ Possibly the most

⁷³ George Lakoff, *The Political Mind* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 9.

⁷⁴ Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 180.

⁷⁵ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 35.

⁷⁶ Danny D. Steinberg, Hiroshi Nagata, and David P. Aline, *Psycholinguistics: Language, Mind and World* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 271.

⁷⁷ Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 185.

⁷⁸ Thomson, *Postmodernism and History*, 12.

⁷⁹ Michel Foucault, “The political function of the intellectual,” *Radical Philosophy* 17 (Summer 1977): 13, accessed September 5, 2017, https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/wpcontent/files_mf/rp17article2_politicalfunctionofintellectual_foucault.pdf.

⁸⁰ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 4.

optimistic view is held by Noam Chomsky, who is convinced there must be some underlying and universal principles in the human mind (i.e. human nature) which would manifest themselves were it not for the oppression of discourse, and according to which people could determine the truth and distinguish right from wrong.⁸¹

Thus, while some postmodernists deem it impossible to reach an absolute, universal truth or meaning and keep relativizing discourses, others believe that even though claims for truths are in some sense false, some may be less false than others within the respective context of their utterance.⁸² As Goatly notes, all consciousness is to some degree false-consciousness, for “ideology is ubiquitous in thought. But some ideologies or ways of understanding the world may be more useful than others.”⁸³ That is the reason why Fairclough distinguishes between ideologies which “in varying degrees contribute to sustaining unequal power relations.”⁸⁴ Hence, Fairclough, among many others, dismisses total relativism and distinguishes between sincere, manipulative and ideological discourses.⁸⁵ The distinction that some label as problematic and naïve, for the measures and standards for discrimination between more or less ideological discourses are difficult to determine and agree on.⁸⁶

Hall advises that claims for truth should be considered provisional and always subjected to criticism, while accepting “a degree of cultural relativism.”⁸⁷ As Wittgenstein maintained, arguing over meanings of words is acceptable as long as people do not strive to establish the ultimate meaning.⁸⁸ Hall concludes that humans should “learn to think of meaning less in terms of “accuracy” and “truth” and more in terms of effective exchange – a process of translation.”⁸⁹ The absolute truth might be unattainable but that should not lead to nihilism and lethargy. On the contrary, as Foucault concludes, books should be written so that other books are possible.⁹⁰

⁸¹ Noam Chomsky, “On Humanism and Morality Noam Chomsky interviewed by Tor Wennerberg,” Chomsky.info, accessed October 18, 2017, https://chomsky.info/199811__-2/.

⁸² Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*, 114,165.

⁸³ Goatly, *Washing the Brain*, 1.

⁸⁴ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 84.

⁸⁵ Fairclough, *Language and power*, 154.

⁸⁶ Jørgensen and Phillips, *Discourse Analysis*, 89.

⁸⁷ Hall, “Representation,” 61.

⁸⁸ David C. Blair, “Language and Representation Information retrieval and the philosophy of language,” *Information Science and Technology* 37, no. 1 (2003): 21, accessed October 6, 2017, doi:10.1002/aris.1440370102.

⁸⁹ Hall, “Representation,” 11.

⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, “Quotes of the month (2000),” Michel-foucault.com, last modified October 30, 2010, <http://www.michel-foucault.com/quote/2000q.html>.

2 LANGUAGE AND POWER IN THE WORK OF GEORGE ORWELL

2.1 Language and Thought

It would be fruitless to attempt to examine Orwell's views on language and power without addressing the most crucial connection from which all the possibilities to exploit language arise; thought and its relation with language.

In his work, Orwell subscribes to the theory that both language and thought complement each other to some extent. Nonetheless, similarly to modern linguists, Orwell observes the limits of language to accurately reflect thought by claiming that words are not “a direct channel of thought”⁹¹ and that “language is practically useless for describing anything that goes on inside the brain.”⁹² Orwell is thus aware the link between language and thought is loose and realizes the difficulties in communication that consequently occur. In his words, there exists “the practical impossibility of understanding others or being understood — in general, of the star-like isolation in which human beings live.”⁹³ Yet, at the same time, Orwell believes the connection is strong enough to influence thought nonetheless: “our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. [...] But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.”⁹⁴

These quotes clearly confirm Orwell's conviction that both language and thought are interconnected; by altering language it is possible to alter, steer or evoke the thought and vice versa. Though the theory was not yet developed in Orwell's time, this approach is strikingly similar to linguistic relativity one of whose claims is that semantics of language may affect the way people think. It is precisely due to Orwell's belief that language may (potentially negatively) influence thought that he is so concerned with words and meanings in his essays.

⁹¹ George Orwell, “New Words,” Orwell.ru, last modified September 24, 2015, http://www.orwell.ru/library/articles/words/english/e_words.

⁹² Orwell, “New Words.”

⁹³ Orwell, “New Words.”

⁹⁴ Orwell, Sonia B., and Ian Angus, editors. *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume IV: In Front of Your Nose 1945-1950*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), 128, 137.

However, this does not mean that Orwell believes thought dependent on language is all there is (i.e. linguistic determinism). On the contrary, Orwell does not forget to account for the nonverbal part of the mind that exists and flows independently of language:

It is true that most of our waking thoughts are reasonable' [sic] — that is, there exists in our minds a kind of chessboard upon which thoughts move logically and verbally; we use this part of our minds for any straightforward intellectual problem, and we get into the habit of thinking (i.e. thinking in our chessboard moments) that it is the whole of the mind. But obviously it is not the whole. The disordered, un-verbal world belonging to dreams I [sic] never quite absent from our minds, and if any calculation were possible I dare say it would be found that quite half the volume of our waking thoughts were of this order.⁹⁵

According to Orwell, this is the part of the human mind which is truly valuable and constitutes the primary influence on thought. As he proceeds:

All likes and dislikes, all aesthetic feeling, all notions of right and wrong [...] spring from feelings which are generally admitted to be subtler than words. [...] they influence the verbal thoughts, and it is largely they that make our inner life valuable.⁹⁶

Orwell's conception of language and thought is thus far from linguistic determinism. Currently, though there is not a consensus as to how language is connected to thought and whether there is any connection at all, many linguists maintain that the majority of thinking is independent of language. Orwell's estimate is thus still rather conservative. Nevertheless, there is evidence that categorization of reality through language may have a significant effect on how human beings perceive and think about reality. This point will be elaborated in Chapter Three. At the moment, it suffices to say that Orwell can be regarded as an adherent of this theory and most of his beliefs described below are based on the conviction that semantics of language may to some extent affect what and how people think.

2.2 False Consciousness and Discourse

What Orwell frequently addresses is words, the volatile nature of their meanings and deceptiveness of representations of real objects. As most linguists, Orwell refuses reflective approach and reaches the same conclusion; words do not reflect reality accurately, in most cases, they are “no like to the reality than chessmen to living beings.”⁹⁷ Words are not inherent in the objects, nor are they fixed;

⁹⁵ Orwell, “New Words.”

⁹⁶ Orwell, “New Words.”

⁹⁷ Orwell, “New Words.”

their meanings are, as outlined in Chapter One, unstable and may vary dramatically. Orwell enquires whether this should be prevented: “one often has to decide [...] whether it is worth putting up a struggle when a word changes its meaning. [...] Ought one to protest against it? And ought one to acquiesce when certain word have their meaning arbitrarily narrowed?”⁹⁸

For Orwell, some words have their meaning stretched to such lengths that they may ultimately denote the opposite of their literal meanings. Since words do not reflect thought and reality accurately, “the lumpishness of words results in constant falsification.”⁹⁹ This way, Orwell concludes, people are deluded, for they see “meanings which are not there”¹⁰⁰, or worse, see none at all, because they do not ascribe any concrete “meaning to the words they use.”¹⁰¹ Thus, it seems that Orwell’s conception of ideology is similar to that of Marxists’ in which language is exploited to create a false consciousness. This also matches Orwell’s time period and his well-documented interest in Marxist doctrine.¹⁰² Nevertheless, with regard to some linguists this definition is now considered old-fashioned and problematic, for if it is to be adopted, some kind of standard or measure that would enable differentiation between ideological and non-ideological meanings must be adopted as well. This is the reason why many linguists prefer to regard ideology as a general process of constructing new meanings as opposed to false consciousness.

Contrary to them, Orwell attempts to draw a distinction. As will be further argued, this issue of determining which meanings are false, or rather less false than others are, is similar to many linguists and philosophers of today, the primary concern to Orwell, and he endeavours to find such a standard that could serve as a corrective system.

Throughout his essays, Orwell lists two main problems in language which, in his opinion, account for the decline of language and thought: “The first is staleness of imagery; the other is lack of precision.”¹⁰³ Orwell attempts to avoid these problems in his essays and novels: “I will only say that of late years I have tried to write less picturesquely and more exactly.”¹⁰⁴ He proceeds to state

⁹⁸ Sonia B. Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume III: As I Please 1943-1945* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), 371.

⁹⁹ Orwell, “New Words.”

¹⁰⁰ Orwell, “New Words.”

¹⁰¹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 378.

¹⁰² H. Bloom, *Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations: George Orwell’s Animal Farm* (New York: Bloom’s Literary Criticism, 2009), 147.

¹⁰³ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 129.

¹⁰⁴ George Orwell, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume I: An Age Like This 1920-1940*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 7.

that “good prose is like a window pane.”¹⁰⁵ However, Orwell is aware that the windowpane is not clean but stained by constant and an occasionally extreme twisting of words. For Orwell, this is a matter of insincerity: “The great enemy of clear language is insincerity.”¹⁰⁶ The concept of sincerity is important and will be examined later.

Nevertheless, Orwell does not know how and why words change their meanings and tacitly admits so: “The coming and going of words is a mysterious process whose rules we do not understand.”¹⁰⁷ This is understandable, for as illustrated in Chapter One, in Orwell’s time, the problem of change was an issue structuralists struggled to sufficiently explain.

However, as Orwell suspects, the process must be a result of some external incentive; language does not evolve naturally by itself nor does it stem from the efforts of individuals. For him, language is not a natural growth, but “an instrument which we shape for our own purposes.”¹⁰⁸

As discourse analysts described, language is a part of society by whose social structures it is conditioned. Together they create discourse. Orwell’s conception of discourse is simple; language is not autonomous and external to society as structuralists such as Saussure implied, but an inseparable part of it. Orwell observes the dialectical relationship between language and society and asserts that “the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes [...] when the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, though signs are ontologically arbitrary, they are not socially arbitrary, but to various degrees motivated.

Orwell regards language as a self-sufficient system which to some extent reflects the state of culture and whose syntactical structure should not be intentionally tampered with.¹¹⁰ Yet, he is against the belief that language could not be improved in detail “by any direct tinkering with words and constructions.”¹¹¹ Orwell thus refuses descriptivism and adopts prescriptivism. There are, as Orwell emphasizes, bad habits primarily connected with semantics that spoil language and, given the connection with thought described above, affect thinking as well. This aspect will be examined in the third chapter.

¹⁰⁵ Orwell, *CEJLI*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 137.

¹⁰⁷ Sonia B. Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume III: As I Please 1943-1945* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), 371.

¹⁰⁸ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 127.

¹⁰⁹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 127,137.

¹¹⁰ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 137-138.

¹¹¹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 137.

Presently, it suffices to say that since Orwell believes language and society are interconnected, he assumes that by improving the former one might improve the latter. In his essay *Politics and the English Language*, Orwell provides a list of “swindles and perversions”¹¹² which he detects in daily usage and political discourse. One of those swindles are “*Meaningless words*.”¹¹³

2.3 Meaningless Words

Orwell and contemporary linguists alike recognize that abstract words which do not point to any concrete object are the most problematic, for their meanings are not uniformly defined and can have diverse, hence non-specific meanings. In the catalogue of perversions, Orwell lists these words under the label “*Meaningless words*”¹¹⁴ and provides several examples: “democracy, socialism, freedom, patriotic, justice, dead.”¹¹⁵ For Orwell, these words are “all meaningless — or rather, having a different meaning for everyone who uses them.”¹¹⁶ According to Orwell, the nature of these words allows people to use them “in a consciously dishonest way” in the sense that “the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.”¹¹⁷ Orwell thus addresses the natural volatility of words and the possibility to exploit this aspect of language consisting in either deliberate or unintentional enlargement of ambiguity.

Some words, particularly abstracts ones, as demonstrated in Chapter One, do not evoke specific and clear concepts, but rather various frames, images and connotations which constantly alter, merge and overlap. The process is highly dependent on individual interpreters and social contexts in which individuals interpret them. To analyse the meaning of a word would mean examining what the word elicits in a person in a specific context. Since abstract words are so volatile, they are open to being grounded to one seemingly possible interpretation. Orwell does not seem to be concerned as much with the final interpretation as with the fact that the meaning potential of these words is so broad that a single word may pack various, often contradictory

¹¹² Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 133.

¹¹³ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 132.

¹¹⁴ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 132.

¹¹⁵ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 132.

¹¹⁶ Orwell, “New Words.”

¹¹⁷ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 133.

meanings. For instance, Orwell observes that the word “fascism” can be applied in a wide variety of contexts, frequently as a swearword:

I have heard it applied to farmers, shopkeepers, Social Credit, corporal punishment, fox-hunting, bull-fighting, [...] Gandi, Chiang Kai-Shek, homosexuality, Pristely’s broadcasts, Youth hostels, astrology, women, dogs and I do not know what else.¹¹⁸

This word, previously described as a floating signifier, has nearly non-existent boundaries as to what it can mean and it can be applied in various, often contradictory contexts. In his novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell thinks about this process through coining the word “*doublethink*”; the awareness of mutually opposed ideas while believing in their respective truthfulness whenever necessitated by the context. Orwell wants to prevent that and repeatedly enquires: “Why, then, cannot we have a clear and generally accepted definition of it?”¹¹⁹ What solution Orwell proposes will be detailed later.

It is apparent Orwell is not fond of abstract words that cause excessive ambiguity and vagueness. However, though he prefers concrete words which point to something physical and concrete, and which are, as described in Chapter One, less prone to alteration, Orwell acknowledges the importance of abstract words which denote important concepts, and realizes that removing them from language would not be beneficial, but on the contrary, another tool “for advocating a kind of political quietism.”¹²⁰ This way Orwell reflects linguistic relativity, claiming that it is more difficult (though not inconceivable) to think and speak about a concept in the absence of words. This hypothesis and its shortcomings will be analysed in Chapter Three.

2.4 Ready-Made Phrases

Some words are more or less clearly defined, for they refer to a physical, discoverable object, other words are ambiguous and vague because they denote complex ideas rather than physical objects and their interpretations are highly contingent on the interpreter. Furthermore, there are words, or rather longer pieces of discourse, whose evocativeness and productivity may be due to their constant reproduction being limited.

¹¹⁸ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 138.

¹¹⁹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 138.

¹²⁰ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 139.

Orwell is particularly critical of the latter and, in several essays, calls for the death of such words and expressions,¹²¹ which he labels “DYING METAPHORS”¹²² and “READY-MADE PHRASES (sometimes he uses the term “WORN-OUT PHRASES”).”¹²³ Orwell takes a prescriptive approach here and provides several examples: “take up the cudgels for”, “ride roughshod over”, “exhibit a tendency to”, “brought to a satisfactory conclusion”, “buckler”, etc.¹²⁴ According to Orwell, these items “have lost all evocative power and are merely used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves.”¹²⁵ The production of language thus:

at its worst does not consist in picking out words for the sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer. It consists in gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else, and making the results presentable by sheer humbug.¹²⁶

This way, people let somebody else’s words steer their thoughts, rather than letting *their own* thoughts steer the words and produce their own, unique arrangements. Thus, autonomous thinking and production are reduced:

They [ready-made phrases] will construct your sentences for you — even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent — and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself. It is at this point that the special connection between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear. [...] What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the words, and not the other way about. The worst thing one can do with words is surrender to them.¹²⁷

Those who succumb to the language of others and fail to produce their own discourses Orwell calls “dummies”¹²⁸ or “plummy voices from the radio”¹²⁹, alluding to the stereotypical, monotonous and thoughtless way of repeating vague, orthodox phrases, which is particularly typical of speakers on the radio during public speeches. Orwell asserts about those people that:

one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy [...] a speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved, as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the

¹²¹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 132, 371-372, 377.

¹²² Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 130.

¹²³ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 134.

¹²⁴ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 130.

¹²⁵ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 130.

¹²⁶ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 134.

¹²⁷ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 135, 138.

¹²⁸ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 135.

¹²⁹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL2*, 233.

responses in church. And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity.¹³⁰ For Orwell, minds have to be stimulated by fresh and evocative language which shows and provokes rather than lulls consciousness to stagnation. As illustrated above, language is linked to society and hence its semantics is influenced by it. That is the reason why Orwell is particularly suspicious of mindless reproduction of pre-established phrases. They may not be a product of a unique and creative arrangement of words carefully coined by the individual. Conversely, these phrases might be stale, already coined and reproduced automatically, nearly incapable of either stimulating through vivid images and changing discourse or provoking new ones. They solely save the trouble to think, for they facilitate the search for more convenient and precise words and their combinations. In *1984*, Orwell calls such language production “DUCKSPEAK”; speaking (or rather quacking) “without involving the higher brain centres at all.”¹³¹

Orwell’s thesis could be viewed solely as a form of prescriptivism aimed against euphemisms and verbosity. This point would be valid. However, if, for the sake of argument, Orwell’s tendency to point out specific words and phrases is ignored, it could be argued that in a broader sense there is a cognitive aspect to it as well. It might be viewed as a critique of the way people think and produce language.

As highlighted in Chapter One, it is a creative, original and persuasive arrangement of words that can affect people and culture. And to achieve such discourse, a certain degree of vigilance and self-criticism is required. This type of naturalized, ritualized and automatic production of language that Orwell outlines may not produce any significant changes and enough discourse struggle, but rather promote current dominant power relations and ritualized positions through reproduction of familiar, pre-established constructions. As a result, the creative capacity of the society may be limited and people themselves more prone to being its passive reproducers rather than its active producers and contributors.

Moreover, if the theory that language and thought are to some extent interconnected and influence each other (i.e. linguistic relativity) is allowed for, semantics may evoke certain types of (possibly erroneous) thinking. Ritualized, automatic language (in Orwell’s vocabulary “ready-made phrases”) may thus lead to more ritualized and automatic thoughts. Similarly, unevocative

¹³⁰ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 135-136.

¹³¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 322.

language (i.e. “dying metaphors”) may lead to more unevocative and stale thoughts. These aspects will be investigated in Chapter Three.

2.5 Orwell’s Corrective System

Orwell realizes the danger of such unproductive, ambiguous discourse and strives to find a way to prevent this surrender to words. For him, the problem lays in the fact that people pay little or no attention to meanings and the effects the words have on them as well as on others.¹³² He proposes a bold solution. Clearer definitions based on what Orwell refers to as “common experience”¹³³ should be assigned to all those ambiguous words and phrases. As has been shown, signs are meaningful only if they are recognized by speakers and the level of mutual understanding depends on the extent their codes for interpretations are similar. However, this process is unreliable, for signs are defined by being different from other signs.

Being aware of this, Orwell wants to form a large group of several thousand talented individuals who would deliberately invent new words (and probably even define problematic abstract words) based on the unanimous agreement on both the signifier and primarily signified. As Orwell explains, this process would not solely involve dictionary definitions but “giving words a physical (probably visible) existence.”¹³⁴ By clearly defined signifiers and anchoring signifieds to physical reality, Orwell intends to establish a common frame of reference and improve efficiency of communication:

What is needed is to show a meaning in some unmistakable form, and then, when various people have identified it in their own minds and recognized it as worth naming, to give it a name. The question is simply of finding a way in which one can give thought an objective existence. [...] All the powerful motives which will not go into words and which are a cause of constant lying and misunderstanding, could be tracked down, given visible form, agreed upon, and named.¹³⁵

However, Orwell is not so naïve as to advocate that words are somehow absolutely inherent in the objects and hence could not be altered. As already hinted at the beginning of this chapter and as Delany argues, Orwell is well aware that language and the world are two separate entities with little

¹³² Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 134-135.

¹³³ Orwell, “New Words.”

¹³⁴ Orwell, “New Words.”

¹³⁵ Orwell, “New Words.”

in common.¹³⁶ That fact, nevertheless, does not dissuade Orwell from his endeavour to tie words and sounds as closely as possible with non-linguistic reality to the point when he states that “concrete words are better than abstract ones, and that the shortest ways of saying anything is the best”¹³⁷ and that there should be more onomatopoetic words in which “certain sounds – would come to be associated with certain meanings.”¹³⁸

Orwell’s mistrust of abstract words and his effort to tie language to reality results from his fear of Saussure’s regard of language as something purely psychological, lying parallel to non-linguistic reality. As shown in Chapter One, Saussure in his system completely brackets the non-linguistic reality. As some critics of Saussure in Orwell’s time, Orwell interprets this as an absolute denial of physical reality and another ideological tool promoting solipsism. This point will be addressed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it seems that while Orwell holds that signs are ontologically arbitrary and do not reflect reality absolutely, he argues they still *indirectly* refer to it; they are still products of human experience in the world and hence cannot be absolutely arbitrary, or at least not to the same degree.

As previously illustrated, this critique is currently justified, for Saussure’s system has been modified to be more physical and less arbitrary than it had been before. It seems that while Orwell admits that words have in essence little in common with reality, it does not follow that one should act accordingly and not attempt to unify them. As Orwell similarly to most empiricists¹³⁹ admits it is conceivable that the “the real world is an illusion” but this should not lead to complete disregard of “the evidence of one’s senses.”¹⁴⁰ In Orwell’s system, unlike in Saussure’s, physical reality should be acknowledged and act as a point from which people should always start before they proceed to inevitable abstraction: “Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one’s meaning as clear as one can through pictures and sensations.”¹⁴¹ One should let “meaning choose the word, and not the other way about.”¹⁴² As will be discussed in Chapter Three, Orwell is worried that if people acted according to Saussurean system and stopped associating

¹³⁶ Paul Delany, “Words, Deeds and Things: Orwell’s Quarrel with Language,” in *George Orwell: A Reassessment*, ed. Peter Buitenhuis and Ira B. Nadel (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 93.

¹³⁷ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 42.

¹³⁸ Orwell, “New Words.”

¹³⁹ Dave Robinson and Bill Mayblin, *Introducing Empiricism: A Graphic Guide*, ed. Richard Appignanesi (London: Icon Books Ltd, 2013), 7.

¹⁴⁰ Orwell, Sonia B., and Ian Angus, editors. *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell Volume II: My Country Right or Left 1940-1943*. (Seeker & Warburg, 1970), 63.

¹⁴¹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 138.

¹⁴² Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 138.

language with outer reality altogether, there would cease to be another standard limiting exploitation of meanings. In order to prevent that Orwell tries to find some common referent, an undisputable standard outside of the realm of words which would serve as a corrective system for limiting disgraceful and insincere twisting of a language. Orwell holds there is nothing more real and undisputable than non-linguistic reality and for this reason regards reality and the empirical experience of it as the most appropriate, uniform standard “that can be referred to without any chance of misunderstanding”¹⁴³ and passed “from one person to another.”¹⁴⁴ He even entertains the hope of making language as precise as mathematical language in which “the necessity for lying would never exist.”¹⁴⁵

A bold idea, but its feasibility should be questioned. As demonstrated in Chapter One, words do not retain reality or “true” meanings in them. Rather, by appealing to background knowledge in human minds they function as cues for constructing or eliciting ones. In other words, meaning is constructed in minds rather than found in words or reality. Due to that, there is little chance of arriving at the exact same interpretation and that it would be sustainable, for interpretations are diverse due to different autobiographies (differences in background knowledge/MR) of those who undertake the process of interpretation. In other words, meanings cannot be settled through common experience accurately because they cannot be experienced (interpreted) in exactly the same way. Even if people did experience reality identically, to communicate the experience would mean defining it in language. Language functions as a compressing device: therefore, the experience of reality would not be accurately contained in the word, but stripped off detail and compressed into a sign according to pre-established patterns in MR. Admittedly, there are always similarities of interpretations among people; otherwise they would not be able to understand each other. However, it will never be absolute since there is no absolute, fixed meaning. Different people may thus associate completely different denotations and connotations with the word.

Therefore, successful communication does not depend on the extent that language refers to reality or some external truth, but rather on the extent of individual perceptions and interpretations of reality are shared and unified (i.e. the most dominant) in the particular context. It is hardly feasible to refer to reality in such a precise way so as to make lying and

¹⁴³ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL2*, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL2*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Orwell, “New Words.”

misunderstanding impossible, as Orwell seems to imply, for reality does not serve as a referent that can be relied on. In fact, in most cases, there is nothing to rely on to begin with.

Saussure's system of signs has indeed been reformed to be more physical and motivated, but it seems that for Orwell's arguments to be valid it is not still physical and motivated enough. For example, how could one attach ontologically verifiable and unquestionable existence to abstract concepts such as "freedom", "ideology" and "democracy"? Such words are ambiguous and vague because they do not denote physical objects but rather ideas and processes; they do not physically exist outside the mind. That being said, most words that are commonly used do not physically exist and hence cannot be ontologically verified and referred to in any clear way. Even specific words such as "a car" or "a dog" are inevitably generalizations and simplifications of non-linguistic objects. Admittedly, as opposed to abstract words, their signifieds bear some resemblance to real cars and dogs and hence the relation between their signifieds and real objects cannot be, as Orwell correctly criticizes, completely arbitrary, but they will achieve the level of accuracy as Orwell's claims tend to assume; they are solely their representations.

Thus, even if people were sincere and expressed their thoughts through the clearest and simplest language imaginable, there would be no guarantee of the uniform interpretation. Hence, even those consciously sincerest could ultimately be deemed sincere by some and insincere by others. In other words, the subject cannot opt to be utterly sincere because the very nature of language renders it impossible. Orwell's insistence on empiricism, which falls within the British empirical tradition since Locke, as a means of a corrective system against false consciousness, lying or a uniform starting point (common referent) is thus untenable. His empirical bypass of the linguistic mediation of reality cannot prevent inevitable ambiguity, vagueness and generalization in language. Nevertheless, the system Orwell proposes might render language more visible (plastic) to people. Arguably, this is the underlying reason Orwell resorts to empiricism; to make meanings more transparent and hence seemingly controllable. However, this is possible to a limited extent, for most words are not accompanied by clear images.

Orwell seems to be preoccupied with meanings of individual words and phrases isolated both from co-textual, situational and cultural context. In other words, Orwell similarly to early structuralists focuses on semantic meaning and omits pragmatic meaning, which is understandable, for in Orwell's time pragmatics was in its infancy. Nevertheless, current linguistic theories show that the process of interpretation is more complex than just the decoding of individual words

separated from context. Rather, words and their meanings constantly fluctuate as they enter into relations and struggles between one another, forming complex, contextually and subjectively contingent frames, images and structures that are employed to make sense of reality. Thus, language is significantly less direct and transparent than Orwell envisions. His (and early structuralists') conception of language appears to be rather stable and simplistic; it fails to take into account the complexity of the whole process of interpretation and both internal and external factors that affect it.

As poststructuralists have proven, the way people arrive at the final interpretation largely depends on different contexts which provoke particular interpretations that appear to be natural and legitimized but in fact may result from ideological efforts to naturalize the interpretations into common sense and sustain them as long as desired. It is this process of naturalizing of particular meanings into common-sense that contributes to constructing and influencing human reality, thoughts and actions, for people are generally unaware of this naturalized and possibly ideological basis within themselves in the first place.

Thus, it is important to stress that the definitions Orwell, or the individuals assigned to the task, would strive to create would again originate from their own common sense assumptions, philosophy, views and beliefs. In other words, they would be based on their naturalized, common-sense knowledge. And this knowledge or, the member resources human beings have in their minds and employ on a daily basis are, as suggested in Chapter One, at least to some extent ideologically tainted.

Hence, Orwell's idea to attribute words unquestionable meanings is not only hopeless but also potentially dangerous, for it may consist in an attempt to ground and promote specific interpretations over others in order to naturalize them and create the illusion they are the only available interpretations. As has been postulated, it is at this point, i.e. when people cease regarding signs as being arbitrary and hence changeable that "the truth" is established. Thus, Orwell's prescriptive tendency would currently be regarded by most linguists as an effect of ideological power. The main problem is that Orwell's prescriptivism, which is rooted in a rather strict empiricism, may paradoxically lead to the rigidity of meanings and consequently thoughts. In fact,

some sources claim to observe a negative impact Orwell's prescriptions may already have had on people who apply them unconditionally.^{146 147}

Presently, it is stressed that it is the abstract, vague and unconstrained language that is one of the main sources of creativity. Being able to challenge someone's definitions and provide one's own is the basis of freedom of speech and thought. The more rigid and automatic language in society, the less creative and disruptive discourse can be expected. Orwell realizes the danger and adds:

Notice, I am not saying that art would necessarily improve if words conveyed meaning more reliably. For all I know art thrives on the crudeness and vagueness of language. I am only criticizing words in their supposed function as vehicles of thought. And it seems to me that from the point of view of exactitude and expressiveness our language has remained in the Stone Age.¹⁴⁸

Orwell repeats that numerous times and it is crucial to emphasize it. It is not about "setting up of a 'standard English' which must never be departed from."¹⁴⁹ Nor does it involve establishing the ultimate, unchangeable meaning and obliterating those which do not comply. After all, the very last prescriptive rule at the end of *Politics and the English Language* is: "Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous."¹⁵⁰ Orwell realizes his empiricism should not be taken to the extreme. In fact, as will be exemplified in the following chapter, Orwell is so critical of radical empiricism and rigidity of meanings that he depicts it in "The A vocabulary" of Newspeak in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Vagueness, Orwell knows, is a feature which should not be removed from language as some of his critics may have implied. He is not concerned with the discourse that depends on vagueness in order to flourish, but mainly with political and media discourse where language is to function transparently "as an instrument for expressing", but in fact serves the opposite purpose; "for concealing or preventing thought."¹⁵¹ Orwell thus distinguishes two functions of language; one that is supposed to be as sincere and precise as possible and the other which is supposed to be vague to provoke, disturb and create. And it is for the former case that Orwell tries to establish a type of what could be collectively referred to as "Orwell's corrective

¹⁴⁶ Carl Freedman, "Writing, Ideology, and Politics: Orwell's 'Politics and the English Language' and English Composition," *College English* 43, no. 4 (April 1981): 339, accessed October 16, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/377118>.

¹⁴⁷ George Y. Trail, "Teaching Argument and the Rhetoric of Orwell's 'Politics and the English Language'," *College English* 57, no. 5 (September 1995): 570,582, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/378827>.

¹⁴⁸ Orwell, "New Words."

¹⁴⁹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 138.

¹⁵⁰ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 139.

¹⁵¹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 139.

system” that he hopes would serve for limiting *extremely* insincere and intentional twisting (for examples, see Chapter Three) of language and thus maintain a state of relative equilibrium.

2.6 Language and Truth

Admittedly, this system would be hardly sufficient and its foundations inevitably ideological and possibly dangerous. However, though Orwell, similarly to thinkers as Fairclough and Chomsky, with his definition of ideology presupposes the existence of a place devoid of it, it is questionable he would believe this achievable in the foreseeable future. Orwell admits that notions of justice, liberty and objective truth “may be illusions, but they are very powerful illusions. The belief in them influences conduct, national life is different because of them.”¹⁵² Orwell thus refrains from sceptical postmodernists who hold that since absolute truth might be unattainable and inexpressible by means of language, it is futile to search for it. Unlike them, Orwell stresses that “a man feels the truth of what he is saying” and should “say what he really thinks, what he really feels”¹⁵³, while being in alignment with reality as closely and sincerely as possible despite the societal and ideological factors by which the subject is conditioned: “What is really at issue is the right to report contemporary events truthfully, or as truthfully as is consistent with the ignorance, bias and self-deception from which every observer necessarily suffers.”¹⁵⁴ This is what Orwell means by sincerity. Being sincere does not mean being absolutely right. What the individual says is not so important as long as he says it and says it with sincerity. It is this speaking and writing with sincerity that Orwell equates with speaking and writing the truth.

According to Orwell, such sense of the truth is vital, for absolute relativism might be detrimental: “The friends of totalitarianism in this country usually tend to argue that since absolute truth is not attainable, a big lie is no worse than a little lie.”¹⁵⁵ Orwell himself acknowledges that “the best books of any one age have always been written from several different viewpoints.” But some of these viewpoints are “palpably more false than others.”¹⁵⁶ Thus, as some present-day

¹⁵² Orwell and Angus, CEJL2, 63.

¹⁵³ George Orwell, “Literature and Totalitarianism,” Orwell.ru, last modified September 24, 2015, http://orwell.ru/library/articles/totalitarianism/english/e_lat.

¹⁵⁴ Orwell and Angus, CEJL4, 61.

¹⁵⁵ Orwell and Angus, CEJL4, 64.

¹⁵⁶ Orwell and Angus, CEJL4, 223.

linguists such as Fairclough, Goatly and Chomsky, Orwell dismisses absolute relativism and maintains that though all claims are ideological and biased, some claims are less insincere (not necessarily truer) and closer to reality than others. However, as has been described, this distinction is problematic, for it is difficult to determine and agree on the criteria for discrimination. Orwell is no exception in this regard; his standards remain unclear. Nevertheless, it seems that contrary to most contemporary linguists, Orwell lays far greater emphasis on non-linguistic reality and views empirical evidence of it as one of the main criteria.

As shown in Chapter One, the objective, universal truth may be unattainable but this should not justify indifference and resignation. Conversely, people should seek for provisional truths and interpretations and attempt to communicate them as effectively as possible despite the limitations of language. This attitude is necessary to secure plurality of discourses and, more importantly, generate enough discourse struggle, for in the societies where a number of discourses prevails over others, the resistance to ideology is exceedingly difficult. Orwell touches upon this when he states:

The fallacy is to believe that under a dictatorial government you can be free *inside*. [...] The greatest mistake is to imagine that the human being is an autonomous individual. The secret freedom which you can supposedly enjoy under a despotic government is nonsense, because your thoughts are never entirely your own.¹⁵⁷ It not only forbids you to express – even to think – certain thoughts, but it dictates what you shall think, it creates ideology for you, it tries to govern your emotional life as well as setting up a code of conduct.¹⁵⁸

Thus, Orwell and present-day thinkers alike maintain that in such discursively constrained societies it would be nearly unimaginable to produce fruitful discourse but rather continue reproducing or cease producing it altogether. As Orwell observes, it leads to orthodoxy and “orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style.”¹⁵⁹ The creative production is thus limited, for “the imagination, like certain wild animals, will not breed in captivity.”¹⁶⁰ The “prisoners” of such societies would resemble the “dummies” – the living, uncreative puppets, controlled by invisible strings of powerful puppeteers, filled with orthodox beliefs, indifferent to the origins of those beliefs, taking them for granted and uncritically reproducing them. In order to produce creative discourse, Orwell holds, one cannot be censured by the constraints of society but “think fearlessly, and if one thinks fearlessly one cannot be politically orthodox.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 159-160.

¹⁵⁸ Orwell, “Literature and Totalitarianism.”

¹⁵⁹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 135.

¹⁶⁰ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 72.

¹⁶¹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLA*, 66.

The pre-fabricated and unproductive phrases, intentionally ambiguous and pretentious words and constructions etc. are, in Orwell's opinion, far from fearless, autonomous, creative and sincere production of discourse but rather an "unavoidable result of self-censorship."¹⁶² Those people do not communicate what they sincerely think and feel and make no effort to change it. Rather, they keep producing what is expected from them. According to Orwell, these semantic swindles render sincere thinking and communication more difficult and hence he warns against their usage. Their overuse is convincing proof for him that one either unintentionally or intentionally fabricates and masks his feelings and opinions behind the veil of *excessive* ambiguity even though they might have expressed themselves in a much less ambiguous, sincerer (though, as previously detailed, never completely unambiguous and sincere) way.

2.7 The Importance of Vigilance

Similarly to most postmodernists, Orwell contends that resistance to ideology depends on awareness: "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance"¹⁶³ as well as on self-criticism: "It is a question of all of discovering what one really is, what one's own feelings are, and then making allowance for the inevitable bias."¹⁶⁴ Thoughts are under the threat of corruption not only from outside but also from within. As Orwell asserts, there are tendencies which "exist in all our minds and pervert our thinking, without necessarily occurring in a pure state or operating continuously."¹⁶⁵ Therefore, one has to be on the look-out "to keep his soul his own."¹⁶⁶ Only then will people be capable of sincerity to the best of their ability.

However, Orwell frequently criticizes ordinary citizens for their ignorance of politics, language and printed word, and regards them as people "unaware of being influenced by their inner life, or even of having any inner"¹⁶⁷ who mostly care about nothing but "the daily round of work, family life, darts at the pub, exercising the dog, mowing the lawn, bringing home the supper beer, etc. etc."¹⁶⁸ Moreover, they are unable to provide definitions of words like Capitalism, Socialism,

¹⁶² Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 66.

¹⁶³ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 294.

¹⁶⁴ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 431.

¹⁶⁵ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 427.

¹⁶⁶ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 294.

¹⁶⁷ Orwell, "New Words."

¹⁶⁸ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 435.

Communism, Anarchism etc., which despite being generalizations constitute important concepts in politics.¹⁶⁹

Therefore, just like today's linguists, Orwell warns that people be more aware of the meanings that language evokes in them. However, unlike them, Orwell is not convinced that most people are capable of such intellectual awareness by themselves, and that is why he not only describes what language is like but also prescribes what language *should* be like. Both contemporary linguists' and Orwell's fears of being exploited without conscious control are the same but their reactions/solutions are different.

¹⁶⁹ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 28.

3 NEWSPEAK

3.1 The Reduction of Vocabulary

If Orwell's views on language and thought are to be understood, the concept of Newspeak in which nearly all Orwell's ideas are realized should not be omitted.

Newspeak is an artificial language devised by Orwell for the purpose of his last novel called *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In 1984, Newspeak functions as the official language of Oceania with the aim to comply with "the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism."¹⁷⁰ Though the majority of citizens of Oceania have not yet fully acquired Newspeak, it has been a long term goal of Newspeak creators to establish it as a sole means of communication and ultimately eliminate Oldspeak (i.e. English) on which Newspeak is based.¹⁷¹

Newspeak is not an ordinary language in which vocabulary naturally grows, but as one of the engineers of Newspeak, Syme, explains to Winston, it is the opposite:

You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words -- scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We're cutting the language down to the bone. [...] Do you know that Newspeak is the only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year?¹⁷²

This reduction is conducted by a number of techniques. The first one concerns the syntactical and morphological structure which is quite unique. To name but a few unusual characteristics; all nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are interchangeable, synonyms are eliminated, prefixes and suffixes are overused, and all grammatical forms are highly regular.

As far as the reduction of vocabulary is concerned, it is likely that Orwell is inspired by an artificial language, constructed by the English linguist Charles Kay Ogden, called Basic English. Basic English is an oversimplified version of regular English with simpler grammar and vocabulary comprising only 850 essential words, mainly nouns.¹⁷³ Basic displays almost the same properties

¹⁷⁰ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 312.

¹⁷¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 312.

¹⁷² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 53-55.

¹⁷³ Charles K. Ogden, "Ogden's Basic English," Ogden's Basic English, last modified March 24, 2012, <http://ogden.basic-english.org/>.

as Newspeak. It removes all irregularities from English, heavily employs prefixes and suffixes instead of distinctive words and there are as few as 18 verbs.¹⁷⁴

More importantly, meanings of Basic's words are strictly defined and almost exclusively pointing to specific, mostly visible objects in reality. That is why there are so few verbs in Basic, for verbs refer to processes than physical objects. This transparency of Basic was thought to prevent lying and promote clarity of expression, for "what can be seen is not to be feared, what can be seen can be controlled."¹⁷⁵

According to Morris, Basic was intended to become an international language with the aim to provide easier communication among nations afflicted by war, and despite harsh critique implying that Basic was solely "a means of retaining ideological power internationally", its popularity was rapidly growing.¹⁷⁶ Orwell had been fond of Basic as well and expressed his positive attitude towards Basic in a number of his earlier essays, stating that it can "act as a sort of corrective to the oratory of statesmen and publicists."¹⁷⁷

This is hardly surprising, for as was argued in the previous chapter, Orwell himself attempts to construct such a corrective system. Nevertheless, when Basic begins to gain ground, Orwell too recognizes the potential danger and indirectly criticizes its insistence on well-defined and rigid meanings that should "never be departed from"¹⁷⁸ and states that he is aware of "the sinister way in which several living languages are being used for imperialist purposes."¹⁷⁹ It should be noted that Orwell never openly criticizes Basic nor does he criticize their creators. Most likely, he is solely fearful of specific features that Basic possesses and warns of the risks they might pose were they exploited. With such rigid language grounded in empiricism together with just a few words available it may be difficult to argue and object, for there is not enough vocabulary for rephrasing and essentially all secondary meanings "with all its vagueness and its useless shades"¹⁸⁰ are removed and prohibited.

¹⁷⁴ Charles K. Ogden, "Simplification of Grammar," Ogden's Basic English, last modified March 24, 2012, <http://ogden.basic-english.org/lbe4.html>.

¹⁷⁵ Mary J. Morris, "Bentham and Basic English: 'The Pious Founders' of Newspeak," in *George Orwell: A Reassessment*, ed. Peter Buitenhuis and Ira B. Nadel (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), 109.

¹⁷⁶ Morris, "Bentham and Basic English," 105.

¹⁷⁷ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL3*, 244.

¹⁷⁸ Orwell and Angus, *CEJL4*, 138.

¹⁷⁹ Morris, "Bentham and Basic English," 103.

¹⁸⁰ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 55.

Hence, it is a compelling reason why Orwell turns Basic into *The A vocabulary* in Newspeak and deliberately exaggerates it as a warning that Basic might be a precursor of Newspeak. This aspect will be scrutinized later in *The A vocabulary*.

Nevertheless, why all the reduction? The main premise of Newspeak is the belief that language and thought are to some extent interconnected. Newspeak might be viewed as an example of linguistic determinism, for as explained in the appendix, it is the main goal of Newspeak engineers to seek ways of rendering all thought (and particularly thought conflicting with Ingsoc ideology) inconceivable: “The purpose of Newspeak was [...] to make all other modes of thought impossible.”¹⁸¹ However, thoughts independent of language and the difficulties to obliterate them altogether are acknowledged:

It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought -- that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc -- should be literally unthinkable, *at least so far as thought is dependent on words*. [emphasis added]¹⁸²

This demonstrates a less strict theory previously defined as linguistic relativity – one of whose claims is that though not all thought is determined by language, language can still influence those thought processes which are to do with it. As revealed in the second chapter, Orwell’s conception of language and thought in his essays seems to be similar to that of linguistic relativity. For Orwell, language may influence and steer thinking in a particular direction and thus he urges people to pay attention to the language they are confronted with as well as to the language they produce.

Nonetheless, in Newspeak, thinking is in principle undesirable: “Newspeak was designed not to extend but to diminish the range of thought.”¹⁸³ Therefore, in order to diminish thought processes, language is to be reduced as well. This is the main reason for the immense reduction of Newspeak vocabulary and overall simplification of grammar, syntax and pronunciation. As Syme explains during the conversation with Winston: “Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.”¹⁸⁴

Hence, not only will heretical thought be reduced to nameless concepts, but also nearly inexpressible, for there will be no linguistic means to do so. The Party comprehends that it is a

¹⁸¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 312.

¹⁸² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 312.

¹⁸³ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 313.

¹⁸⁴ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 55.

difficult and arguably preposterous task to reduce all modes of thought any time soon, but provided there were no elaborate words capable of expressing abstract concepts, it would be difficult to develop any meaningful, articulate arguments against the ideology of Ingsoc:

in Newspeak the expression of unorthodox opinions, above a very low level, was well-nigh impossible. [...] It would have been possible, for example, to say *Big Brother is ungood*. But this statement, which to an orthodox ear merely conveyed a self-evident absurdity, could not have been sustained by reasoned argument, because the necessary words were not available. Ideas inimical to Ingsoc could only be entertained in a vague wordless form, and could only be named in very broad terms which lumped together and condemned whole groups of heresies without defining them in doing so.

All potentially dangerous ideas will therefore either remain in the mind of rebels, incapable of jeopardizing the doctrine of Ingsoc or eliminated by means of *doublethink*; “the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them.”¹⁸⁵ This technique is essential, for people may still remember the old meanings from Oldspeak.

In the long term, however, it is intended that Newspeak become the primary mode of communication in Oceania as soon as 2050. The Party is well aware that not until Newspeak has become the mother tongue of new generations, will it be possible to fully eradicate heretical thought:

In 1984, when Oldspeak was still the normal means of communication, the danger theoretically existed that in using Newspeak words one might remember their original meanings. [...] but within a couple of generations even the possibility of such a lapse would have vanished.¹⁸⁶

However, as clarified in Chapter One, the absence of a word does not entail the absence of a thought, for most thinking is done independent of language. Furthermore, the concepts which are lacking in the semantics of a language can be grasped and expressed by other words in a roundabout way. Orwell seems to be aware of that and this fact may account for not just a minuscule reduction of vocabulary but a *massive* one. Such a drastic reduction might render thinking about forbidden concepts more difficult, for available words make the information more accessible in memory, though again, not entirely unattainable.

Therefore, once Newspeak has become the mother tongue of all citizens of Oceania, heretical thought would still be theoretically possible but substantially diminished and solely retained in wordless form. Nevertheless, objections, questions, rebellious statements and any plurality of discourses capable of attacking and unmasking ideology due to an immense reduction

¹⁸⁵ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 223.

¹⁸⁶ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 323-324.

of words would be nearly inconceivable. Ultimately, the simplicity and reduction of language as depicted in Basic and Newspeak would not be beneficial for independent, fearless and creative thinking that Orwell promotes and that might be the reason why he opts to depict it as a warning in his novel. The reduction in Newspeak constitutes a powerful tool which supports apathetic, uncritical, and a thoughtless mind as physiologically possible, making it ready for the final implementation of the political ideology.

To achieve this, Newspeak comprises an elaborate system of vocabulary divided into three groups: “*The A vocabulary*”, “*The B Vocabulary*” and “*The C Vocabulary*.”¹⁸⁷ The first two categories will be for their importance examined in this paper. Both should be treated separately, for each constitutes Orwell’s critique of a unique phenomenon that he believes is present in the English language and that he intentionally takes to the extreme to bring it to attention.

3.2 The A Vocabulary

According to the appendix “*The principles of Newspeak*” of 1984, *The A vocabulary* comprises items necessary for everyday life. Thus, verbs and nouns denoting simple things and processes belong to this category: “things as eating, drinking, working, putting on one's clothes, going up and down stairs, riding in vehicles, gardening, cooking, and the like.”¹⁸⁸ Several words are provided as examples: “hit, run, dog, tree, sugar, house, field.”¹⁸⁹ These lexical items are seemingly the same as in English. However, this is not so. Since the vocabulary of Newspeak is constantly being reduced, there are just a few of such words available.

Nevertheless, the most striking difference concerns the meaning. As explained in the appendix, meanings of words in *The A Vocabulary* are “far more rigidly defined. All ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them.”¹⁹⁰ Hence, given that these words stand for simple concrete objects and processes observable in reality and all secondary meanings have been abandoned and forbidden to use, it would be “quite impossible to use the *A vocabulary* for literary purposes or philosophical discussion.”¹⁹¹ Thus, *The A vocabulary* is intended to solely “express

¹⁸⁷ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 313.

¹⁸⁸ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 313-314.

¹⁸⁹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 314.

¹⁹⁰ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 314.

¹⁹¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 314.

simple, purposive thoughts, usually involving concrete objects or physical actions”¹⁹² of little or no political importance.

The A vocabulary seems to be a critique of the extreme simplicity and rigidity of Basic, whose vocabulary is strictly tied to a verifiable physical reality and its meanings are never to be departed from. Despite the fact the simplicity and endeavour to anchor words to reality is, as has been proposed in the second chapter, the gist of Orwell’s approach to language, thought and their rejuvenation, he acknowledges that radical empiricism and insistence on fixed meanings are nonsensical and may be exploited as ideological tools. Thus, *The A vocabulary* might be viewed as an exemplification of the probable outcome if either or both Orwell’s and Ogden’s empirical prescriptivism were carried to extremes and applied ruthlessly. Such simple and rigid language strictly grounded in physical reality, together with just a few words available, Orwell realizes, would lead to creative stagnation and the impossibility to criticize any social system by an articulate argument. This is clearly reflected in the final scene of *1984* when Winston is unable to develop arguments against O’Brien.¹⁹³

For such arguing and critique, far more words denoting abstract concepts and ideas are necessary. These are to be accounted for in *The B vocabulary*.

3.3 The B Vocabulary

The B vocabulary is a much broader category, which due to unique morpho-syntax, has little in common with current English. Contrary to the simplicity of *The A vocabulary*, the B category exclusively comprises abstract words “deliberately constructed for political purposes [...] barely intelligible to anyone who had not mastered the language as a whole.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, all ideas and meanings of political significance are included in this category.¹⁹⁵

Compared to *The A vocabulary*, words in *The B vocabulary* are not reduced to a specific meaning but, on the contrary, extended to the point when they pack “whole ranges of ideas into a few syllables.”¹⁹⁶ The main purpose of *The B vocabulary* is thus to squeeze the remaining ideas

¹⁹² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 314.

¹⁹³ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 278-279.

¹⁹⁴ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 316.

¹⁹⁵ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 318.

¹⁹⁶ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 316.

and concepts from the destroyed words into a few ideologically selected words which are however “intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them.”¹⁹⁷ For example, words such as liberty and equality and all similarly undesirable concepts are to be expressed by a single word “crimethink.”¹⁹⁸ This comprehensive label deliberately compels its user to think about the concepts of liberty and equality in terms of crime - as if the notions themselves were forbidden.

As shown in Chapter One, according to linguistic relativity this thesis might be considered valid, for semantic categories may provoke (though not determine) distinctive types of thinking, some of which might be erroneous and more harmful than others. This view is held by many (though not all) linguists of today.

While *The A vocabulary* criticizes an extreme simplicity and rigidity of meanings, *The B vocabulary* aims at the opposite extreme – extreme ambiguity and vagueness which in Orwell’s view is on the rise and might result from the fact that people follow Saussure’s conception of language as unmotivated by reality. As has been argued, Orwell regards this as a step towards solipsism. For him, non-linguistic reality and empirical evidence of it should be the starting point before it proceeds to inevitable ambiguity.

However, as outlined in the previous chapter, though Orwell is right that signs might bear some resemblance to real objects, most of them do not have any physical boundaries as to what meanings they might acquire, and what contexts they might be applied to. As a result, one sign, such as “fascism” may be used as “a blanket term” for a variety of contradictory concepts and ideas.

The B vocabulary is the prime example of that. None of the words in *The B vocabulary* have any limits as to what meanings they might take on and what contexts they might be used in. *The B vocabulary* is thus completely Saussurean in the sense that its words are treated as having *nothing* to do with reality. The link between signifiers and their signifieds is either eroded or non-existent. Hence, as explained in the appendix, it is conceivable to translate the whole passage from the *Declaration of Independence* into the single word “crimethink.”¹⁹⁹ In the modern terminology, all words in *The B vocabulary* might be considered floating signifiers that are filled with whatever signifieds (be it the whole paragraphs) the ideology of Ingsoc requires. And the immense reduction of vocabulary contributes to making this process easier.

¹⁹⁷ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 316.

¹⁹⁸ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 318.

¹⁹⁹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 325.

As a result, the greater flexibility of language and consequently the truth is achieved. In *1984*, the truth is never stable. It alters when needed by the Party. As O'Brien asserts during the torturing scene of Winston: "whatever the Party holds to be truth, *is* truth."²⁰⁰ Once the new truth has been established, all evidence of the former truth is obliterated and rendered untrue by The Ministry of Truth. Hence, in *1984*, no reliable standard (or signified) either in the form of objective truth, facts, empirical evidence, or simple morals that could be employed to differentiate between various claims for truth is present. In the ideology of Ingsoc, the very reality and the past are deemed to be purely psychological, existing "in the human mind, and nowhere else."²⁰¹ Empiricism is thus rejected and solipsism promoted. And since there are assumed to be no stable physical facts outside of the mind that could be relied on and used for verification, everything is alterable at a moment's notice.

Hence, in *1984*, it might occur that "in philosophy, or religion, or ethics, or politics, two and two might make five, but when one was designing a gun or an aeroplane they had to make four."²⁰² This way, Orwell stresses that some truths and standards however illusionary, arbitrary and unattainable they might be, should remain true and stable until proven wrong or useless. As noted in Chapter Two, though it is difficult to determine what they precisely all are, Orwell similarly to some contemporary thinkers emphasizes the importance of standards that should prevent this ultra-relativism in which *all* claims for truth are on the same level until the Party decides to elevate a particular claim above others. Only if these standards are preserved will it be possible to determine what claims are less false than others and subject them to critique.

As described in Chapter Two, Orwell's fear of being dislocated from one of those standards by Saussure's anti-realistic, needlessly relativizing system ultimately results in his desperate attempt to safely tether words to the standard whose existence, in his philosophically realistic view, should not be denied – the existence of the physical world.

Contemporary linguists would refrain from this empirical position and focus on descriptivism rather than prescriptivism, while ceaselessly seeking the truth in competing discourses and the basic, universal principles (human nature) that some hope might one day serve, contrary to the non-linguistic reality, as an objective corrective system/standard that Orwell is so eager to establish. Nevertheless, it is probable they would agree that neither *The A Vocabulary* nor

²⁰⁰ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 261.

²⁰¹ Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 261.

²⁰² Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 206.

The B Vocabulary would be beneficial to language and thought, for both constitute artificial and dangerous intrusions that impede successful communication.

The realization of Newspeak as a sole means of communication is far-fetched and would be hardly feasible. Such control of language and thought would require immense coercive power, but even then, as elaborated above, this might not be physiologically enough for achieving all of the Party's objectives. The whole concept of Newspeak is, judging by the satirical tone in which the appendix is written, deliberately exaggerated by Orwell in order to draw attention to seemingly unimportant aspects of language which may potentially be exploited. After all, Orwell admits that he writes "because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention."²⁰³ And it is this conscious awareness that Orwell believes is an antidote to the realization of Newspeak and that many people, including the Proles in *1984* lack. As the well-known, authorless quote goes: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Newspeak is the result of good people doing nothing. Let's not make the same mistake.

²⁰³ Orwell and Angus, *CEJLI*, 6.

4 CONCLUSION

As with many contemporary linguists, Orwell observes the limits of language to reflect thought and reality accurately. Similarly, he strives to avoid automatic reproduction of discourses and promote their plurality and clarity by raising critical awareness and self-criticism. However, most people are indifferent to meanings that language evokes in them and, since language and society are inseparable entities influencing one another, they might be prone to being passive reproducers rather than active contributors. Orwell endeavours to prevent that but contrary to present-day linguists who adopt a non-intrusive, descriptive approach, he decides to make use of empirical prescriptivism to achieve rejuvenation of language, thought and society regardless of its limits and potential dangers of achieving the opposite result if taken to the extreme. By the unification of thought and reality Orwell desperately attempts to find an acceptable compromise, a state of equilibrium, between two radical positions; extreme rigidity (and simplicity) of Ogden's Basic and extreme ambiguity that might partly stem from Saussure's original, anti-empirical version of his system – neither of which, as Orwell correctly criticizes in the form of *A* and *B* vocabulary of Newspeak, would be beneficial to language and thought were these systems applied and followed unconditionally.

Nonetheless, while Orwell's indirect critique of Saussure's denial of non-linguistic reality in his system of signs might be considered valid, Orwell's corrective system based on anchoring words to reality with the promise of rendering lying and misunderstanding impossible is at least on a large scale untenable, for non-linguistic reality most of the time does not function as a reliable, uniform referent independent of contextual and subjective contingency. His prescriptivism might make language more transparent to some degree and prevent/expose the most blatant exploitations of language, but it might easily become a burden hindering creativity were it applied ruthlessly.

Thus, the system remains a bold but desperate and potentially dangerous attempt to establish a sense of stability in much more complex and chaotic world of human language, thought and reality. It relies on pretending that language corresponds to the non-linguistic reality more than it really does and on acting accordingly. It depends on the individual's sincerity in the world where sincerity is due to the very nature of language, thought and reality at least for the time being unattainable.

Yet, in various claims Orwell displays an outstanding insight even with regard to contemporary theories such as linguistic relativity. Though the absence of language does not entail absence of thought and the ultimate goal of the Party is thus untenable, the semantics of language may indeed influence thinking. Therefore, the reduction of words may render rebellious thinking and speaking more difficult and ideologically pre-selected words may provoke certain ideologically-motivated thoughts.

As some modern thinkers, Orwell keeps a promise of achieving unbiased reality and sets against absolute relativism in which all truths are equal. Though his standards for discrimination are just as unclear and problematic, some standards however illusionary, arbitrary and unclear as they currently might be, Orwell emphasizes, must be held and protected, for their absence, as Orwell depicts in *1984*, hinders the production of new discourses and renders the differentiation between even the most basic claims for truth impossible. Language should be allowed to transform and claims should be reconsidered but some truths are, Orwell wants to convey, less false and insincere than others and must remain stable until proven empirically wrong or are no longer useful “fictions.”

Though Orwell might be mistaken in some of his arguments, his powerful rhetoric and eloquence remain engrossing to many readers to this day. And isn't this what he wants? Raise public awareness about things that without their knowing continue to influence their lives?

5 RESUMÉ

Cílem této práce je s využitím relevantních sekundárních zdrojů zmapovat způsoby, jakými Orwell ve svém díle nahlíží na jazyk a s ním spojené koncepty. Práce je rozdělena na tři kapitoly. První kapitolou je teoretická část, která je rozdělena na šest podkapitol.

První podkapitola se zabývá kontroverzním spojením jazyka a myšlení. Postoje se dají rozdělit na dva protikladné proudy, z nichž jeden zastává, že jazyk determinuje myšlení (tj. lingvistický determinismus) a druhý, že jazyk a myšlení nemají nic společné. V současné době převažuje konsenzus, že jazyk může ovlivnit (nikoliv determinovat), myšlení a způsob, jakým lidé vnímají realitu. Absence jazykové kategorie tedy neznamená absenci myšlenky, ale jejich přítomnost ulehčuje dostupnost.

Druhá podkapitola pojednává o spojení jazyka a reality. Saussure byl jeden z prvních, kdo zdůraznil, že jazyk nereflektuje realitu. Jazyk považoval za systém znaků, ve kterém je každý znak složen z označujícího a označovaného. Tvrdil, že spojení mezi označujícím a označovaným je arbitrární, a proto ve svém systému nepřiznává existenci reality, za což později sklidil kritiku. Současní lingvisté nyní uznávají relativní ontologickou motivaci znaků.

Tématem třetí podkapitoly je nestálost a nejednoznačnost znaků. Znaky se mění v závislosti na kontextu. Přestože některá slova mají poměrně uniformní významy, většina slov je abstraktních a neevokuje jasný, stabilní význam. Taková slova se často nazývají „plovoucí označující.“

Čtvrtá podkapitola se zabývá jazykem jakožto sociální praktikou. Saussure rozdělil jazyk na langue a parole. Langue představuje socializovanou strukturu znaků a parole samotnou řeč, závisující na individuální volbě. Post-strukturalisté ovšem upozornili, že konkrétní artikulace se musí podrobovat společenským konvencím a pravidlům. Moderní lingvisté tedy nepovažují jazyk za čistě lingvistický koncept, ale jako sociální praktiku, determinovanou sociálními strukturami. Argumentují, že znaky nejsou sociálně a historicky arbitrární, nýbrž motivované a důležitou roli v tomto procesu hraje ideologie.

Předposlední kapitola se zabývá jazykem, mocí, její naturalizací a reprodukcí. Jazyk je podle mnohých lingvistů kontaminován ideologií – souborem názorů, postojů a hodnot, které zkreslují vnímání reality. Toto pojetí je občas považováno za zastaralé, a tudíž mnoho lingvistů vnímá ideologii jako obecnou produkci významů. Tato definice je záměrně opatrná, protože se

většina lingvistů zdráhá rozlišovat mezi ideologickými a neideologickými významy. Někteří však přesto považují ideologii za význam ve službách moci.

Ke své funkci musí být ideologie naturalizována. Vzhledem k tomu, že významy nejsou ukotveny v realitě, či objektivní pravdě, konstantně podléhají změně. Lingvisté upozorňují, že jakákoliv snaha o zafixování určitého významu je výsledkem ideologické moci. Argumentují, že kreativita spočívá v abstraktním, nejasném jazyce.

Důležitou roli v naturalizaci hrají média, která produkují ohromné množství diskurzů a podněcují tak specifické interpretace. Vzhledem k tomu, že lidé často k diskurzům nepřistupují kriticky, dochází k internalizaci diskurzů dle dostupného kódu v nevědomí a následné reprodukci. Nevědomky se tak stávají pasivním prostředníkem pro jazyk dané kultury. Lingvisté tedy vyzdvihují důležitost kritiky k diskurzům, včetně určitého stupně sebekritiky.

Poslední podkapitola se věnuje jazyku a pravdě. Někteří myslitelé věří, že absolutní pravda je nedosažitelná. Ostatní si naopak zachovávají příslib dosažení objektivní reality, či doufají v nalezení univerzálních standardů, které by sloužily jako korektivní systém. Odmítají tak absolutní relativismus a i přes absenci jasných, objektivních měřítek si neodepírají možnost určovat, co lze považovat za ideologii a co nikoliv. Zároveň upozorňují, že žádný nárok na pravdu by neměl být považován za absolutní a nezpochybnitelný. Pravda by se měla vytvářet na základě neustále soupeřících diskurzů a nikdy nezaujímat neměnnou pozici.

Praktická část práce je rozdělena na dvě kapitoly, z nichž první kapitola se s využitím teoretického podkladu zabývá analýzou názorů Orwella na jazyk a myšlení, realitu, moc, pravdu apod.

Orwell si uvědomuje limity jazyka jakožto nástroje pro efektivní vyjádření myšlenek. Přesto tvrdí, že sémantika může ovlivnit směr myšlení, či samotnou myšlenku. Toto stanovisko je podobné tzv. lingvistické relativitě, tj. lehčí verze tzv. lingvistického determinismu, v jehož jádru je tvrzení, že jazyk determinuje myšlení. Orwellův postoj není tak radikální a je blíže k relativitě.

Orwell jako většina lingvistů věří, že spojení jazyka a reality je do určité míry arbitrární. Slova nejsou součástí objektů v realitě, a tedy mohou radikálně měnit své významy. Orwell konstatuje, že toto překrucování významu je výsledkem ideologie, která evokuje klamné významy a vytváří tak falešné vědomí. Jeho definice se tedy podobá Marxistické definici. Pokud je toto vymezení akceptováno, musí být přijat i určitý standard, podle kterého by bylo možné rozlišovat

mezi ideologickými a neideologickými významy. Podobně jako současní myslitelé, Orwell hledá takový nástroj, či standard, který by toto umožnil.

Orwell se dožaduje jasného a přesného jazyka. Zastává, že překrucování významů není produktem jednotlivce, nýbrž společnosti. Jazyk je tedy podle něj na rozdíl od raných strukturalistů neoddělitelný od vlivů společnosti. Znaky jsou ontologicky arbitrární, ale nejsou sociálně arbitrární, leč motivované. Z tohoto důvodu je Orwell přesvědčen, že zlepšením jazyka lze dosáhnout revitalizace myšlení a následně celé společnosti. Představuje „seznam švindlů“, který podle něj má přispět k tomuto zlepšení.

Orwell si podobně jako soudobí lingvisté uvědomuje problematickou povahu abstraktních slov. Například u slova „fašismus“ neexistuje téměř žádná hranice toho, co může znamenat a v jakém kontextu být použito. Tyto plovoucí označující mohou zahrnovat celé baterie rozlišných, často protichůdných významů. Orwell se táže, proč neexistuje lépe definovaný význam. Není tedy velkým příznivcem abstraktních slov, nicméně uznává jejich důležitost a neusiluje o jejich odstranění.

Dalším švindlem jsou mrtvá slova a již hotové fráze. Politický diskurz podle Orwella neobsahuje konkrétní jazyk, ale naopak je charakteristicky nejasný a spočívá v lepení otřepaných frází. Přestože je Orwell preskriptivní, jeho postoj má kognitivní přesah. Prohlašuje, že lidé nejsou producenty originálních kombinací slov, ale spíše reproducenty cizího diskurzu. Tento typ naturalizovaného, rituálního jazyka, který může vést k uniformitě myšlení, snížení kreativity a produktivity společnosti je to, čím se současní lingvisté zaobírají.

Orwell chce tomuto typu produkce zabránit a navrhuje vytvořit skupinu lidí, která by spolupracovala na co možná největší shodě u označujícího a označovaného. Jasnější definicí označujícího a provázáním označovaného s realitou si Orwell slibuje výrazné zefektivnění komunikace.

Tato snaha provázat jazyk a realitu je způsobena Saussurovým popřením fyzické reality v jeho systému znaků, což Orwell považuje za krok směrem k solipsismu. Orwell věří, že znaky jsou produktem zkušenosti v realitě. Tento názor je opodstatněný, protože Saussureho systém je nyní více fyzický a motivovaný. Pro Orwella je realita (a smyslový prožitek) to nejvíce reálné a tedy by měla sloužit jako výchozí bod před nevyhnutelným abstraktnem. Realitu považuje za nejlepší, univerzální standard, který by mohl sloužit jako korektivní systém.

Tento postoj sebou nese své limity a rizika. Slova neobsahují či nereflektují realitu, nýbrž přispívají k její utváření. Jelikož jsou významy konstruované, každý člověk interpretuje jiným způsobem, protože každý oplývá rozličnými prostředky pro interpretaci. Realita tedy nemůže být interpretována jednotně. I kdyby lidé vnímali realitu stejně a dohodli se na označovaném, pokud by usilovali o komunikaci tohoto konceptu, museli by jej definovat v jazyce. Jazyk funguje jako kompresor komplexních prožitků do jednoduchých znaků. Tím v sobě nezanechává realitu absolutně, nýbrž pouze relativně. A právě na této relativní podobnosti interpretace závisí úspěšnost komunikace. Absolutní, univerzální význam ale nemůže být dosažen, jak některá Orwellova tvrzení naznačují. Saussureho systém je nyní považován za více empirický, ale pro platnost Orwellova argumentu stále ne dostatečně. Realita ve většině případů nefunguje jako spolehlivý, výstupní bod, a tedy nemůže sloužit jako korektivní systém zabraňující lhaní, či nedorozumění.

Orwell se také zabývá jednotlivými slovy a frázemi izolovanými od jakéhokoli kontextu. Současní lingvisté se domnívají, že proces interpretace je mnohem komplexnější a závisí i na sociálním kontextu, který podněcuje určité interpretace za účelem legitimizace a naturalizace. Orwellova teorie významu je příliš stabilní a transparentní a nebere v potaz kontextuální a subjektivní podmíněnost, či další faktory, které ovlivňují proces interpretace. Mimoto, skupinou přiřazené významy by vycházely z jejich víry, vědění, filozofie a právě tyto prostředky mohou být ideologicky motivovány. Upřednostňování určitých interpretací, které je založeno na poměrně přísném empiricismu, tak může vést k rigiditě jazyka a myšlení. Podle současných teorií, je určitá nejasnost v jazyce nezbytná pro kreativitu a diverzitu ve společnosti.

Orwell si tento problém uvědomuje a odmítá rigidní jazyk. Chápe, že díky nejasnosti v jazyce, umění apod. prosperuje, a proto se snaží jazyk rozdělit na vágní jazyk, který má vzbuzovat rozdílné interpretace a na jazyk, který má komunikovat jasně – tj. např. politický diskurz. Pro tento účel požaduje co možná nejjasnější a nejpřesnější jazyk, k čemuž má dopomáhat jeho korektivní systém.

Přestože si Orwell jako někteří lingvisté ponechává naději na dosažení objektivní reality, je nepravděpodobné, že by to považoval za možné v dohledné době. Naopak prohlašuje, že přestože jsou všechny pravdy svým způsobem zaujaté, iluzorní a neupřímné, některé pravdy jsou méně zaujaté a neupřímné nežli ostatní. Orwell tedy odmítá radikální, skeptický postoj, v jehož jádru je tvrzení, že jelikož nelze dosáhnout jednotné pravdy, není důvod ji hledat.

Orwell tak podobně jako někteří lingvisté odmítá absolutní relativismus a rozlišuje mezi ideologickými a neideologickými významy. Takové vymezení je ovšem problematické, protože je obtížné stanovit standardy pro diferenciaci. Orwell není výjimkou, nicméně je zřejmé, že na rozdíl od současných myslitelů přikládá empiricismu podstatně větší důležitost.

Univerzální a objektivní pravda může být nedosažitelná, ale tato skutečnost by neměla vést k apatii. Naopak, podle Orwella člověk musí věřit v to, co cítí, co si myslí a nebát se to vyjádřit. Právě tento přístup vede k pluralitě významů a pravd, nežli k nezpochybnitelnému paradigmatu. Podobně jako moderní lingvisté Orwell tvrdí, že diskurzivně limitována společnost vede k ortodoxii a snížené kreativitě.

Orwell stejně jako soudobí lingvisté věří, že odolnost vůči ideologii závisí na bdělosti a sebekritice. Souhlasí, že tato schopnost lidem chybí. Ideologie je všudypřítomná. Lidé tedy musí být kritičtí nejen k jazyku, se kterým jsou ve styku, ale i k jazyku, který sami produkují. Na rozdíl od současných lingvistů, Orwell není přesvědčen, že jsou lidé intelektuálního uvědomění sami schopni, a proto je jeho přístup nejen deskriptivní, ale i preskriptivní.

Třetí část praktické části se zabývá redukcí a jednotlivými kategoriemi slovní zásoby v umělém jazyce Newspeak.

K redukci dochází pomocí několika technik, z nichž tou nejdůležitější je signifikantní redukce slovní zásoby. Tímto se Newspeak nápadně podobá umělému jazyku Basic, se kterým Orwell nejdříve sympatizoval, ale poté jej podrobil kritice.

Předpokladem Newspeak je, že jazyk a myšlení jsou vzájemně propojeny a omezením jednoho dojde k omezení druhého. Toto stanovisko opět zrcadlí lingvistickou relativitu. Cílem tvůrců Newspeak je omezení jazyka do té míry, aby došlo ke snížení autonomního myšlení. S myšlením „mimo jazyk“ se počítá, ale protože většina slov bude zničena a zakázána, značně se omezí jakýkoli lingvistický odpor proti systému.

Nicméně k úplnému vyhlazení myšlení nemůže dojít, protože absence slova neznamena absence myšlenky. Myšlenka se dá vyjádřit i jinými lingvistickými prostředky. To je pravděpodobně důvod pro skutečně masivní redukci slov. Tak extrémní redukce může myšlení zkomplikovat, ale rozhodně ne překazit. Přesto je redukce slov velmi silný nástroj pro vytvoření „podhoubí“ k indoktrinaci. K tomuto účelu je Newspeak vybaven třemi skupinami slovíček.

Slovní zásoba A zahrnuje jednoduchá slova pro vyjádření jednoduchých myšlenek. Významy těchto slov jsou striktně definovány a poukazují na konkrétní, fyzické objekty, či

procesy. Tímto Orwell opět kritizuje Basic. Podle něj by tak výrazně konkrétní jazyk, ve kterém by byly všechny sekundární významy odstraněny, vedl k úbytku schopnosti přemýšlet a argumentovat. I přesto, že Orwell rovněž usiluje o zakotvení jazyka v realitě, upozorňuje, že i tento postoj může být zneužit. K myšlení a argumentaci je nezbytné širší spektrum slov, včetně těch, které postrádají ontologický status. Taková slova jsou ovšem náplní *Slovní zásoby B*.

Slovní zásoba B oproti *Slovní zásoby A* zahrnuje ideologicky motivovaná slova, jenž svoji formou podbízí určité myšlenky. Na rozdíl od *Slovní zásoby A*, která kritizuje extrémní rigiditu a jednoduchost, *Slovní zásoba B* je kritikou opačného extrému – krajní nejednoznačnosti a fluidity významů, která podle Orwella může být zapříčiněna Saussorovým filozoficky anti-realistickým, relativizujícím systémem. Slova v B kategorii jsou extrémně fluidní a naprosto odtržená od reality. Umožňují tak neustálou změnu pravdy. Společně se systematickým ničením označovaného (standardů) v podobě faktů, pravdy a podporováním solipsismu je jakákoliv diferenciací a verifikací nároků na pravdu nemožná. Výsledkem je absolutní relativismus, ve kterém se i nelogická, protichůdná tvrzení mohou stát pravdou. Orwell tak jasně zdůrazňuje důležitost standardů, ať už jakkoliv iluzorních a arbitrárních, které zabrání těmto praktikám.

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