IDEOLOGIES OF LANGUAGE: AUTHORITY, CONSENSUS AND COMMONSENSE IN CANADIAN TALK ABOUT USAGE

By

Jaclyn Marie Rea
B.A., University College of the Fraser Valley, 1995
M.A., Simon Fraser University, 1998

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the
Department
of English

© Jaclyn Marie Rea 2006

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Summer 2006

All rights reserved.
This work may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or
other means, without permission of the author.

Approval

Name: Jaclyn Marie Rea

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy (English)

Title of Thesis: Ideologies of Language: Authority, Consensus and Commonsense in Canadian Talk about Usage

Examining Committee:

Chair: Dr. Margaret Linley
Assistant Professor of English

____

Dr. Janet Giltrow
Senior Supervisor
Professor of English
University of British Columbia

____

Dr. Richard Coe
Professor of English

____

Dr. Kathy Mezei
Professor of Humanities

____

Dr. Gary McCarron
Internal External Examiner
Assistant Professor
School of Communication

____

Dr. Margery Fee
External Examiner
Professor of English
University of British Columbia

Date Defended/Approved: Jun. 20/06

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY **library**

DECLARATION OF PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENCE

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection, and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Abstract

This study attempts to understand the tenacity of everyday talk about language and its seemingly effortless ability to present itself as commonsensical and authoritative. Focusing on Canadian public domains as important sites for the performance and play of language ideologies, this project addresses three interrelated concerns: the commonsensical character of these ideologies, the authoritative positions they offer, and the ways talk about language might manufacture consensus in the service of linguistic authority. Seeing the generic forms, vocabulary and grammar of this talk as central components of its saliency, I draw on recent research in new rhetorical genre theory and on linguistic pragmatic accounts of politeness and relevance. To examine emblematic methods of thinking and talking about language in Canadian locales, I analyze a cluster of terms that operate in an important genre related to the production of national identity: Canadian English dictionaries that market generic claims of national distinction via the codification of a national-linguistic consciousness. Inspecting the style of statements about language for evidence of a grammar of perspective and position measurable in its characteristic syntactic and pragmatic features, I examine a Canadian press style guide and letters to the editor for the ways these arbitrating texts might structure commonsense ideas about language.

My analysis indicates that the authority and thus tenacity of commonplace talk relies on the invocation of *doxa*, the appeal to a unified opinion, a shared linguistic consciousness that must be continually renewed and calibrated. In these locales, language itself becomes a place – or *topos* – where identifications and corresponding strategies of distinction are practised and enacted. I suggest that the very style of statements about language ratifies consensus, disperses talk about language into civil and civic atmospheres where the enactment of polite social orders secures the rulings of those who make authoritative claims on and about language. This study also found that the always-already relevance of commonplace statements lies in their ability to make mutually manifest, make 'public', a surplus of interest and identification that encourages new strategies of distinction and therefore new routes for the traffic in commonplace ideologies to take.

Keywords: language ideologies, Canada, commonsense, authority, politeness theory

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have provided me with the support and encouragement needed to complete this project. I am especially indebted to my supervisory committee for their expertise and advice. I would like to thank Janet Giltrow, my senior supervisor, for her interest in my work, her guidance and for the many ways she inspired me to go beyond the intellectual commonplace. Her inexhaustible curiosity about all things related to language resulted in the most wonderful conversations, which led me down the most unexpected and rewarding of paths. I was also fortunate to work with Richard Coe, whose rigorous attempts to understand how "wordlings" word contributed to my own understanding of why rhetorical studies of language matter. And, I was fortunate to work with Kathy Mezei, whose friendly encouragement and sound advice always came at just the right moment.

This project has benefited enormously from the support of my beloved friends and valued colleagues, all of whom have provided and continue to provide me with a lively intellectual community: Deanna Reder, Shurli Makmillen, Yaying Zhang, Kathryn Alexander, Jan Fraser, Nadeane Trowse, Marlene Sawatsky, Bonnie Waterstone, Daniel Dunford, Sharon Josephson, Lori Prodan, Sarah Parry, Dana Landry, Kim Norman, Nancy Gillespie, Tatiana Teslenko, Robert Alexander, Angela Mills, and Susan Spearey. In addition, I am indebted to The Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, whose support in the form of a doctoral award enabled me to complete my research.

I also wish to acknowledge those who, during my years as an undergraduate student, pointed me in the right direction: Professors Eric Davis, Al McNeil and Virginia Cooke for giving me a sense of what was possible, and Fay Hyndman and Gloria Borrows for offering me an invaluable opportunity to work with them in The UCFV Writing Centre.

Finally, I wish to thank my family, most especially my mother, Charmaine, and my son, Gordon, for their love and generosity. They are my inspiration and my compass, and it is to them that I dedicate this work.

Table of Contents

Approval ii

Abstract iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents v

Introduction 1

Authoritative Distinctions: Some Historical Commonplaces 3
Ideologies of Language: The Field 11
Rhetorical and Pragmatic Frameworks 19
'Canadian' Ideologies of Language: The Chapters 22

Chapter One Commonsense: Intelligibility and Authority in Language 27

Chapter Two Making Canadian English: "The Codification of Our Common Understanding" 49

Nation, History and Consciousness: Some Preliminaries 57
A Living Language: Paradoxes of Scene and Substance 62
The Making of Canadian English 73
Prelude to a National-Linguistic Consciousness 73
Stories of Existence and Non-Existence 79
Stories of Origin and Essence 87

Chapter Three The Grammaticalization of a Common Sense and Sensibility: Genteel-Scientific Talk in *The Globe and Mail Style Book* 108

Authority in Canadian Usage: An Ennobling Position 114
The Normative Authority of Imperatives 120
Unexpressed Contextual Implications 124
Rules of Grammar 127
Judgements about Language 130
Modality: The Deferment and Distribution of Authority 132

Chapter Four Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Public Talk and Mutual Assumption in Letters to the Editor 146

Letters to the Editor 146
Relevance and Authority: A Media Account 151
Relevance Theory: A Pragmatic Account 160
Contextual Effects and 'Popular' Assumptions 165
Letter Heads as Relevance Optimizers 165
Metaphor as Relevance Optimizer 178

Conclusion **188**
Appendix: Key Terms **195**
Works Cited **196**

Introduction

On Wednesday, May 26, 2004, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation aired "Talking Canadian," a CBC Newsworld documentary posing the question, "Why do English-speaking Canadians talk the way they do?" Implicit in this question is a commonplace assumption that English-speaking Canadians do talk in particular ways, ways that are decidedly and recognizably different from the ways of other speakers of English. In fact, the appeal of the documentary, a "light-hearted look at how we differ from the British and the Americans," lies in its agreeable construction of a linguistic difference rooted in historical and political experience: "Few of us are aware that the language we speak . . . has less to do with conscious choice than it has to do with our past: when and why we came here, where we settled and the tug of war between the British and American influences, which has been part of our live [sic] for centuries" ("The Canadian Experience"). This promotional appeal, however, raises another question: Why does such talk about language invariably lead down familiar paths of history, nation or identity? The simple answer, of course, is that such talk comforts, reassures some Canadians that their suspicions of linguistic difference are well-founded. More importantly, such talk corroborates the sense that linguistic difference is somehow a marker of national or personal difference and so perhaps reassures those who find it harder and harder to identify these differences. This congenial corroboration has a particular salience in Canada, where "the tug of war between the British and American influences" has produced a kind of anxiety of influence, one which reflects an enduring, sometimes sober, sometimes parodic, preoccupation with national self-determination and sovereignty. In other words, there are those Canadians who seem cheered by and who often cheer on difference.

The more complex answer, I think, lies elsewhere, nearby but elsewhere -- not in an enduring preoccupation with nation, history and identity *per se* but in the commonplace ways we talk about language, the ways we routinely attach conceptualizations of nation, history and identity to language itself.

> I was proofing an ad for Unicef just now, and got all warm and fuzzy when I noticed that they spelled "program" the way I was taught in school:

> programme. When I was growing up, it was mandatory that all words be spelled in the Canadian fashion, [sic] American spellings were considered incorrect. . . . I've been noticing recently that Anglophones have begun to take the language back from illiterate teenagers, media-speak, and of course, the unedited internet. Bloggers have taken up arms in defence of proper grammar and a little book about (British) punctuation is on best-sellers lists the world over. While these are definitely worth-while endeavours, why not work towards reinforcing our own take on the language? (Blogger 1, "Letter Zed")

> I recently bought a Canadian English Dictionary; I like things well done, well said and well written. (Blogger 2, "Letter Zed")

> My household has not one, but two copies of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary . . . does that make us geeks, or patriotic? Or maybe just patriotic geeks! (Blogger 3, "Letter Zed")

For these bloggers, language is not merely a matter of communication. Instead, language is definitional, and its meaning lies in its capacity to evoke personal sentiment ("got all warm and fuzzy") and to verify national identity and attachment ("Or maybe just patriotic geeks!"). Here, Canadian spellings activate nostalgia for older schoolroom practices that guaranteed national distinction ("American spellings were considered incorrect") and Canadian dictionaries themselves come to symbolize a combined longing for national and personal distinction ("I like things well done, well said and well written"). But in this conversation is evidence of other sorts of talk about language, commonplace talk about usage not related explicitly to nation but nonetheless appended to it. Commonplace mentions of correct and incorrect spellings, proper grammar and punctuation are here configured within the language of national security – of arms, defence and military-like reinforcement: "Bloggers have taken up arms in defence of proper grammar and a little book about (British) punctuation is on best-sellers lists the world over. While these are definitely worth-while endeavours, why not work towards reinforcing our own take on language?" Moreover, other sorts of mentions, of "illiterate teenagers, media speak, and of course, the unedited internet," appear to express anxieties about nation; indeed, such sites for disparagement and correction are often perceived as threats to a national-linguistic ideal.

This study examines the sort of talk exemplified in these bloggers' discussion of national spelling and usage. That is, I look at talk about language itself, at the

commonplace ways people express beliefs about language and the commonplace distinctions this talk permits. Suspecting that their commonsensical quality lends them a durable cogency, or authority, I examine the commonplace perspectives and positions that are encoded and enacted in discussions of spelling and usage in Canada and I analyze the characteristic forms these discussions take. In other words, I examine the ideologies of language that are encoded and enacted in the rhetoric and style of this talk. Specifically, I analyze talk about language in Canadian domains where it occurs with particular frequency and with great consequence: in national dictionary projects that attempt to delineate a Canadian English and in a national press, *The Globe and Mail*, whose investment in the production and circulation of certain ideas about language warrants attention.

Authoritative Distinctions: Some Historical Commonplaces

As Raymond Williams notes, "a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world" (21). In the linking of language, nation and self, the bloggers' talk above represents conventional methods for articulating, for defining, our experiences in and of the world. The talk that has surrounded language and usage, in fact, has fulfilled important functions for those who have participated in it. As others have noted, talk about language can be a convenient way to articulate concerns about national unity and/or personal distinction; in turn, it can be a means of socio-political regulation and an index of socio-political status. According to Deborah Cameron, discourses on language often represent efforts to impose order or meaning on the social world. In her study of attitudes toward language and those regulatory practices that encircle its use, Cameron maintains that language becomes a "fixed and certain reference point" (*Verbal Hygiene* 25) that secures anxieties about such thing as difference, conflict and social fragmentation. As a fixed and certain reference point, language functions as "a metaphysics of criticism" (Nunberg qtd. in Cameron 13), a politics of practice that marks the capacity of language to signify "all the rules that regiment the conduct of public discourse" (Nunberg qtd. in Cameron 13). Cameron also argues that language functions as a politics of identity, one which signifies the rules that regiment public subjectivities. Drawing on Judith Butler's work on performativity,

Cameron argues that identity is brought into being, in part, through repeated acts of language-using that are susceptible to a set of cultural codes (prescriptive and proscriptive talk) which define what is publicly intelligible, acceptable and normal. These "repeated stylizations" can contribute to the production and reproduction of "congealed" social identities for particular language users (16-17).

Definitions of language that underwrite what is publicly intelligible, acceptable and normal can be traced back, at least, to the late eighteenth-century formation of the bourgeois public sphere. In his account of the methods by which the public sphere constituted itself as a space of sociable discussion and public criticism, Jurgen Habermas argues that public life was characterized by the institutional privileging of rational-critical debate in a sphere of discursive interaction. In theory, the bourgeois public sphere was a sphere of equality in which anyone could engage in rational-critical discussion. The "celebrity of rank" was replaced with a "tact befitting of equals" (36). As Habermas explains, "[t]he parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself against that of the social hierarchy and in the end carry the day meant, in the thought of the day, the parity of the 'common humanity'" (36).

Thus, Nancy Fraser notes, in "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," that the public sphere was one of discursive relations constituted by talk:

> . . . the public sphere connoted an ideal of unrestricted rational discussion of public matters. The discussion was to be open and accessible to all, merely private interests were to be inadmissible, inequalities of status were bracketed, and discussants were to deliberate as peers. The result of such discussion would be public opinion in the strong sense of a consensus about the common good. (113)

Fraser argues, though, that this consensus of universal reason and common good rested on a number of exclusions around class and gender which, in fact, helped to constitute it. She suggests that the public sphere, with its emphasis on rational critical debate, was a strategy of distinction. By valorizing one form of speech, by providing a "training ground" for those who would govern (bourgeois men), and by delineating a separate sphere (public versus feminized private), it distinguished itself as a predominantly

bourgeois male space of bourgeois male publicity.[1] As Terry Eagleton explains, the consensus of universal reason and common good was in reality an impulse toward class consolidation, "a codifying of the norms and regulating of the practices whereby the English bourgeoisie [could] negotiate an historic alliance with its social superiors" (*Criticism* 10). It was, according to Eagleton, a means of negotiating and naturalizing the values, standards, tastes and conduct necessary for the discursive formation of bourgeois distinctions linked to the "niceties of class and rank" (14). Well-mannered, reasoned, universal discourse was, to those who constituted and participated in it, abstracted from the private interests of class and gender. It maintained the appearance of disinterestedness because it was disassociated from material interests and personal lives, from the desire and power that constituted it. It was simply "polite discourse among rational subjects" (14). Thus the style of linguistic exchange became a marker for inclusion: "What is said derives its legitimacy neither from itself as a message nor from the social title of the utterer, but from its conformity as a statement with a certain paradigm of reason inscribed in the very event of saying" (15).

---

[1] However, according to Fraser, the public sphere discourse on style and language failed to contain the contradictions and inequalities it was meant to contain. Fraser argues that the bourgeois public sphere operated alongside or among a number of competing counter-publics, each striving for their own form of expression, their own forms of publicity. For instance, Fraser claims that women creatively used 'private' or domestic idioms (linked to their roles as mothers) as a means to engage in the public sphere. Geoff Eley, in "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," maintains that in spite of or perhaps because of the bourgeois discourse on publicness, other voices began to employ "the same emancipatory language" (304). As Eley points out, the new radical publicness was predicated on the "ideal of the independent, well-informed and disciplined citizen arriving at decisions via enlightened and free discussion" (328). Although this linguistic definition of publicness was originally linked to the bourgeoisie, then Jacobin radicals, Eley argues that it also heralded nineteenth-century working class consolidation because it provided the radical intelligentsia with a means, albeit a problematic one, to educate the working class into political knowledge, into citizenship: "It should be viewed as partly the achievement and 'partly the continuing expression of a comprehensive effort at enlightenment and education, aimed at bringing the urban stratum of small tradesmen and artisans to the point where they could articulate their social and political discontent no longer in the pre-political protest rituals of the traditional plebian culture, but instead in a political movement'" that was organized, grounded and theorized (329).

What Eley and others have noted, then, is that the discourse on style is inextricably linked to the socio-political dissension evident in the public/counter-public spheres of late eighteenth, early nineteenth-century England. This is not surprising given what language theorists such as Bakhtin have argued – that discourse itself is a historically situated social phenomenon wherein utterances are saturated with concrete socio-ideological intentions and thus saturated with struggle, contradiction, permissions and denials. According to Bakhtin, the life of language is shot through with those forces which centralize and unify (centripetal) and those which decentre and fragment (centrifugal). In turn, language becomes a stratified, energized phenomenon that resists stasis, that resists the stabilizing, centripetal forces of such things as unitary language and rigid protocols of style (*The Dialogic Imagination* 272).

Indeed, according to Olivia Smith, in *The Politics of Language: 1791-1819*, the vocabulary that surrounded participation in the public sphere indicates that legitimate or correct linguistic production was limited to the virtuous speakers of the dominant classes of Britain: "Grammar, virtue and class were so interconnected that rules were justified or explained not in terms of how language was used but in terms of reflecting a desired type of behaviour, thought process, or social status" (9). For example, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century taxonomies of language (in grammars, dictionaries and style-guides and in literary journals like *The Spectator*) divided and characterized polite and rational participation in the public sphere (via written usage) according to perceptions of vulgarity, corruption, and barbarity and in terms of what was or could be considered refined, pure, and civilized. Michael Warner, in his discussion of the formations of the British and American public spheres, suggests that the language of the public sphere was, in effect, a structuring meta-language that abstracted the individual (then, a male) from his particularity (his interests, perspectives, intentions, gender, race, class) and, in turn, identified him as "a disembodied public subject" (381). According to Warner, "Through the conventions (e.g. protocols of a mannered, reasoned, universal style) that allowed such writing to perform the disincorporation of its authors and its readers, public discourse turned persons into a public" (381). That is, the denial and suppression of the particular turned some individuals into an authoritative public via an abstracting public discourse. Yet, because this public was founded on the denial and suppression of the "humiliating positivity" (382) of those whose particularity marked them (as women, immigrants, blacks), these folk had their own form of publicity, one which ensured their visibility or exposure as illegitimate language users or participants in the public sphere. Because they could not claim a self-abstracting disinterestedness via authoritative discourse and the protocols surrounding this discourse, they were made visible and ready for correction.

These distinctions, and associated corrections, can be seen in eighteenth-century periodicals, important domains where talk about language worked to delimit participation in public spheres. As comments in eighteenth-century periodicals such as the *Critical Review* suggest, this medium was an important vehicle for language correction and a corresponding socio-political censorship. For example, in a 1785 review of Mary Hays'

controversial *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women*, the reviewer insists that

> The language of this work is very incorrect; and those who examine it will think that the Observer has acted politically, in wishing to avoid comparisons. *Peritrelion, volumn*, and some other words, may be attributed to the printer; but *pailing, deterring, vouchsafements*, and similar ones, must be owing to the author. Reviewers are the guardians of the language, and we cannot suffer these errors to escape without reprehension. The construction too is often faulty. 'This is not the case with them who are born.' It is better to make a breach in any thing, rather than good manners. If the observations are pursued, similar mistakes, for they are numerous, must be avoided. (299)

This guardian of language sets out the limits of writing in the public sphere. His attention to the 'errors' of Hays' writing (its misspelled words and faulty construction, and the connections he makes between good manners and good writing) is typical of the kind of particularizing publicity to which Hays was subject. Moreover, given the content of her writing and her political position on the rights of women, the reviewer's attempt to undercut her argument via her use of language reveals the extent to which such particularized 'illegitimacies' were suppressed or denied through the containing protocols of polite style. Here, the reviewer does not discuss her politics; instead, he elides political issues by focusing on Hays' use of language. In order to pursue her "observations," she must clean up her linguistic act – and presumably her political act.

Yet, as Olivia Smith argues, adoption of the dominant forms of discourse did not necessarily mean access to the public sphere and its associated power. She points out, for example, that eighteenth and early nineteenth-century petitioners to parliament who 'cleaned up' their language were nonetheless denied their requests. They were, in a sense, caught in a double bind; their use of language was suspect if they wrote in a 'vulgar' language but was equally suspect if it was written in a more mannered language (30-22). Either way, their status and political leanings (many of these petitioners sought universal male suffrage) ensured that their linguistic productions would not be heard. In fact, as Thomas Miller maintains, in *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces*, the tensions surrounding increased participation in the public sphere (either through petitions to parliament, submissions to periodicals or the circulation of 'radical' pamphlets) resulted in a subsequent tightening

of linguistic boundaries. He notes that by 1799 the British state had imposed anti-combination, censorship and sedition laws in an attempt to contain print literacy (57). In addition, the sheer number of grammars and dictionaries written during this period and the emergence of "English as an object of formal study in higher education" (58) suggest that the language business was not only lucrative, it was seen as a socio-political imperative: "The conventions of English were charted to map out the boundaries of literate culture, but as literacy expanded and the working class became politicized, [politicians, grammarians and educationalists believed that] more attention needed to be paid to teaching the public to obey the laws of correct usage and polite taste" (60).

In fact, the boundaries of what it meant to be literate were mapped onto the study of literature which, in nineteenth-century configurations of English and Composition Studies, became an important site for the teaching of correct usage and polite taste. The appreciation of literary texts and the use of literary language, the standardized language of the 'best' writers,[2] authorized one's participation in literate culture. In her study of the formation of American English Studies, Susan Miller maintains that one's ability to use literary language, to appreciate the finest examples of English and to show this appreciation in one's compositions, had a kind of disciplining function. Early American writing instruction, influenced as it was by ideas about literary language, became a way to instil politeness and good breeding, a kind of "surface gentility" that, in the end, separated out those who were 'genteel' from those who were not (55-61). According to Ian Hunter, in his examination of education in Britain, the study of literature was an important site for the development of the Self and for its incorporation into a moral-ethical public. As the privileged site for self-realization and moral-ethical investigation, literary education – and the expressivist language associated with it – revealed the student to himself and, in the process, brought this Self into the domain of the teacher's "normalizing observation" (137). In this way, the literary text and the use of literary

[2] In his examination of the making of the OED, Tony Crowley argues that 'the standard language' became synonymous with 'the literary language' in large part because nineteenth century lexicographers drew their etymological examples from "a carefully ordered and historically arranged canon of English literature" (*Standard English* 98), from, for example, the works of Milton. According to Crowley, these lexicographers needed the concept of a 'standard literary language' to delimit the boundaries of their work, to make decisions about what words and spellings to include in the proposed OED and what words and spellings not to include.

language became devices which regulated conscience, that is, identified and corrected the values and attitudes expressed by students in their reading and writing.

But the effect of these ideas about language, the ways they bring the Self into the domain of a "normalizing observation," are not limited to nineteenth-century contexts, nor are they limited to students. In *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*, Linda Brodkey details her attempts, as director of the writing programme at the University of Texas, to implement, in 1990, an alternative writing pedagogy that challenged conventional methods of teaching Freshman English. These conventional methods involved teaching students the five paragraph theme essay, which meant that teachers tended to focus on form and grammatical correctness alone. It also involved teaching literature, the work of 'authorized' writers. Brodkey rejected this method of teaching writing because she believed that it led to inevitable comparisons between 'authorized' writing, and the cultural knowledge and sensibility it represents, and 'unauthorized' or 'illegitimate' writing, represented by students' theme essays. Because student writing can rarely mimic authorized knowledge and sensibility, the five paragraph theme, according to Brodkey, becomes a site for the identification of a student's 'inappropriate' personal idiosyncrasies. She replaced this syllabus with a different syllabus, "Writing about Difference," which, she believed, would encourage students to think about the relation between form and content. To this end, students were asked, for example, to read legal opinions in discrimination suits, then to summarize and evaluate the structure and discursive effects of these texts' arguments and warrants.

Brodkey also details the institutional and public backlash that ensued as a result of her attempt to develop an alternative curriculum. She maintains that her efforts were stalled, bogged down in the American cultural wars of the early 1990s. She became an example, writ large in the *New York Times*, of the sort of permissive, liberal and politically correct teaching that conservative pundits often associate with American universities:

> Richard Bernstein . . . introduced a *New York Times* feature article on "political correctness" with the mistaken but fluent claims that the course was being taught, and that it had replaced the "literary classics" with what he described, without asking to see the syllabus, as materials some people said gave the course "more relevance" but others said it made it "a stifling example of academic orthodoxy" (1990: 1). Such ill-informed hyperbole

> seems to me a classic example of journalism's commonsense precept that news is newsworthy only if there are two (and only two) diametrically opposed sides to a story. Never mind that his sources are reacting to the idea of the syllabus, not responding to it. Never mind that, in claims ostensibly about writing, the reporter and his sources are concerned only about what students will read. George F. Will used his syndicated column to lambaste the course, about which he knew so little that he described one at another university, and then took the occasion of his outrage to remind his readers that teachers are supposed to teach grammatical correctness, not political correctness. Judging by what I have read, the most wonderful thing about possessing common sense must be the satisfaction of saying in so many words that it goes without saying that you are right, that there would be nothing to talk about if people would just see "reason" – end of conversation. (147-48)

What is noteworthy in Brodkey's account of her troubles is her opponent's identification of a set of ideas about language and writing with arguments based on the invocation of commonsense, on the appeal of "mistaken but fluent claims." Apparently, it is only commonsense that teachers of writing should focus on grammatical correctness; anything else engages teachers of writing in political correctness, in extra-linguistic concerns that have no place in the composition classroom. However, as Brodkey suggests, commonsense ideas about language and writing have effects that warrant closer inspection:

> The results of what amounts to a cultural Rorschach are passed off as common sense, and common sense is in turn used to warrant state regulation. Thus the nation's fetuses must be protected from feminists and their dupes; its citizens must be defended from the south by fences; its language must be policed. In this scenario, medicine, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the schools are the sites where doctors, border patrols, and teachers are installed as the gatekeepers of the nation, and any reluctance on their part – to prevent abortions, turn back undocumented workers, identify illiterates – becomes a reason for regulating them as well as their charges. (148)

What emerges from Brodkey's story, and from the occurrences of talk about language I have detailed so far, is an indication of the compelling force of this talk and its ability to present itself as commonsensical, as disinterested, universal, reasonable and coherent – as fluent, intelligible and authoritative. However, as Brodkey's story suggests, such commonplace ideas about language (and their regulatory effects) are not neutral, nor

are they disinterested. In fact, their frequency, intensity and resilience suggest that there is something important going on in this talk. Therefore, this study looks at why, in spite of writing teachers', linguists' and sociolinguists' attempts to debunk the sorts of commonplaces detailed above, certain ideas about language still circulate, still influence. Unlike other commonplaces (e.g. nineteenth-century ideas about women's participation in public and educational domains), ideas about language have a peculiar, indeed mysterious, longevity. In spite of decades of criticism, commonplace ideas about language, it seems, will not go away. This longevity can not be explained, at least not entirely, by the *commonness* of ideas about language. Other ideas are or have been equally common, or widespread. Are there, then, characteristics of this particular talk that contribute to the longevity, the tenacity and authority, of these ideologies of language?

Ideologies of Language: The Field

Recently, there has developed a body of research that deals explicitly with investigations of language ideologies, with the ways people imagine and define language and with the ways these definitions link language to extra-linguistic phenomena. As Kathryn Woolard notes, "ideologies of language are not about language alone. Rather, they envision and enact ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology. Through such linkages, they underpin not only linguistic form and use but also the very notion of the person and the social group, as well as such fundamental social institutions as religious ritual, child socialization, gender relations, the nation-state, schooling, and law" (3). Moreover, research in this area takes a number of forms; it is a diverse field that approaches attitudes about language from a range of perspectives, methodological orientations and disciplinary locations. Studies in standardization, for example, investigate the development and maintenance of standard languages and attitudes toward these standards. The works of Lesley Milroy, James Milroy, Richard Watts, Peter Trudgill, Tony Crowley, and Tony Bex exemplify this concern with the historical development of language standards. Specifically, these researchers focus on the development of Standard English and its links to traditions of complaint, correction and distinction (variously imagined as personal or national distinction).

Linguistic anthropology, which examines the connections between linguistic and socio-cultural life, between ideas about language and their role in socio-cultural activities, is exemplified in the work of Bambi Schiefflin and Rachelle Doucet, who, in "The 'Real' Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice," maintain that, in Haiti, the sounds of Kreyòl have been invested with "social, symbolic and political values" (287). For example, the sounds of creole languages have been variously described (by both experts and non-experts alike) as "deformed," "impoverished" and "harsh" (292). Because these languages are viewed as "simple" languages, they are considered unsuitable for use in official domains, in schools, in government and in church. Moreover, the sounds and grammatical structures of creoles have been linked to characterizations of their speakers, who are seen as "coarse, clumsy, stupid, illiterate, uneducated" (292). However, Schieffelin and Doucet note that there is some ambivalence about these language varieties and what they symbolize; while they are disparaged, they have also come to represent an 'authentic' or 'rural' national identity. In Haiti, the stigma that surrounds the sounds of kreyòl and the ambivalence many feel about this variety have resulted in a long-standing orthographic debate, not only about the codification of a written variety of kreyòl, but also about the ways this variety might represent Haitian national identity. So, Schieffelin and Doucet's work on the development of a written orthography for Haitian Kreyòl indicates that linguistic anthropology is also interested in the ways linguists themselves participate in ideologies of language. They argue that linguists' attempts to delineate Haitian Kreyòl as a written vernacular expressing national interest and desire symbolize "competing concerns about representations of Haitianness" and so constitute "an activity deeply grounded in frameworks of value" (285). For example, the question of whether to codify the 'educated' use of front rounded vowels (e.g. the ü in the French *tu*) is really a debate, according to Schieffelin and Doucet, about language's relation to class: "The existence or non-existence of the front rounded vowels is viewed by many [including linguists] as the dividing line between the educated minority and the masses, between rural and urban" (301). This debate, in turn, is linked to larger debates centring on issues of national authenticity, social mobility and power (301).

This concern with the work of linguists and their interpretative frameworks is picked up by those working in the field of sociolinguistics. As John Joseph and Talbot Taylor's *Ideologies of Language* indicates, the work of linguistics is not neutral, nor is it autonomous. In this collection of essays, researchers take on the assumption that descriptive linguistics is simply descriptive and so can abstract itself from the ideological workings of language by adhering to scientific values and methods that purport to be objective. In "Which is to be Master? The Institutionalization of Authority in the Science of Language," Taylor questions the view that language, as an object of study, can in reality be a true descriptive science. He argues that linguists who purport to describe language (rather than prescribe its use) may end up eliding important questions about the normative authority of their work. For example, the assertion, made by the editors of the Oxford English Dictionary, that they have simply recorded the meaning of "soporific" as it is used by some groups raises questions about whose meaning norms have been cited in the dictionary: "A dictionary which says something like 'SOPORIFIC': tending to produce sleep' cites a norm, a statement which (it asserts) would be normatively enforced by some group in some context. But, by what group and in what contexts? By the best educated? In informal conversation? By the social elite? . . . By the handsomest men" (24-25)?

What these studies have in common, as I suggest above, is an interest in the ways conceptualizations of language reflect and inform conceptualizations of other things, of nation, society, culture, institution and identity. Hence some researchers who wish to investigate the significance of those extra-linguistic factors that shape beliefs about language and in turn shape beliefs about the social employ the term "ideology" to delineate a specific field of study, one which attends to the *force* of ideology, its involvement, for example, in the naturalization of hierarchical social relations and the methods by which we perceive these relations. But, as Kathryn Woolard, Paul Kroskrity and others have noted, ideology, as a theoretical and investigative framework for the study of language, has multiple instantiations because conceptualizations of ideology themselves are multiple. Indeed, while some notions of ideology have engaged theorists and researchers in attempts to understand the relation between humans, their lived realities and their consciousness of these realities, in more recent incarnations, thinking

about ideology has helped theorists and researchers articulate how sets of shared ideas might structure identity, or subjectivity. Since its first use by French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy to define the scientific study of ideas and its later use by Marx and Engels to help explain, in part, the way modes and relations of production maintain and reproduce themselves, the study of ideology has helped to delineate the epistemological and/or ontological workings of belief, value, position and interest. How do people come to know what they know and so believe what they believe, about institutions, society, culture, politics and the self? How do people come to constitute themselves, to perform a set of identifications and divisions that signify the self and/or one's position in the world?

For Marx and Engels, who are primarily concerned with epistemological questions, the answer lies in the notion of mystification, or "false consciousness" as Engels will later call it in a letter he writes, in 1893, to Franz Mehring. It is the aim of Marx and Engels, in part, to demystify the work of ideology, to point out the ways it obscures hierarchical relations of power and so conceals the ways working class interests have been unwittingly absorbed by and appended to bourgeois interests (*German Ideology* 1-2). For Antonio Gramsci, the work of ideology and the ways it appends and absorbs interest, value and belief rests, not in a notion of misguided falsity (in relation to some actual truth about reality), [3] but in an understanding of the workings of hegemony. In short, hegemony refers to the process by which dominant groups come into being through the cultural production and articulation (i.e. in art, science, literature, and philosophy) of shared interests and identifications. Dominant groups and their functionaries, whom he calls organic intellectuals, manufacture consent rather than exert force to substantiate or legitimatize their positions over the long term: "The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (*Selections*

[3] For a representation of current reasoning about the notion of "false consciousness," see Terry Eagleton's *Ideology* (Verso 1991) 7-18. Eagleton argues, for example, that such notions of consciousness, aside from being unfashionably focused on notions of truth and reality, naively and unproductively assume that most people are easy dupes: "Deeply persistent beliefs have to be supported to some extent, however meagerly, by the world our practical activity discloses to us; and to believe that immense numbers of people would live and sometimes die in the name of ideas which were absolutely vacuous and absurd is to take up an unpleasantly demeaning attitude towards ordinary men and women" (12).

from the Prison Notebooks 12). According to Gramsci, language itself is an important site for the operation of cultural hegemony. Given its intimate connection to socio-cultural life and to notions of value and prestige, language (or a particular language ideology) can be summoned to foster or secure hegemonic affiliations. Moreover, invocations of language are really, Gramsci argues, expressions of extra-linguistic concerns: "Every time the question of language surfaces, in one way or another, it means that a series of other problems are coming to the fore: the formation and enlargement of the governing class, the need to establish more intimate and secure relationships between the governing groups and the national-popular mass, in other words to reorganise the cultural hegemony" (*Selections from Cultural Writings* 183-84).

In what could be called an ontological conceptualization of ideology, Louis Althusser outlines the methods by which ideology contributes to the formation of subjectivity. According to Althusser, the primary means of maintaining relations of production and managing the social inequities that arise from these relations are what he terms Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), those institutional and cultural mechanisms by which we come to internalize or recognize a concept of self and a position in the social order and so misrecognize these as natural and/or inevitable. For Althusser, these ideas of the self are comprised of the assumptions people have of their relation to a lived reality. Unlike Marx and Engels, Althusser is not so much concerned with the representation of ideas in and of themselves (as true or false), but with a notion of ideology that focuses on its concrete materiality, on the "material existence" of ideology and the implications of this existence for subject formation: "it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that 'men' 'represent to themselves' in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them" (*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* 154-55). Ideology offers the self an image of the social and one's place in it; it offers interpretative frameworks for living and a corresponding set of everyday practices that "hail" or "interpellate" individuals into social reality, into subjectivity (162-63). This interpellation "can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (162-63). According to Althusser, it is ideology, as naturalized assumption and everyday practice, which summons or recruits individuals as subjects; individuals perform

subjectivity via a reply to the practical and 'real' solicitation of social institutions and other social subjects.

The everyday, practical workings of ideology and their implications for an understanding of lived reality are also addressed by V. N. Voloshinov, in "Marxism and the Philosophy of Language."[4] However, unlike Althusser's over-simplified account of interpellation (as Eagelton asks, what if the subject does not answer the hail?), Voloshinov sees ideology in terms of its relation to the social and material nature of language and thus provides a more interactive or dialogic account of ideology. In fact, for Voloshinov, ideology and language are nearly identical; that is, language is the plane on which experience is *ideologized.* In this work, Voloshinov insists that Marxist theories of ideology need to be revisited in terms of ideology's relation to language, specifically to the "problems of the philosophy of language" (1210) as represented by Saussurian linguistics. Voloshinov details the ways in which an "idealistic philosophy of culture and psychologistic cultural studies" tend to envision ideology as an *a priori* set of beliefs, attitudes and values, a "fact of consciousness" that language merely conveys. In these configurations, language is treated as a tool of communication, a unidirectional instrument that simply expresses an individual's consciousness. But, argues Voloshinov, such depictions of ideology and its relation to language miss an important aspect of ideology itself:

> By localizing ideology in consciousness, they transform the study of ideologies into a study of consciousness and its laws . . . The objective social regulatedness of ideological creativity, once misconstrued as a conformity with laws of the individual consciousness, must inevitably forfeit its real place in existence and depart either up into the superexistential empyrean of transcendentalism or down into the presocial recesses of the psychophysical, biological organism. However, the ideological, as such, cannot possibly be explained in terms of either of these superhuman or subhuman, animalian, roots. Its real place in existence is in the special, social material of signs created by man. Its specificity consists precisely in its being located between organized individuals, in its being the medium of their communication. (1212)

[4] In spite of the debates that surround the authorship of this work, I have chosen to attribute it to V.N. Voloshinov rather than to M.M. Bakhtin, primarily because this is the name under which it was published.

Here, Voloshinov firmly locates ideology in language or, more precisely, in the materiality and sociality of language. Voloshinov argues, in fact, that because "*everything ideological possesses semiotic value*" (1211; emphasis in original), without language (variously called the sign, the word, the utterance) "*there is no ideology*" (1210; emphasis in original). Conversely, because language has a material reality (in that "signs are particular, material things" that "[reflect] and [refract] another reality"), language is always, already socially orientated; language, according to Volshinov, "is *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*" (1215; emphasis in original). In this account of language as addressed, as oriented toward an Other, Voloshinov implies that ideology too is addressed, is oriented and depends for its workings, not on the abstracted individual psyche, but on the situated "*interindividual territory*" of the sign, the concrete verbal interaction of individuals, who, in and through language, construct belief, value, position and interest (1212; emphasis in original).

Given these varied accounts of ideology and given language's intimate but complex connection to ideology, it is not surprising that definitions of what constitutes ideologies of language should also differ and be complex. For example, while some researchers appear to treat language ideologies in terms of a consciousness of language that works to substantiate users' values and practices, as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 193), others seem to highlight the ways ideologies of language operate as a hegemonic socio-cultural force: "*language ideologies represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group*" (Kroskrity 8; emphasis in original).[5]

My conception of language ideologies has been informed, in large part, by my reading of Voloshinov and Gramsci. In general, I treat ideologies of language as an everyday practice of perspective and position, as the enactment of commonsense beliefs,

---

[5] However, linguistic anthropologist Paul Kroskrity is quick to point out that the ideological workings of language are never uniform; they rarely symbolize the perceptions or beliefs of just one group (the dominant or ruling elite): "*language ideologies are profitably conceived as multiple because of the multiplicity of meaningful social divisions (class, gender, clan, elites, generations, and so on) within sociocultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership*" (12; emphasis in original).

attitudes and values about language and in terms of the commonplace positions (or social coordinates) these beliefs, attitudes and values afford. As suggested above, the workings of ideology, for Voloshinov, are inseparable from the workings of language; ideology is encoded and enacted in the very words we use to describe our experiences, linguistic and otherwise. Because language is a dialogic phenomenon, because it is addressed and situated, it not only represents but also *makes possible* perspectives and positions. This understanding of the language-ideology nexus has particular relevance to my analysis of talk about language. The perspectives and positions encoded in ideologies do not exist before discourse (as an *a priori* set of beliefs, attitudes and positions that words merely reflect); rather, they are created in and through discourse. Like other ideologies, ideologies of language (and the perspectives and positions they offer) do not precede our talk about language; ideologies of language are enacted and renewed in the methods we use to express ideas about language. I also draw on Gramsci's account of the hegemonic nature of commonsense ideologies to understand how the commonplace ways we talk about language might actually foster shared perspectives and positions and so contribute to the cultural diffusion of certain ideas about language. For Gramsci, as for others, ideology does not exist in an abstracted realm; it is a concrete practice, a method by which we produce practical affinities, by which we identify and encourage an everyday, practical sense of the world that in turn encourages 'common' interests and identifications.

I attempt, then, to understand the epistemological workings of talk about language, specifically with regard to its nature as commonsensical. In what ways have we consolidated and ratified methods of thinking and talking about language that make this thought and action appear ordinary and so intelligible and authoritative? How does authoritative talk about language sustain itself outside of those institutional contexts that legitimate it, that is, ensure its efficacy in public domains where it circulates with particular ease? And, put simply, what makes this talk so tenacious, so commonplace, even in the face of decades of criticism and research that has attempted to explain and problematize its ideological character? This study also attempts to understand the ontological workings of talk about language. Specifically, I investigate the characteristic positions ideologies of language offer to those who utter statements *about* language. That

is, I examine the overlap between epistemology and ontology, between emblematic methods of thinking and talking about language and the representations or positions this discourse affords. How do the characteristic ways we talk about language contribute to the reproduction of easy intelligibility and authority and so to *authoritative* or *expert* positions, even for non-experts?

Rhetorical and Pragmatic Frameworks

This study aims to understand both the rhetorical and the pragmatic implications of this easy intelligibility and authority. I employ discourse analytic methods to study emblematic statements about language and the texts in which these statements are most likely to occur – those conventionalized texts (dictionaries, style guides, and letters to the editor), wordings (unity/diversity) and characteristic grammatical structures (agentless passives, modal expressions) that often go unnoticed in others' accounts of ideologies of language. Seeing the generic forms, vocabulary and grammar of this talk as important components of its saliency, I draw on recent research in new rhetorical genre theory and linguistic pragmatics.

New rhetorical genre theory sees texts as cultural artefacts, as social products that house, to borrow Carolyn Miller's words, "systems of value and signification" ("Rhetorical Community" 70). Current conceptualizations of genre as social action indicate that texts represent situated practices; genres are responses to socio-cultural phenomena and are thus sensitive to larger institutional and ideological contexts. In these new configurations, genre becomes the site for the social life of a discourse community, its practices, its ways of thinking and its ways of being in the world (Giltrow, *Academic Writing* 12-15). Sensitive to contexts and to the social life of its users, genres can tell us much about the constitutive potential of those texts (e.g. dictionaries) that routinely accommodate and enable ideologies of language. This constitutive potential is evident in the ways genre theorists themselves discuss genre and its power to "structure joint action through communal decorum," its power to "create similarity out of difference . . ., identification out of division" (Miller, "Rhetorical Community" 74). As Carolyn Miller points out, "a genre is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private and the public, the singular with the

recurrent" ("Genre as Social Action" 37). This potential is also evident in the notion that a genre participates in the "social construction of orientations, paradigms, ideologies, worldviews and cultural perspectives" (Coe, "The Rhetoric of Genre" 184). Creating identifications and participating in the construction of orientations, genre, like talk about language itself, acts like a code. That is, genre too has the capacity to signify the social conventions that both enable and constrain attitudes toward language and the positions constructed within and through the rehearsal of these attitudes.

As I suggest above, genres often act as centripetal or hegemonic forces that allow "virtual communities" (Miller, "Rhetorical Community" 73) to create similarity out of difference, but this notion of genre as a centripetal or hegemonic force might perpetuate an illusion of consensus – to borrow Burke's words, a "perversion of communion," wherein identification's counterpart, division, is subsumed (*On Symbols* 181). This "perversion of communion" might, I suspect, have particular force in generic talk about language, especially when this talk encodes, rhetorically, a notion of difference (or distinction) that works in the service of identification. So drawing on Kenneth Burke's work on words and identification, this study sees the genres commonly associated with talk about language as strategies that name situations in "a way that contains an attitude toward them" (*Philosophy* 1). As Burke suggests, names such as these can act like "terministic screens," enabling some perspectives, while deflecting others, foregrounding some things about users and usage, while rendering other things obscure (e.g. a dictionary's involvement in the management of language and language users). These forms of talk are interested; they are social and institutional practices that house particular orientations and identifications arising out of jurisdictions that necessitate their use but that need not remain in these jurisdictions. In fact, this study also attends to the ways that these practices come to be valorized as representative, as commonsensical, come to have their own rhetorical force beyond their use in specific jurisdictions. That is, I examine how the commonplace practices, perspectives and positions associated with these genres 'transcend' or travel across generic boundaries, valorize certain assumptions about language beyond the jurisdictions of, for example, dictionary making. Therefore, I explore the itinerant vocabulary, the 'generic' terms used to describe the nature and workings of language, and I explore the assumptions about usage and users encoded in

this traveling, definitional talk. In short, I analyze how these terms are themselves *suasive*, how they involve participants in this talk in those classifications, or ratifications, of language ideologies that enable these ideologies to circulate outside their immediate contexts of use.

This study, however, also acknowledges the *suasiveness* of style, the way that the characteristic styles of statements about language themselves might participate in the naturalization of shared perspectives about language. As Janet Giltrow maintains, "a way of speaking organizes the world, and organizes systems of association, solidarity and advantage" (*Academic Writing* 13). Inspecting the style of statements about language for evidence of a kind of grammaticalization of commonsense and authority – a grammar of practice, perspective and position – I address the following questions: What positions are constituted in and through the style of statements about language? That is, who is speaking? From what position in the world? From where do these speaking subjects derive their authority? What mutually shared assumptions about language and usage are at work in statements about language? To answer these questions, I turn to recent work in linguistic pragmatics, to politeness and relevance theoretical accounts, which allow for an analysis of a statement's production and reception in its social context. That is, I examine statements about language at their very foundation: at the linguistic materials that construct, substantiate and perhaps naturalize the perspectives and positions encoded in these statements.

Drawing on Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's work on politeness phenomena, I analyze positive and negative strategies of politeness for tangible instances of the complex operation of authority in talk about language. Politeness strategies, according to Brown and Levison, are socio-linguistic resources that mitigate imposition (e.g. via the use of hedges) and/or foster common ground (e.g. via the use of presupposing expressions). As Lynn Magnusson notes, in *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters*, an investigation of politeness strategies allows for an understanding of "how verbal exchanges figure the complex and variable power dynamics of historically specific social relationships" (2). Attending to the ways in which the style of statements about language might configure social relations and understandings, I analyze the use of imperatives (those potentially face threatening or

authoritative wordings that are typically associated with proscriptive and prescriptive talk) and I analyze the use of modal expressions, expressions (e.g. seems, might, apparently, acceptable) that not only index the status of knowledge regarding usage but also this knowledge's dispersion into more congenial or consensual realms. I also draw on Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson's work on relevance, on the ways statements are made relevant or meaningful in social contexts. According to Sperber and Wilson, communication is about enlarging "mutual cognitive environments" (193), about assessing a listener's or reader's ability to make manifest shared assumptions in order to understand the relevance of a given utterance. Such assessments involve estimates of a listener's or reader's background knowledge or ability to infer certain kinds of information which may not be but are sometimes treated as background knowledge. Analyzing statements about language for evidence of characteristic estimations of this knowledge, I investigate how these statements might index mutually manifest assumptions about language and how they might contribute to the construction of authoritative positions for those who utter them. That is, I analyze those expressions (e.g. presupposing expressions, ironic and metaphoric utterances) that participate in constructions of authoritative knowledge and privileged identity. This is particularly important in a study such as mine given the tendency of unitary, authoritative views of language to preserve, as Bakhtin suggests, "the socially sealed-off quality of a privileged community," to reinforce the hegemony of consensus and "defend the interests of cultural-political centralization" (*Dialogic Imagination* 382).

'Canadian' Ideologies of Language: The Chapters

The purpose of this rhetorical and pragmatic investigation of ideologies of language is three-fold. First, I offer a way of looking at ideologies of language in general: their character as commonsensical and the characteristic positionings these beliefs and attitudes offer to those who participate in such talk about language. To this end, Chapter One speculates about the operation of commonsense in ideologies of language. I trace the term's use (or its variants: misrecognition, mystification, hegemony) in studies of language standardization, critical discourse analysis and in studies of what Deborah Cameron calls "verbal hygiene." I then explore the rhetorical

nature of commonsense ideologies of language, the ways these commonplaces offer convenient *topoi* and authoritative footings for those engaged in attempts to delineate language standards and for those engaged in language debates.

Second, I offer a way of understanding how these commonsense ideas about language, this commonplace talk, operates in Canada. In Chapter Two, I trace the complex intersection between talk about language in general and the ways this talk is picked up and used to construct and express distinction: localized concerns about and constructions of nation, identity, place and history. Specifically, this chapter analyzes the operation of a set of commonplace terms in an important genre related to the production and reproduction of distinct national publicities: Canadian English dictionaries that market their own claims of distinction via generic reproductions of national citizenry and a national-linguistic consciousness.

As Ian Pringle and others have suggested, the discourse on language and usage in Canada is primarily concerned with delineating such distinctions. In fact, according to Margery Fee, "people feel that their identity is reflected in their language" (*Oxford Guide to Canadian English Usage* v) and so such entanglements of language and identity shape notions of cultural and national distinction which in turn shape both expert and non-expert discussions of language in Canada. Typically, linguists and sociolinguists who study the use of language in Canada tend to focus on Canada's 'unique' geographical and historical proximities, proximities that contribute to the formation of a distinct linguistic outcome, one based on the tensions that have emerged out of this country's socio-historical relationship with Britain and its socio-geographical connection to the United States. Moreover, much of this research, in its construction of distinction, shapes a particular version of Canada: a tolerant Canada. That is, what makes Canadian usage or Canadian English so distinct is, in large part, its ability to tolerate difference, to accommodate both American and British spellings and pronunciations. In turn, this linguistic tolerance is configured as a national attribute, an identificatory marker of the Canadian *people's* openness, broadmindedness, and congeniality.

As this brief account of specialist talk about usage in Canada suggests, talk about language and nation is really a commonplace rhetoric of distinction, one which contributes to models of language and usage that variously organize language users and

their relationship to the nation along familiar historical, ontological and epistemological lines. Chapter Two examines these familiar lines, arguing that they are predicated upon an *a priori* conceptualization of situation and therefore highlight, to borrow Kenneth Burke's terminology, "scenic" relationships. That is, those engaged in specialist talk about language often attribute such things as beliefs about language or linguistic diversification to situation. So, employing Burke's dramatist method, Chapter Two looks at the ascribing of scenic motives (of history, geography and community) and the attitudinal force of those universalizing terms (unity/diversity, permanence/change) that cluster around these motives and so shift local accounts of language and nation into wider, or more authoritative, realms.

The third objective of this study is to examine the role of consensus and community in talk about language. I indicated earlier in this introduction that eighteenth-century periodicals were important public domains where talk about language occurred with some frequency. In Canada, of course, such public talk about language is likely to (and does) occur with considerable frequency (and fluency) in what are considered national public domains, in the country's national media. For example, listeners often hear talk about language on the airwaves of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC); in fact, sometimes whole shows are devoted to Canadians' usage. Canadians can also read accounts of their usage on the CBC's website, where national arbitrators of language, alongside listeners and viewers, keep watch over the nation's linguistic practices. According to Russ Germain, the CBC Radio Broadcast Language Advisor, the CBC is often viewed as "the keeper" of English as it is spoken in Canada and so is considered a "definitive" authority on language matters ("The C-B-C of Language"). For Germain, the maintenance of legitimate Canadian standards is integral to the role of the CBC in general; apparently, many people believe that it is the job of the CBC "to tell Canadians what makes them who they are and why they are unique in the world" ("The C-B-C of Language"). This institutional and public imperative, though, raises questions about the nature of linguistic authority and consent. On the one hand, the CBC, for many, represents Canadians and their interests; on the other, it tells them who they are and what these interests should be: "On one hand Canadians expect us to subscribe to

popular usage, not to talk down to them or talk over their heads; to be real. On the other, they expect us to aim for the highest linguistic common factor, not the lowest common denominator" ("The C-B-C of Language"). While Germain seems to recognize that language changes and that these changes are predicated upon actual usage (the linguistic practices of everyday Canadians, or popular usage), he nonetheless re-inscribes common usage as the "highest linguistic common factor," a commonplace "aim" or standard that depends upon the CBC for its authority.

Yet, it is in this confluence of common usage and authoritative measure that the complex relation between localizing accounts of language and universalizing precepts intersect. In fact, this confluence of popular/local and authoritative/universal raises an important question about the reproduction of the popular or the common in productions of a universalizing linguistic authority: what role do constructions of community and consent play in the reproduction of authority and expertise and thus in the enduring life of language ideologies? To answer this question, Chapters Three and Four analyze the style of statements about language as they occur in two locales published by *The Globe and Mail*: *The Globe and Mail Style Book* (four editions) and the newspapers' letters to the editor (136 letters written over an 88 year period, from 1911 to 1999). In these chapters, I trace the characteristic wordings (e.g. imperatives, modalizing expressions, ironic utterances) that describe and discuss language and usage in Canada's foremost national newspaper, which, like the CBC, presents itself as a guardian of Canadian public usage. In particular, I analyze how politely worded configurations and attempts to make statements about language relevant might ratify consensus in the service of linguistic authority, that is, structure relations between 'public' attitudes and 'private' interests.

In the chapters that follow, I offer an exploratory rather than comprehensive account of the tenacity of everyday talk about language and its seemingly effortless ability to present itself as authoritative. I suggest, in what follows, that authority in language relies on the rhetorical and stylistic construction of a commonsense linguistic consciousness that must be renewed, or recalibrated, for new contexts of utterance. Such activity, I propose, yields a surplus of interest and identification that secures the practices and positions, the distinctions, of those who make authoritative claims about language. Moreover, this surplus encourages renewed invocations of a shared linguistic

consciousness and new strategies of distinction, which in turn maintain the efficacy of commonsense ideas about language. It is my hope that the rhetorical and pragmatic analyses offered here will lead to further interest in the forms and structures of this talk.

Chapter One
Commonsense: Intelligibility and Authority in Language

> Many native leaders advocate the terms "aboriginal" and "aboriginal person," but the terms "native" and "Indian" are still used by the vast majority of native people themselves, as well as by our readers, by governments and by various world bodies and academic disciplines. We should respect the wishes of the particular person being referred to whenever this is consistent with clarity, and in fact "aboriginal" is more useful than "native" as a worldwide generic term.
> (*The Globe and Mail Style Book*, 1998, 229)

> [S]ome who ought to know better – or who ought to at least have better taste and to have a deeper respect for their own speech – persist in using slipshod English.
> (Letter to the Editor, *The Globe*, March 7, 1921)

Readers, of course, will recognize these statements about language. They represent time-honoured ways of talking about language in familiar locales, in style guides that codify usage or letters to the editor complaining about it. Readers might also recognize their participation in a larger discourse on language, where they circulate amongst other manifestations of similar talk – amongst such things as dictionaries, writing handbooks and monographs lamenting the decline of standards. These materials are persistent, rather ordinary occurrences of what Deborah Cameron calls "verbal hygiene." They are everyday episodes that operate within a larger discourse whose practices and underlying assumptions are seen as unremarkable. The above statements about language, for example, assume readers are familiar with authoritative definitions of identity terms or with the custom of complaint. These statements also assume readers value such things as clarity (over self-definition) and social propriety (over individual quarrels about usage). Readers are assumed to be knowledgeable about other things as well: the practice of referring to generalized authorities to make claims about language (e.g. governments and academic disciplines) and the practice of discussing language in terms of taste and respect.

As ordinary occurrences, however, we may not be as familiar with the ways these routines for prescribing, proscribing and judging usage might operate as social practices saturated with intentions and identifications. Their easy articulation and recognition, in fact, may shelter their social or ideological dimensions, leading us to believe that they operate outside the socio-ideological conditions that make their articulation and recognition so easy in the first place. Therefore, their very commonness makes them eligible for investigations into the operation of language ideologies: as customary ways of talking about language, they are sure to tell us something about how ideologies of language themselves are maintained, circulated and made commonplace or commonsensical. It would seem, then, that any discussion or analysis of ideologies of language must account for the operation of commonsense, as it appears to play a key role in the authority and longevity of certain ideas about language. To this end, this chapter speculates about the operation of commonsense in ideologies of language and explores the ways commonplace arguments about language might in fact reflect, define and construct a ready intelligibility and authority for many engaged in these arguments.

In their familiarity, materials such as the style guide and letter to the editor I cite above "satisfy," according to Cameron, "a certain cultural intelligibility and noteworthiness" (*Verbal Hygiene* 213). The cultural intelligibility of these materials, moreover, may signify the extent to which they have become naturalized. The repetition and recognition of certain statements about language construct and permit, as commonplace, as a matter of convention and consensus, a body of received ideas about language and ways of talking about it that reflect an uncritical acceptance of both the forms and contents of some verbal hygiene practices. Discussing the institutionalized authority of editors, dictionary makers and grammarians to make pronouncements about language, Cameron notes that such pronouncements seem to recede "endlessly into the past without ever appearing to reach any ultimate source. This does not prevent them from being persuasive and powerful. On the contrary, their status as conventional wisdom means that they can be repeated *ad nauseam* by people who, by their own admission, can neither pinpoint their origins nor justify their content" (33-34). So, for example, we read pronouncements about usage in *The Globe and Mail Style Book* that rely on conventional ideas about clarity and consistency to justify the use of "native" as a

generic term. Cameron calls this phenomenon a mystification, an appeal to commonsense and tradition that conceals the actual interaction of professionals working in language (e.g. editors, dictionary-makers, and grammarians) and a previously authorized body of lore, a "feedback loop" that not only conceals the vested interests of those who appeal to established wisdom to advance their own claims about language, but also distorts the facts about usage by insisting that ideas about 'common usage' are simply commonsense (54-55).

Pierre Bourdieu, in *Language and Symbolic Power*, describes a similar process of mystification in the recognition of legitimate language. However, he insists that the cultural intelligibility or belief in the efficacy of legitimate language depends upon both a recognition and a misrecognition. Language standards or norms, for example, create a market wherein linguistic exchanges (including authoritative pronouncements on language) only have value if they are (mis)recognized as having value (that is, if legitimate forms of speech and writing and the pronouncements on these activities are misrecognized as neutral, as non-authoritative, and simultaneously recognized as legitimate in spite of their arbitrariness). The value of linguistic productions within this market has everything to do with the ability to appropriate and appreciate the legitimate language, to reproduce it as having market value. As Bourdieu explains, a soldier may utter an order to an officer, but his utterance would not be legitimate – under this circumstance, the order would seem preposterous (75). It appears, then, that the reception and production of legitimate language relies on a particular intelligibility or (mis)recognition of legitimate contexts and forms: "consumers grant more complete recognition to the legitimate language and legitimate competence . . . [to speech] that is authorized, authoritative language, to speech that is accredited, worthy of being delivered, or, in a word, *performative*, claiming (with the greatest chances of success) to be effective" (69-70; emphasis in original). The appropriation, appreciation, recognition and performance of the legitimate language make commonplace and intelligible – meaningful and socially recognizable – a consensual reproduction of legitimacy. That is, in order to become authoritative, legitimate language "must . . . produce a new common sense and integrate within it the previously tacit or repressed practices and experiences of an entire group, investing them with the legitimacy conferred by public expression and

collective recognition" (129). Legitimate language relies, to borrow Bourdieu's words, on "a discourse permeated by the simplicity and transparency of common sense, the feeling of obviousness and necessity" (131), on a hegemonic discourse that naturalizes (and neutralizes) a unitary notion of language as the unitary expression of the entire strata of the social order.

While Cameron and Bourdieu, in the above examples, focus specifically on instances of authoritative discourse (the institutional authority to make pronouncements on language and the maintenance of dominant positions in the field of linguistic production, respectively), here, I would like to think through the ways in which the discourse on language is picked up and circulated throughout the social world. As these authors (and others) point out, not everyone uses the legitimate language or adheres to its rules, but most recognize it, reproduce its legitimacy in their (mis)recognition of it and in their repeated citation of its codes, beliefs and values. What is truly interesting is the way such ideologies of language travel across social and institutional boundaries, across a range of discursive sites – a kind of traffic in talk about language that warrants a closer look at how ideologies of language are dispersed and ratified, made commonplace, consensual and authoritative. As those who study discourses on language indicate, the proliferation of this talk is substantial: talk about language travels in and across disciplinary boundaries, in writing centre consultations, in handbooks and grammars, in dictionaries, in letters to the editor, in editorials, in political discourses on literacy, in discourses on immigration, gender or nation, in discourses on criminality, and even in such things as cocktail party conversation where mentions of immigration, nation or criminality can set off talk about language.

In fact, what Foucault says about talk about sex (that other common activity) can be applied to language and talk about it:

> It may well be that we talk about sex more than anything else; we set our minds to the task; we convince ourselves that we have never said enough on the subject, that, through inertia, or submissiveness, we conceal from ourselves the blinding evidence, and that what is essential always eludes us, so that we must always start out once again in search of it . . . . [W]e are dealing less with a discourse on sex than with a multiplicity of discourses. . . . [W]hat distinguishes these last three centuries is the variety, the wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about it, for having it spoken about, for inducing it to speak of itself, for

> listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it: around sex, a whole network of varying, specific, and coercive transpositions into discourse. (*History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, 33-34)

Such “regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse” (34) is apparent in the multiple contexts (e.g. of school, law, media and the nation), forms (e.g. grammars, dictionaries, letters to the editor, editorials, immigration policy, judiciary evidence) and devices (e.g. literacy tests, the five paragraph essay, immigration criteria) through which discourses on language operate. Indeed, like discourses on sex, discourses on language are characterised, in part, by “the variety, the wide dispersion of [contexts, forms and] devices that were invented for speaking about it, for having it spoken about, for inducing it to speak of itself, for listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it” – in short, for repeating, recognizing and authorizing statements about language, for making statements about language culturally intelligible. However, while nineteenth- and twentieth-century discourses on sex were linked to scientific discourses (derived their meaning, necessity and ‘truth’ from scientific systems of knowledge), statements about language seem linked to other sorts of knowledge or criteria of intelligibility.

Foucault argues that, in the nineteenth century, the practice of talking about sex became a scientific practice: the act of confessing sex moved from the confessional to the couch, where the ‘truth’ about sex acquired its meaning from medical experts who recorded, analyzed and interpreted it – and from other institutional experts who elaborated it (31-33). Sex was spoken about, but in authorized contexts (of medicine, psychiatry, criminology and education) and by authorized parties (doctors, psychiatrists, judges, educators). Foucault suggests, then, that the role of expertise is important in the formation and maintenance of discursive realities. Like Bourdieu, who insists that the production and reception of legitimate language relies on a (mis)recognition of authority, Foucault, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, argues that the subject and his/her enunciations are formed in contexts that confer and construct legitimacy, or authority. These legitimatizing contexts differentiate who can speak certain statements and from where they must be spoken. He notes, for example, that medical statements can not come from patients; they can only be spoken by doctors, whose legal and educational status ensure the legitimacy of medical statements as medical statements. At the same time,

medical statements themselves make the position 'doctor' possible. So 'making sense' has much to do with one's position and the ways in which this position must be taken up in order to be authoritative. According to Foucault, propositions can be called statements "not because, one day, someone happened to speak them or put them into some concrete form of writing; it is because the position of the subject can be assigned. To describe a formulation *qua* statement does not consist in analysing the relations between the author and what he says . . . ; but in determining what position can and must be occupied by any individual if he is to be the subject of it" (*Archaeology* 95-96).

It appears, however, that the discourse on language, unlike the discourse on sex, can be produced by a variety of individuals in a variety of institutional and social settings. That is, while the operation of these two discourses is similar in that their dispersion, transmission and repeatability lend them a certain cultural coherence, a ready intelligibility and authority, differentials regarding who can speak statements about language and from where these statements must be spoken are much less circumscribed in discourses on language than they are in discourses on sex. Where many might expect statements about language and the positions engendered by these statements to 'make sense', to be authoritative, only if they are spoken by experts located in certain institutional locales (e.g. linguists), I see something else at work: the intelligibility and integrity of statements about language appear not to depend on whether they issue from institutional or disciplinary positions of expertise.[6] In fact, while linguists, sociolinguists and those engaged in the analysis of discourse may be afforded some authority to make statements about language, their institutional expertise is often resisted or dismissed, seemingly unintelligible to the many who derive the 'truth' about language from other sources. According to Anthony Giddens, in his discussion of laypersons' attitudes toward scientific or technical knowledge, such resistance or disregard can symbolize a fundamental ambivalence toward expertise:

> This is an ambivalence that lies at the core of all trust relations, whether it be trust in abstract systems or in individuals. For trust is only demanded where there is ignorance – either of the knowledge claims of technical

[6] While the socio-cultural dispersion of twentieth and twenty-first century statements about sex suggests such statements need not be spoken by experts to be authoritative, the 'truth' about sex may still be tied to institutional and disciplinary positions. That is, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and social scientists who make claims about sex are afforded a kind of authority language experts are not.

> experts or of the thoughts and intentions of intimates upon whom a person relies. Yet ignorance always provides grounds for scepticism or at least caution. Popular representations of science and technical expertise typically bracket respect with attitudes of hostility and fear, as in the stereotypes of the "boffin," a humourless technician with little understanding of ordinary people. . . . Professions whose claim to specialist knowledge is seen mainly as a closed shop, having an insider's terminology seemingly invented to baffle the layperson – like lawyers or sociologists – are likely to be seen with a particularly jaundiced eye. (*The Consequences of Modernity* 90)

While respect may be conferred on those with some technical knowledge of grammar, linguists and sociolinguists are often viewed, especially in debates about usage, with the kind of hostility and distrust Giddens outlines above. This distrust, however, does not appear to arise from linguists' or sociolinguists' insider status (as disciplinary experts with a baffling, exclusive terminology), but from another sort of bafflement – an uncertainty about the 'truth' status of expert statements about language, which seem to contradict common experiences and views of language. Indeed, what might distinguish the state of knowledge about language (and people's attitude toward this knowledge) from other sorts of knowledge is its relation to our practical lives, to our everyday uses and common understandings of language, of which others, not experts, are more likely to speak.

As Cameron notes in her discussion of the grammar debates in England during the 1980s, the 'truth' about language often acquires its meaning, its sense, not from the practices or statements of linguistic science, but for example from pro-grammar conservatives (e.g. Prince Charles), whose expertise is garnered from sources that are less tangible at the same time as they are more intelligible. As she points out, conservative arguments about grammar appealed to a broad range of people in large measure because they "resonated with common-sense assumptions about *language*. [They] spoke to the belief almost everyone has that language-using is a normative practice, properly subject to judgements of correctness and value. . . . People engage in all kinds of everyday practices that confirm this belief: they look up words in dictionaries, they correct others' usage and are corrected themselves . . . (*Verbal Hygiene* 114; emphasis in original).
It appears, then, that ways of talking about language, based on widely circulated beliefs about or attitudes toward language, seem to have, built right into them, positions of

expertise. Although statements about language themselves, like statements about sex, make the position 'expert' possible, these statements about language must first resonate, must speak to a public consciousness, a commonsense affinity (rather than the 'sense' of specialists), before they are made intelligible. So while other discourses may rely on modern or specialized institutional domains of expertise for their circulation, maintenance and regulation, discourses on language can, I think, rely on themselves for their efficacy and authority. That is, the repetition, performance and subsequent recognition of commonplace statements about language seem to be enough to allow an individual to take up the position 'expert'. Such statements about language can be spoken by almost everyone, almost everywhere; legal, educational or political status does not always guarantee the legitimacy of language statements as language statements.[7]

What the above studies indicate is that certain assumptions, attitudes and beliefs about language rely on the operation of commonsense (so far described as mystification and (mis)recognition) for their circulation and ratification. Norman Fairclough, in a discussion of how commonsense contributes to the coherence of discourse, maintains that some discourses acquire the character of commonsense, become commonsensical, through a process of naturalization in which dominant discourses seemingly "lose [their] connection with particular ideologies and interests" (89). He discusses the relationship between ideology and commonsense by referring to Antonia Gramsci's notion of "implicit philosophy," which, according to Fairclough, can be seen as an unexamined,

---

[7] One could argue that if people were less ignorant about the workings of language, if they knew the 'truth' about it, linguistic experts might be afforded more authority to make statements about language, making it difficult for non-experts to take up the position of expert. But in spite of decades of research and discussion about language, a persistent ignorance about the workings of language remains. I do not believe, however, that dispelling this ignorance is simply a matter of teaching people the 'truth' about language, but of understanding what happens when people (e.g. students, teachers, editors, policy makers), presented with expert knowledge about language, repeatedly 'ignore' it. To borrow Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's wording, in some of these cases there appears to be a kind of 'will to ignorance' at work, not a will to knowledge, an "*already institutionalized* ignorance" (78; emphasis in original) or practical opacity that is "produced by and correspond[s] to particular knowledges and circulate[s] as part of particular regimes of truth (8). Indeed, what Sedgwick says about homosexuality, in *The Epistemology of the Closet*, could also pertain to language: "Just so with coming out: it can bring about the revelation of a powerful unknowing *as* unknowing, not as a vacuum or as the blank it can pretend to be but as a weighty and occupied and consequential epistemological space" (77; emphasis in original). There are some, it seems, who do not wish to know the 'truth' about language. In fact, this ignorance, if read as an epistemological stance on the part of some, could be interpreted as a strategy to make sense out of language in particular ways, ways that affirm, for functional purposes, commonsense views and conservative practices.

taken-for-granted consciousness manifest in the practical activities of social life (e.g. in law, art, and the economy). Gramsci himself actually makes a distinction between two kinds of consciousness, or, as he says, "one contradictory consciousness": an unverbalized consciousness, implicit in the activities of workers who are united in their "practical transformation of the real world," and a theoretical consciousness, the verbalization of an inherited, but unexamined philosophy which attaches itself to and guides practical activity in the service of a hegemonic force (*Prison Notebooks* 333-34). Although Fairclough does not say so, he seems to be drawing on this second sense of consciousness in his elaborations of commonsense and ideology. Through the process of hegemony, particular ideologies become taken-for-granted, commonsense philosophies operating at the level of the practical.

According to Fairclough, this process allows some discourses and their related activities to appear neutral, or natural. When discursive practices operate at the level of taken-for-granted knowledge, they lose their arbitrariness, or ideological character: ". . . if a discourse type so dominates an institution then it will cease to be seen as arbitrary (in the sense of being one among several possible ways of 'seeing' things) and will come to be seen as *natural*, and legitimate because it is simply *the* way of conducting oneself" (76; emphasis in original). For example, according to Fairclough, the everyday practice of looking up the meaning of words in dictionaries represents a commonsense idea about the nature of language: "Because of the considerable status accorded by common sense to 'the dictionary', there is a tendency to generally underestimate the extent of variation in meaning systems within a society. For, although some modern dictionaries do attempt to represent variation, 'the dictionary' as the authority on word meaning is very much a product of the process of *codification* of standard languages and thus closely tied to the notion that words have fixed meanings" (77). In spite of the fact that many dictionaries list a variety of meanings for any given word, the commonplace practice of looking up words, of turning to the dictionary to find just the 'right' or 'authoritative' meaning (especially in disputes over meaning), can reinforce the notion that meaning is fixed. Fairclough suggests that such practical activity, based as it often is on a commonsense idea of language, can maintain the dominant discourse on language wherein constructions

of meaning and meaning systems appear neutral, to borrow his words, "present themselves as simple matters of fact to common sense" (79).

But how do some discourses come to operate at the level of taken-for-granted knowledge and practice in the first place? Fairclough acknowledges the existence of ideological struggle or conflict (competing discourses associated with competing ideological positions), but also maintains that some discourses enjoy a commonsense status that can direct thought and action in and across institutional and social boundaries (75-76). He appears to attribute this dominant status to the nature of ideology itself, particularly with respect to its relation to power:

> Ideologies are closely linked to power, because the nature of the ideological assumptions embedded in particular conventions, and so the nature of these conventions themselves, depends on the power relations which underlie the conventions; and because they are a means of legitimizing existing social relations and differences of power, simply through the reoccurrence of ordinary, familiar ways of behaving which take these relations and power differences for granted. (2)

Thus, for Fairclough, it seems that the naturalization of commonsense discourse types and discursive relations "depends on the power of the social groupings whose ideologies and whose discourse types are at issue. What comes to be commonsense is . . . in large measure determined by who exercises power and domination in a society or social institution" (76). Exactly how this power and domination are exercised, however, deserves fuller development. Fairclough partially develops his analysis of this phenomenon in his discussion of hierarchical discourse types: discourse types – defined as the "conventions, norms, codes of practice underlying actual discourse" (75) – come to be seen as commonsense because they come to represent the discourse of whole institutions or societies, rather than groupings within an institution or society. This occurs, in part, via the suppression or containment of oppositional discourses and their types (79). However, while discourses can, of course, be suppressed or contained, their suppression or containment may rely on the more complex or subtle operations of commonsense. Fairclough hints at these operations in his explanation of the implications of commonsense assumptions. On the one hand, he argues, commonsense assumptions can, in varying degrees, contribute to unequal power relations (e.g. when assumptions about freedom of speech disguise actual barriers that prevent some from speaking freely).

On the other hand, they can establish and consolidate "solidarity relations among members of a particular social grouping" (70). Yet, in his discussion of the operation of commonsense, Fairclough seems to leave behind the importance of solidarity relations as he focuses on the ways discourse types and the 'naturalized' social positions they engender reflect institutional relations of power. For example, Fairclough tends to focus on discourse types and their associated "interactional routines" (such as police officer/witness interviews or doctor/patient consultations) and the ways in which these types, routines and the subject positions they afford become naturalized in the service of power hierarchies: ". . . there is no inherent reason why enquiries at police stations should be conventionally structured the way they are, there are conceivable if not actual alternatives, and the naturalization of a particular routine as the common-sense way of doing things is an effect of power, an ideological effect" (82).

But, as Cameron suggests, the efficacy and authority of dominant discourses rely, in large part, on the workings of commonsense affinity or solidarity. This solidarity, however, does not refer to what has often been described as 'folk wisdom' – the unconscious or naïve knowledge of the 'common folk'. According to Teun van Dijk, other discourses and modes of thought, such as those found in psychoanalytic theories, influence presupposed, mutually shared beliefs and conceptualizations: ". . . in most modern societies, there is no 'pure and popular', scientifically uncontaminated, common sense, but rather a gradual difference with explicit, scientific, methods of observation, thinking, proof and truth criteria" (105).[8] Hence, theories of commonsense that insist on its relation to an idealized 'everyday' or 'popular' experience miss its relation to more complex ways of interpreting and articulating experience.

While van Dijk usefully reminds us that commonsense ideas should not be thought of as operating in some idealized domain of activity among an idealized social grouping, he does not address why some ways of interpreting and articulating experience influence commonsense thinking and others do not, why some modes of 'scientific'

[8] Here, I leave aside van Dijk's objections to the links others have made between ideology and commonsense. Attempting to separate commonsense from ideology, van Dijk insists that because ideologies are identified with the specific beliefs of a group and commonplace assumptions operate in wider cultural domains, ideologies should not be collapsed as commonsense. While I note his objections, I also note Fairclough's claim, via Gramsci, that the specific beliefs of a group can and do circulate in wider domains of culture, society and economy.

thought (e.g. recent research in sociolinguistics) do not enjoy wide influence, while others exert their influence across a range of contexts, among a variety of groups, for a variety of intentions. This phenomenon is explained in Gramsci's elaboration of hegemony, where commonsense operates as a *cohesive* force (343). According to Gramsci, any idea has the capacity to become commonsense, but not every idea does: "It is a matter therefore of starting with a philosophy which already enjoys, or could enjoy, a certain diffusion, because it is connected to and implicit in practical life, and elaborating it so that it becomes a renewed common sense possessing the coherence of and sinew of individual philosophies. But this can only happen if the demands of the cultural contact with the 'simple' are continually felt" (332). Although van Dijk questions the role of everyday experience as the sole criterion of commonsense consciousness, Gramsci suggests that it is important to understand how *identifying* with practical life contributes to the cultural diffusion of certain ideas or 'philosophies'.

It is not a matter, therefore, of a consciousness based on one's everyday experience and observation, but on the invocation and elaboration of this experience and observation, on the identification and construction of everyday practice and practicality. That is, the power and significance of commonsense lie in its ability to both allow for and produce affinities: commonsense "attaches one to a social group, [influencing] moral conduct and the direction of will" (Gramsci 333). In other words, elaborating a shared practicality encourages shared interests. So, one could argue that Gramsci's "practical life," or popular experience, is actually the construction of a common practicality that supports hegemonic interests and activities. For example, where matters of language are concerned, the practical, the popular and the common are discursive constructions in arguments for and against certain notions of language (e.g. in elaborations of a 'national-popular' language and in rationales for rules of practical usage in such texts as *The Practical Stylist*). For Gramsci, invocations of the common, of the popular, become necessary "hegemonic ideological constructions" that approach and assemble "the people in order to guide it ideologically and keep it linked with the leading group" (345).[9]

---

[9] This phenomenon can be seen, for instance, in George W. Bush's frequent invocations of the American people alongside claims about plain-speaking, commonsense approaches to domestic and foreign issues. Of course, this connection between plain-speaking and commonsense has a long history. It can be traced back to late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century British discourses on reason, government and

In order to understand how commonsense discourses on language resonate in wider cultural domains, perhaps operate as hegemonic practical constructions, we need, I think, to understand language's historical status as an object of knowledge – the ways in which the modern study of language itself has permitted and ratified a certain consciousness about language. Such study, according to Tony Crowley, more accurately represents a cultural field of knowledge rather than a scientific one. Arising out of and responding to socio-cultural exigencies, the modern objectification of language symbolized attempts to produce and regulate social, political and historical unities, affinities meant to cultivate a common sense of language and self.

In his analysis of English as an object of study in the nineteenth century, Crowley notes that the objectification of language signalled the emergence of a new discursive field rooted in notions of historicity. He maintains, however, that in Britain the study of the history of language represented a particular configuration of language and history. British comparative philology, for example, had much more to do with the study of *a specific* language than with language in general: ". . . for the historians of the language in Britain the main concern in language studies was not with 'dead' languages but with the relationship between English language and past and present history" (50), a relationship that necessitated a unified subject (English as language and identity), "constructed and ordered according to the continuity of what may be called 'national time'" (37). The 'nation' provided early linguists with a methodological unity that, in turn, served as a rallying point for national unity itself; the language and its study "bound all English-speaking individuals together at the present and gave them a sense of a common past history" (39). The history of the English language would, in the eyes of many historians and linguists, provide a unified pattern of national and cultural progress that could unite the English – inspire patriotism and educate the masses into citizenship, into an acceptance of the English nation as "a long-standing, continuously evolving entity" (46) with a language that not only linked Britain's past with its present but also linked all

---

rights. See, for example, Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* and *Commonsense* and Mary Wollstencraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, where the authors invoke linguistic notions of clarity and conciseness alongside constructions of commonness, or the popular, in their bids to produce a 'new' commonsense.

English speaking people together as a "collective 'social fact'" (39), sharing common values apparently inherent in the language itself.

According to Crowley, the study of language as object was always linked to its potential as a unifying or centralizing force. He details this phenomenon in, for example, his discussion of Archbishop Trent's preoccupation with the etymology of the English language and "its hidden moral and political truths" (59). Like others working on the etymology of English words, Trent believed that an excavation of words would be "the medium by which the original perfection and consequent debasement of humanity could be proved" (62) via investigations of a word's original meaning and subsequent transformations. As Crowley points out, this notion of language, as a vehicle for revealed truth, perfection and then debasement, guaranteed the language's status as a moral arbitrator and reformer that worked in the service of national and social unity. In fact, Trent's aim was "to teach students moral respect and thereby 'to lead such through a more intimate knowledge of [English] into a greater love of [England]'" (71).

In varying degrees, then, language as object of knowledge became the site upon which identifications were invoked, negotiated and regulated. Affinities were produced in and through a field of knowledge that relied on imagined commonalities and historical unities. Linked, as statements about language were, to constructions of common identity, value and experience, their intelligibility rested on their capacity to transcend particularities (of class, morality, politics and time), to create the appearance of, to borrow Bakhtin's words, "unified verbal-ideological thought" (*Dialogic Imagination* 270). Thus the distribution, ratification and authority of commonsense ways of thinking and interpreting linguistic experience may have much to do with this discourse's earlier methodological intentions and practices. Cultivating a common sense of language and self required the construction of a common consciousness for its integrity and authority. The importance of this relationship is exemplified in recent debates about declining standards and the loss of a shared culture, debates which frequently invoke the touchstone of commonsense against the "new orthodoxy" of linguistic theory (Crowley 260-71). As Crowley notes, conservative proponents of a return to traditional linguistic and social

values often argue that those formulating language policy must remain "strong in their common sense, distrustful of experts and chaste towards fashion" (Marenbon qtd. in Crowley 272).

Here, we enter rhetorical realms, where speakers appeal to the logic of common experience or belief – and appeal to the idea of commonsense itself – as a means of persuasion, of confirming or encouraging common ground. Such appeals constitute what Isocrates, and later Aristotle, called *doxa*, or common opinion (*consensus omnium*), and *endoxa*, arguments based on these opinions. In fact, for classical rhetoricians the study and use of common opinion to establish common ground was at the heart of the rhetorical project. Early rhetoric, in contrast to early philosophy, constructed itself as a domain that dealt in the realm of the practical and the probable, of contingent matters where arguments based on shared beliefs and values, on shared or enthymematic premises rather than abstracted or certain knowledge, were more likely to shift the consensus on any given matter: "we must use, as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody, as we observed in the *Topics* when dealing with the way to handle a popular audience" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 180). Aristotle, in fact, spends a considerable amount of time delineating the uses and effects of the enthymeme, a syllogistic method of reasoning that relies on fewer propositions: "For if any of these propositions is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself. Thus, to show that Dorieus has been victor in a contest for which the prize is a crown, it is enough to say 'For he has been victor in the Olympic games,' without adding 'And in the Olympic games the prize is a crown,' a fact which everybody knows" (*Rhetoric* 183). Moreover, Aristotle's account of rhetoric and the role of contingent knowledge in rhetorical practice centres on a dual meaning of contingency. On the one hand, contingency refers to the character of probable knowledge itself, its nature as variable and fallible. On the other hand, contingency refers to *kairos*,[10] or the variable nature of rhetorical situation, and the effect of situation on knowledge, on what is, for a particular time, place and community, probable and therefore acceptable as common ground. Thus, for Aristotle, the enthymeme and related to the enthymeme, the *topoi* or commonplaces (a term that

[10] For an elaborate account of the complexity of the term *kairos*, as it is used in rhetorical theory, see *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Praxis*, Phillip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin, Editors (Albany: State U of New York P, 2002).

effectively captures this dual sense of contingency as probable topic/knowledge and variable situation), are integral to an understanding of rhetorical argument or appeal.

At the heart of rhetorical activity, then, are attempts to invoke that which is "generally admitted or believed" (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 183), to appeal to commonsense and so construct and clarify the commons itself. In fact, drawing on the work of Aristotle, Perelman and Burke, Michael Billig, in *Arguing and Thinking*, maintains that the efficacy of commonplace arguments lies in their ability to produce such identifications. As common 'places of argument' commonly used by orators and recognizable to audiences, commonplaces (*topoi*) establish common ground in presuppositions that treat the speaker and audience as a community bound together by shared values and ideas (196-98). Burke, of course, sees rhetoric as "involving us in matters of socialization and faction," where "real divisions [are presented] in terms that deny divisions" (*On Symbols* 190). In his elaboration of Aristotelian rhetoric (rhetoric as discovering the available means of persuasion), Burke outlines the nature of rhetoric as a socially symbolic act that relies on identification for its operational force:

> . . . we might well keep it in mind that a speaker persuades an audience by the use of stylistic identifications; his act of persuasion may be for the purpose of causing the audience to identify itself with the speaker's interests; and the speaker draws on identification of interests to establish rapport between himself and his audience. So, there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification ("consubstantiality") and communication (the nature of rhetoric as "addressed"). (*On Symbols* 191)

Rhetoric, for Burke, is "a symbolic means of inducing cooperation" (*On Symbols* 188) via "communally shared assumptions that allow us to work together, to cooperate, to identify even though we are not identical" (Coe, *Toward a Better Life*). By appealing to generally received opinion or established prejudice, the speaker links her interests with those of the audience (Billig 194); she creates consubstantiality. Seeing the operation of commonsense in a rhetorical context, then, allows us to investigate its constitutive properties, to see the invocation and construction of 'common' knowledge as participating in discursive identifications, as ontological rather than merely epistemological. As Richard Coe suggests, in his explanation of Burke's treatment of knowledge and symbolic action, the operation of common ground or commonsense

should not be seen as exclusively epistemological. Rather, commonsense identifications involve us in ontological matters, where knowing and being is a socially constituted 'acting together' (Coe, *Toward a Better Life*). Indeed, according to Burke, "substance, in the old philosophies, was an act; and a way of life is an acting-together; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial" (*On Symbols* 181).

This is not to say that commonsense thinking is unitary or without its challenges. While commonplaces symbolize objects of agreement, or common ways of acting together, they are also a means by which controversies arise (Billig 209). They provide the seeds of logoi and anti-logoi, opposing values and principles that become ideological rallying points; they are, argues Billig, inherently dilemmatic. In fact, because they operate at the level of generality, commonplaces are fraught with "dilemmas of categorization and particularization" (210). That is, controversy will arise over disagreements about the assignation of a value or its interpretation in a specific context. For instance, according to Billig, "freedom" is commonly seen as a good thing, but "the interpretation of this self-evidently desirable value differs markedly, and the fascist's freedom is the democrat's dictatorship" (210). Moreover, the commonplaces of commonsense often conflict with one another: commonplaces about freedom conflict with commonplaces about responsibility and commonplaces about justice can conflict with commonplaces about mercy, and so on (211). Therefore, according to Billig, general principles or commonplaces may not be questioned (e.g. freedom, liberty, responsibility, justice, mercy), but their different application can provoke debate.

A focus on the dilemmatic nature of commonplaces, then, can provide a useful framework for interpreting debates about language, especially on those occasions when shared principles are acknowledged and used by all participants in these debates. As Coe points out, divisions or differences "can be debated only where there is, on a more profound level, cooperation . . . . Only when we stand together, grounded in the same basic assumptions, can we fruitfully debate our *relatively* superficial disagreements. Where this discursive consubstantiality does not exist, debate degenerates" (*Toward a Better Life*; emphasis in original). In conversations about language, speakers often share the same terms of reference (e.g. clarity, consistency, unity, diversity) to debate matters

of usage. Furthermore, these terms of reference are almost always linked to other commonplaces (to, for example, basic assumptions about language's relation to identity, history, nation and culture). Where participants in these debates differ is in their interpretations and applications of these principles or values. Perhaps because arguments about language are ultimately debates about extra-linguistic values, and these extra-linguistic values also operate at the level of commonsense, commonplaces about language are bound to open themselves up to dilemmas of categorization and particularization.

For example, many engaged in debates about language will invoke the term "equality" as a key principle that informs their contributions to this debate, but the use of this principle is differently applied depending on the position from which one speaks. Linguists and socio-linguists, for instance, often insist that all languages and dialects, including the dialect from which Standard English comes, are equal. As Rosina Lippi-Green claims, in her discussion of the principles by which linguists operate, "All . . . languages are equal in linguistic terms" (10).[11] Thus, for some linguists, sociolinguists and educationalists, the teaching of Standard English and, more importantly, the ways in which this standard is taught ends up privileging one dialect above all others. Some of these experts suggest that the teaching of one 'correct' standard, without acknowledgement of the arbitrariness of this norm, can result in low self-esteem for those whose home dialects are marked as low status, or unequal: "It is clearly important that teachers should . . . recognise dialects for what they are. In assisting children to master Standard English, which in effect is the dialect of the school, they should do so without making the children feel marked out by the form of language they bring with them and to which they revert outside of class" (Bullock qtd. in *Standard English and the Politics of Language* 236).

[11] According to James Milroy, in "The Consequences of Standardisation in Descriptive Linguistics," such expert invocations of "equality" may reinforce the sense that debates about language are simply debates about the 'scientific facts' of language, which in turn obscures the ideological nature of these debates. Milroy insists that the notion that all languages are equal is not a scientific fact, capable of empirical demonstration, but an ideological position: "To point out that there is nothing 'ungrammatical' in some particular non-standard usage and that 'dialects' have 'grammars' is not ideological. However, to suggest that such usage is or should be generally socially accepted is just as much an ideological claim as to suggest that it is not acceptable: it is an attempt to influence social attitudes" (23).

Defenders of the standard, however, will often employ the same commonplace term of reference in their arguments for a return to traditional values and norms. According to this perspective, 'left-wing socio-linguists' and their permissive educational counterparts have ensured some children's unequal socio-economic participation (Cameron, *Verbal Hygiene* 98). In her discussion of John Honey's *The Language Trap*, which attacks socio-linguists on the grounds that they are involved in a misguided "game of social engineering," Cameron summarizes this position:

> . . . in adopting the new orthodoxy, schools were hurting the very pupils they most earnestly desired to help, namely, working-class children speaking non-standard vernaculars. It was all very well proposing the linguist's axiom that 'all varieties are equal', but since no one else in society believed this, to act on it was to perpetuate social disadvantage. Standard English remained the mark of intelligent, educated speakers, and working-class children would suffer unless they were taught it and made to use it in school. (98)

The notion of equality, as I indicate above, is a shared value or principle by which participants in debates about the teaching of Standard English often argue different points of view. On the one hand, some experts in the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics and education insist that because all dialects are equal, the uncritical teaching of the standard dialect disadvantages children who speak and write in a non-standard dialect and so ensures feelings of inadequacy or inequality. On the other hand, non-expert arguments based on the commonplace value of equality, such as Honey's above, re-stage notions of advantage and disadvantage to make claims about the importance of teaching Standard English to these children who speak and write in a non-standard dialect.

The discourse on language itself is generally a stage for such common-play; in fact, the use of common frames of reference, differently produced and dramatized, appears to be a hallmark of this discourse. For example, in other debates about language, the commonplace "clarity" is invoked, but it too is differently applied, depending on the identifications and interests of the actors on the stage. In debates about the use of generic terms to signify men and women, proponents of the use of gender-neutral terms argue that clarity relies on the accurate representation of a world in which both men and women participate (Cameron 135). In other words, there are some who believe it is more accurate and therefore clear to say police officers, firefighters, anglers, chairpersons (or

chair) in a world were women participate in the activities of policing, firefighting, fishing, chairing and so on. For example, there are those, according to Cameron, who defend the use of 'politically correct' language on the grounds of accuracy-clarity: "Simon Hoggart, for instance, regards the BBC's 'Sensitivity' guidelines as 'mostly . . . common sense. Now that fire brigades are appointing women, "firefighters" isn't PC but is just accurate" (136). But as Cameron notes, this argument rests on another basic assumption or commonplace about language – that it is "a simple 'mirror of nature', designating things in the world rather than symbolizing values and beliefs" (136).[12] On other occasions, "clarity" is used to rationalize assumptions about character (e.g. mentions of ethics and morals are common in appeals for a clear, plain style) or it is used to rationalize higher level values (e.g. where the use of clear, plain language comes to represent democratic challenges to the elitism of academe, medicine, business and government).[13]

In short, commonplaces about language, differently applied, can be put to use in a number of contexts for a variety of purposes. However, their easy recognition, or ready intelligibility, may be the very characteristic that allows them to travel, to circulate in and across social and institutional contexts in spite of situational differences in application or

---

[12] The distinctions being made here by proponents of the use of gender-neutral terms appear to be grounded in a kind of either/or thinking: either words are 'accurate' representations of the world or they are 'inaccurate'. If they are accurate, then they do not, somehow, embody attitudes, values and beliefs; they simply reflect the world as it is. Accuracy here seems to be equated with neutrality and transparency, with the notion that words and things can have a direct or clear relationship. There *are* female police officers, anglers, chairs and firefighters in the world and so the use of policemen, firemen, chairmen and fishermen is considered 'inaccurate' and 'unclear'. However, drawing on Burke's discussion of the accuracy and adequacy of words, Coe notes that, according to Burke, a word "is accurate insofar as it contains no falsehoods, does not represent anything that is not really there" (*Toward a Better Life*). The word *firemen*, then, might not be inaccurate. However, such a word may be inadequate if it does not represent "everything germane to our purposes . . . . It may represent reality without any misrepresentation (i.e. with any falsehoods), but partially – deflecting information and insights we need to understand and respond successfully. Occasionally, a representation may even be inaccurate but adequate, as when false 'intelligence' reports lead to fortuitous actions" (*Toward a Better Life*). Moreover, words can be accurate (according to Burke's criteria of accuracy) *and* embody perspectives (e.g. both *fireman* and *firefighter* can accurately 'sum' up situations and also embody perspectives on these situations). For Burke, words are like titles; as "entitlings," they are "receptacles of personal attitudes and social ratings" (*Language as Action* 361). That is, words entitle or summarize non-verbal situations and in doing so direct our attention to some things and deflect our attention from others (361). Thus, to treat language in terms of a direct "word-thing relationship" (361), as those proponents of gender neutral terms who base their arguments on notions of clarity do, misses the functions or purposes of our wording.

[13] For familiar examples of these applications of "clarity," see George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language," Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* and Joseph M. Williams' *Ten Lessons in Clarity & Grace*.

interpretation. Their repeated invocation in and across these varied contexts might actually solidify their authority, ratifying general and generalizing identifications over particular interests. This in turn may disable or disallow the 'expert' function of statements about language that emanate from institutional domains of speciality. That is, when commonsense principles, such as "equality" and "clarity," represent the only available terms of reference in discourses on language, it becomes difficult to disrupt the hegemonic force of these commonplaces and the positions these commonplaces afford. Even Cameron, in her discussion of commonsense thinking about language standards, admits the difficulty of moving away from such enduring frames of reference: "the discourse of 'standards' is not only available to those who dissent from conservative views about language, it is probably the only discourse in which dissent can gain a hearing. Those who want to question prevailing standards must present their arguments with due consideration for the common-sense perception of language-using as a normative practice. . ." (115).

My point here is not to claim that ideologies of language can not be questioned or disrupted, but that the operation of commonsense makes this activity particularly difficult. While uttering commonplaces about language, in the context of dissent, may produce a shift in their legitimacy, more often than not, repeating these commonplaces simply re-inscribes their authority. Indeed, although there are some, of course, who are suspicious about the 'truth' of official discourses on language (a kind of unofficial, sometimes unverbalized, thinking about language-using in cases where an experience of language contradicts the official narrative), the recognition and repetition of official discourses on language often circumvent or contain these suspicions in the way that the recognition and repetition of national emblems can contain threats to national affinity and accord. In fact, commonsense accounts of language may be official in the way an anthem or a flag are official; they can be sincerely sung or flown, sincerely cited by individuals and so become a meaningful (both a personal and official) way to signal one's participation in a unified discourse or community – a way to feature one's residence in a larger neighbourhood where expertise is dispersed among those who share broader interests and identifications in spite of suspicions about the values associated with these interests and identifications. Therefore, the reason official discourses on language might

'speak' to language users (expert and non-expert alike) is that they not only identify with them (via the elaboration of a shared practicality that encourages shared interests), but also identify them, provide them with a ready and welcome position of expertise and authority, a kind of sincere, neighbourly citing and situating that might be motivated by broader institutional or communal exigencies (of education, of nation, etcetera). For example, new graduate students working in English Studies can take up authoritative positions of expertise by sincerely citing official discourses on language, which have a ready audience (undergraduate students who recognize these discourses and who can repeat them in spite of their actual experiences with them). And perhaps there are those who feel added pressure to echo these commonplaces, who believe they must demonstrate their knowledge of these commonplaces in order to enter into 'official' communities or to question the tenets of these communities.

Whether commonplace statements about language are uttered as a means to demonstrate one's identification with a community (as in the case of graduate students) or uttered in such a way that they encourage shared interests and identifications (as in the case of those who attempt to delineate a national standard), what these commonplaces suggest is that talk about language often ratifies common interest and identity in spite of the fact that the dilemmatic nature of this talk can become a stage for the practical play of debate and difference. In the chapters that follow, then, I detail the ways in which this talk relies on the operation of commonsense for its intelligibility and authority, and I account for the ways its dilemmatic nature might actually serve to amalgamate and thus advance commonsense ideas about language.

Chapter Two
Making Canadian English:
"The Codification of Our Common Understanding"

> The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* . . . has dozens of mundane uses – clarifying meanings, settling spellings, suggesting pronunciations, providing synonyms, and all the rest – but the sum of all those uses is much greater than the parts. In the living language there is a reflection of where we have been and where we are likely to go next, and what we have considered important on the way. It is the codification of our common understanding.
>
> (J.K. Chambers, "Canadian English: 250 Years in the Making" 1998)

In national discourses on language, links between language, nation and history are taken as axiomatic, self-evident blurrings that underlie much of the work of dictionary makers and other professionals engaged in the delineation of national languages. The premises that underlie Chambers' statements are typical of the kinds of assumptions dictionary makers have been making for some time now; they represent a long tradition of attempts to signify the nation in terms of linguistic and historical unities.[14] A national language is not simply a language but an account of the nation's past, present and future, "of where we have been and where we are likely to go next." But in this conceptualization of language such "mundane" things as pronunciation, spelling and meaning not only organize national histories, they exemplify national consciousness, a "common understanding." Such codifications of linguistic form and use, to borrow Kathyrn Woolard's words, "envision and enact ties of language to identity ... and epistemology" (3). As others have noted, the confluence of history, identity and

[14] Attempts to signify the nation in terms of linguistic and historical unities can been seen as early, at least, as 1694, with the publication of the Académie Française's *Dictionnaire de la langue française*. Eighteenth-century attempts include Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* project, as detailed in his *Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* (published in 1747) and, of course, Noah Webster's *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789), which preceded *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). For a discussion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century attempts to codify the English language in terms of nation and history, see Tony Crowley's account of the making of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in *Standard English and the Politics of Language*.

epistemology has come to be viewed as a routine aspect of language itself; it has become the ground upon which language – as nation, history, identity and consciousness – is figured. This chapter, however, is primarily concerned with the tenacity or persistence of these entanglements, in spite of researchers' attempts to unravel them.[15] Indeed, while those working in the field of language ideologies have observed a tendency to treat these associations as evidence of the existence of a distinct nation rather than evidence of the ways language has served and continues to serve different articulations and understandings of nation, researchers have been unable, for the most part, to dislodge the idea that language is a neutral and transparent marker of nation, a disinterested and self-evident index of a nation's history and identity.

As Michael Billig suggests, this inability to unravel the connection between language and nation may have something to do with the way commonplaces in general become ideological rallying points when assigned a value or interpreted in specific contexts. As it happens, commonplaces about language, when they are assigned values associated with nation and interpreted in national contexts, are a particularly effective means of differentiating and so articulating the nation. For example, in discourses on language in the United States and Canada one finds these commonplaces (language as identity and history), but finds them expressing localized cultural values and political interests. For instance, in Geoffrey Nunberg's examination of early 20th century "English-Only" movements in the United States, we learn that conceptualizations of language as nation and identity were used as a means of ensuring a unified public discourse and public ideal. According to Nunberg, language was involved in "an aggressive program of Americanization," whereby new immigrants, arriving in the United States between 1900 and 1920, were sanitized, made to speak the official language as a condition of their citizenship, as proof that they had abandoned the political ideas of their home countries (124). In this configuration, argues Nunberg, the use of American English, as a bearer of democratic ideals and patriotic rituals, was linked to

---

[15] See, for example, Tony Crowley, *Standard English and the Politics of Language*, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Jim Milroy, "The Legitimate Language: giving a history to English," *Alternative Histories of English*, ed. Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 7-26; Bambi B. Schieffelin et al. eds., *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998); Ian Pringle, "Attitudes to Canadian English," *The English Language Today*, ed. Sidney Greenbaum (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1985)183-206.

political thought and participation, to one's ability to adapt to a democratic society. This tie of language to political institution and ideal can be heard in early accounts of the emerging nation. In 1793, for example, William Thornton anticipates nineteenth and twentieth century American imaginings of language as national-political ideal:

> You have corrected the dangerous doctrines of European powers, correct now the languages you have imported, for the oppressed of various nations knock at your gates, and desire to be received as your brethren. As you admit them facilitate your intercourse, and you will mutually enjoy the benefits. – The AMERICAN LANGAUGE will thus be as distinct as the government, free from all the follies of unphilosophical fashion, and resting upon truth as its only regulator. (*Cadmus; or A Treatise on the Elements of Written Language* v-vii; emphasis in original)

In Canadian imaginings, language, not surprisingly, has also come to signify the nation's socio-political ideals and concerns. Like those who participated in early American discourses on language, those who attempt to describe Canadian English frequently invoke the term "distinction," a description of language that could be linked to extra-linguistic anxieties about social and political difference. As Margery Fee points out in her introduction to the *Oxford Guide to Canadian English Usage*, Canadians are concerned about "the distinctiveness of things Canadian, including Canadian English" in part because of their fears of American cultural assimilation. She also notes that what makes writers and readers of Canadian English distinct "is their calm acceptance, even in the same sentence, of both American and British forms" (xi). As Fee's comment about Canadians' calm acceptance of linguistic diversity suggests, researchers also tend to interpret usage in Canada in terms of this country's institutions and ideals, in terms that hint at the nation's institutionalized pluralism and multiculturalism, or principles of tolerance and acceptance. For example, in his explanation of why Canadians have rejected the imposition of a standard Canadian English, J.K. Chambers suggests that Canada's unique linguistic history is both a result of its constitutional precedents and a reflection of its tolerant attitude toward diversity:

> [The] real significance [of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham] is that Canada became officially, constitutionally, and culturally bilingual. . . . From that precedent, our subsequent linguistic history takes many unique turns. For instance, in 1970 the census figures showed that in Ontario more than one person in six spoke a language other than English or French

> as his or her mother tongue. Even more remarkable than the diversity was the initiative taken by the Ontario government in order to maintain it by introducing legislation . . . , which guarantees Ontario schoolchildren some instruction in their mother tongue in schools where they form a significant minority. (Chambers, "Three Kinds of Standard in Canadian English" 3)

Both Tony Crowley and Lesley Milroy argue for a study of the ways different discourses on language articulate varied and localized representations of nation, of the ways local circumstances shape different ideas about language and different forms of social and political organization. Challenging Bakhtin's preference for socio-linguistic diversity (the tendency toward heteroglossia) over unity (the tendency toward monoglossia), Crowley argues that a look at the local and specific contexts that might produce monoglossic tendencies indicates that linguistic unification can be an effective organizing tool for those nations or groups seeking to assert their independence. According to Crowley, an examination of different histories and different contexts (e.g. African attempts to standardize African languages in the face of colonial English) demonstrates that "the struggle between monoglossia and dialogism, and that between monoglossia, polyglossia and heteroglossia, is not simply a conflict of linguistic tendencies and effects but a conflict in which what is at stake is precisely forms of representation and self-representation which are closely linked to power" (*Language in History* 53). Milroy too calls for the study of local contexts and histories, especially in relation to the character of local language ideologies. In her comparison of language ideologies in Britain and the United States, Milroy traces these differences, arguing that although class and race can mediate attitudes toward language in both countries, conceptualizations of and attitudes toward standard English generally reflect long-standing socio-historical circumstances of race, in the case of the United States, and class, in the case of Britain. For example, in the United States, slavery, the Civil War, the country's proximity to Mexico, and its immigration patterns "shaped a language ideology focused on racial discrimination rather than on class warfare" (204).

While it is evident that these histories and contexts have produced particular ways of talking about language or ways of responding to others' talk about language, Milroy's analysis of language ideologies in the United States and Britain seems to produce what

Deborah Cameron calls a "correlational fallacy," whereby some relation between language and society is presupposed: "The 'language reflects society' account implies that social structures somehow exist before language, which simply 'reflects' or 'expresses' the more fundamental categories of the social" (81). In "Demythologizing Sociolinguistics: Why Language Does Not Reflect Society," Cameron refers specifically to sociolinguistic accounts that interpret usage as a reflection or expression of various social categories and divisions: to borrow Cameron's example, a middle-aged Italian woman from New York who uses *x* and *y* linguistic features apparently expresses her identity as a middle-aged Italian woman from New York (85). In discourses on language as nation, a similar "correlation fallacy" might be at work, one which affirms a notion of pre-existing histories. American history is a history of race conflict. British history is a history of class conflict. Attitudes toward language, then, reflect or express these historical conflicts. These commonplace relations between language and history and between language and society, however, may end up reproducing pre-existing national constructions, reaffirming familiar historical representations.[16]

Still, suppositions of this sort permeate the discourse on language as nation, not only rationalizing materialist claims that usage signifies an "actual" difference (between nations, peoples, regions), but also motivating sociolinguistic claims that language ideologies emerge out of different historical contexts that express national identity and concern. In both kinds of claims, arguments about difference, actual or ideological, are predicated upon an *a priori* conceptualization of situation, whereby situation (time/place) activates related categories of difference (nation, region, class, race, ethnicity). That is, when situation is treated in terms of events located in real time and space, categories of difference may end up being treated as naturally occurring context variables. The uses of linguistic feature *x* in a different locale signifies a naturally occurring identity. Different

[16] Moreover, these sorts of "correlational fallacies" may shelter other ways of looking at the exigencies and effects of attitudes toward language. See, for example, Alastair Pennycook's *English and the Discourses of Colonialism*, an account of attitudes toward English in colonial and neo-colonial contexts. Pennycook presents a more complex account of language ideologies in Britain by linking the teaching of English abroad to the material, cultural and historical interests of Britain. In his study, language ideologies in Britain do not simply reflect or express histories of class conflict, but involve larger issues related to colonial discourses of race and identity, expansion and economy. See also Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, an examination of English language and literature in terms of racialized identities, culture and economies in colonial India.

histories produce different attitudes toward language that then become the basis for an interpretation of naturally occurring national concerns.

However, as Carolyn Miller suggests, "[s]ituations are social constructs that are the result, not of 'perception', but of 'definition'. Because human action is based on and guided by meaning, not by material causes alone, at the centre of action is a process of interpretation. Before we can act, we must interpret the indeterminate material environment; we define or 'determine' a situation" ("Genre" 29). While Miller is primarily concerned with reconceptualizing conventional ideas about genre, her understanding of genre as typified social action can provide insights into the ways situation – and *statements* about situation – are motivated by rhetorical rather than material conditions alone. In fact, Miller's discussion of situation has important implications for the study of discourses on language. If we see situation as "social construct, or semiotic structure" (30), then recurring or typified statements about situation and the linguistic variables it supposedly produces (materialist or ideological) might tell us more about studies of language themselves than the differences these studies posit. As Miller points out, "[b]y 'defining' a material circumstance as part of a situational type, I find a way to engage my intentions in it in a socially recognizable and interpretable way" (31). Definitions of situation involve us in definitions of what is intelligible, meaningful and authoritative and, as such, they involve us in matters of motive. Drawing on Kenneth Burke's assertion that "motives are shorthand terms for situations," Joseph Gusfield argues that motives should not be understood "as a source of behaviour but as a concept used by people to make actions understandable to them and to others" (11). A motive "is a linguistic device, a concept by which the observer, including the self, explains and understands situations" (11). As Burke himself says, "Any given situation derives its character from the entire framework of interpretation by which we judge it. And differences in our ways of sizing up an objective situation are expressed subjectively as differences in our assignment of motive (*On Symbols* 130).

The idea that different contexts or situations produce different ideologies, and thus different articulations of or understandings of nation, relies on a particular framework of interpretation, one predicated upon the study of material, rather than rhetorical, situations. However, what might a study of motivation and the cultural

vocabularies that name situations reveal about talk about language and nation? I ask this question in large part because it seems to me that, in specialist discourses on language, talk about language and nation often features setting or situation above other motives, or to use Burke's pentadic terminology, features scene above act, agency, agent and purpose. Act (use of language), agent (language user), agency (the attitudinal manner and instrumental means by which the agent performs the linguistic act), and purpose (reason for particular use) are then read as variables of scene.[17] That is, specialist talk about language often highlights scenic relationships, attributes such things as changes in language or linguistic unification to scenic motives, which in turn makes situation an objective reality external to the discourse on language. But, as Richard Vatz points out, "No situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric" which characterizes it (226).

According to Burke, such an examination of motives offers us a way to understand what is involved when we "size up situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude toward them" (*Philosophy* 1). Called a dramatist method of analysis, this 'way with words' involves looking at the vocabularies or clusters of terms we utilize to make sense of the world and it involves doing so, in part, by examining the five elements of drama, or elements of symbolic action, that make up what Burke calls the pentad. For Burke, the five terms of the pentad and their interrelationships, the ways they can be placed together in a hierarchy of motives, constitute a 'grammar' that prescribes our wording about the world. Burke's dramatist method, in fact, offers a way to analyze the ascribing of motives, the imputing of act, scene, agent, agency (attitude) and purpose: "Men have talked about things in many ways, but the pentad offers a synoptic way to talk about their talk-about" (*Grammar* 56).

---

[17] In "Counter-Gridlock: An Inteview with Kenneth Burke," Burke maintains that the pentad (scene, act, agent, agency and purpose) should involve a sixth term, *attitude*, making the pentad a hextad. He arrives at the hextad by separating *attitude*, the manner in which an act is performed, from *agency*, the means or instrument by which the act is performed. In his early account of the pentad, Burke links *attitude* to *act* and *agent,* suggesting that *attitude*, as a term of analysis, is important to any investigation of perspectives and motives: "In the last example, we referred to God's *attitude*. Where would attitude fall within our pattern? Often it is the *preparation* for an act, which would make it a kind of symbolic act, or incipient act. But in its character as a state of *mind* that may or may not lead to an act, it is quite clearly to be classed under the head of *agent*" (*A Grammar of Motives* 20; emphasis in original).

Identifying the most prominently featured term of the pentad (e.g. scene rather than agent) can lead to insights into the "philosophic idiom[s]" of particular groups or interests (*Grammar* xvii). To identify the dominant element and thus the relation between, for example, scene and act, Burke suggests that elements be paired in what he calls ratios (e.g. scene-act, scene-agent, agent-scene, agent-purpose), hierarchical orderings that privilege one element of the pair, or one way of looking at things rather than another. For example, anti-poverty advocates may argue that wider socio-economic conditions are responsible for an increase in panhandling in Vancouver. In this pairing of circumstance and action, scene motivates act. Others, however, may insist that panhandling is the result of some personal flaw (i.e. an unwillingness, on the part of the panhandler, to get a 'real' job); here, agent motivates act. Thus, our terms or names can act like "terministic screens" (Burke, *On Symbols* 115), directing and deflecting our attention, foregrounding some ideas and perspectives, while rendering others obscure. As Burke maintains, "Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality" (115). As selections and deflections of reality, our wordings are *suasive*; they are involved in matters of identification and faction (Burke, *Rhetoric* 45), compelling us to identify with certain interests while denying others.

This chapter, then, analyzes the wordings that attitudinally name and entangle a cluster of ideas about language as nation, observing and tracing their complexities and the perspectives they entail in specialists attempts to delineate or 'make' a Canadian English. I address the conditions that produce commonplace frames of reference that cluster around scenic significations of time (history), place (geography) and community (nation) and that pull other terms of identification and division into their orbit. Encoded in this scenic "talk-about" language are commonplace dialectical terms (*permanence* and *change*, *unity* and *diversity*), those titular, relational terms that name, or sum up, seemingly contradictory "essences and principles" (Burke, *Rhetoric* 184). I also analyze the ultimate terms of this discourse, those unifying terms "which encompass and order the dialectical conflict" (Coe, *Toward a Better Life*). While an "ultimate term from one discourse becomes a dialectical term when viewed in a broader context" (Coe, *Toward a Better Life*), ultimate terms, in general, are terms which claim to represent universal

principles (i.e. about the *life* of language) and which are often presented as self-evident. According to Richard Coe, these kinds of terms can act like "camouflaged *pre*sumptions, less likely to be noticed and evaluated critically" than other kinds of propositions ("Beyond Diction" 370; emphasis in original). In order to understand the attitudinal force of these dialectical and ultimate terms, I first trace broader conceptualizations of language that entangle and are entangled in accounts of national history, identity and consciousness. Then I look at the methodological implications of the cluster of terms that emerges in expert and non-expert discussions of language in general. Finally, I examine the operation of this vocabulary in Canadian English dictionaries and in the work that surrounds the making of them.

Nation, History and Consciousness: Some Preliminaries

According to Benedict Anderson, the sort of genealogical imagining common to national dictionary makers is really about "generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*" (133; emphasis in original). As Anderson suggests, historical conceptualizations of language figure large in the continuous, cohesive space of the imagined nation: "once one starts thinking about nationality in terms of continuity, few things seem as historically deep-rooted as languages, for which no dated origins can ever be given" (196). By both constructing and appealing to a common sense of language, history and identity, dictionary makers and the like foster communal links in the shared space of what Anderson calls "homogenous empty time," a nation space "conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). Unlike medieval "simultaneity-along-time" (24), a cyclical unfolding of time according to divine principles, national time simultaneously links actions and persons together even when they are not, in actuality, connected.[18] And language, argues Anderson, plays an

[18] For a critique of Anderson's account of temporality and the nation, see Brian Singer's "Cultural versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking Their Opposition" (1996). Singer maintains that the distinctions Anderson makes between divine time, a pre-modern "simultaneity-along-time," and nation time, "simultaneity-in-time," are problematic. Anderson, according to Singer, erroneously assumes that in pre-modern times, individuals did not feel connected across space and in time: ". . . the author at times seems to suggest that, within the perspective of 'simultaneity-along-time,' one cannot conceive the same event enacted at the same time by a large number of people without face to face relations – for such a conception would imply an imagined community, that is, a nation (though, obviously, the imaginary community of Christianity supposes every Christian realizes that every other Christian spends Sunday morning at mass)" (321-22 ff).

important role in the confidence people feel toward the "simultaneous activity of the nation":

> No one can give the date for the birth of any language. Each looms up imperceptibly out of a horizonless past. . . . Languages thus appear rooted beyond almost anything else in contemporary societies. At the same time, nothing connects us affectively to the dead more than language. If English-speakers hear the words "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" – created almost four-and-a-half centuries ago – they get a ghostly intimation of simultaneity across homogenous, empty time. The weight of the words derives only in part from their solemn meaning; it comes also from an as-it-were ancestral "Englishness." (144-145)

Conceived in national-historical terms, in terms of shared origins and ancestral identity, language, according to Anderson, links people across space and in time; it has the capacity to provide people with a sense of national and historical "unisonality" (145).

What is especially interesting about attempts to construct an imagined community out of linguistic origins is the linking of history with consciousness, with a narrative of common remembrance and understanding. In this configuration, language not only tells the story of a unifying national-historical identity but also a shared consciousness of this history and identity.[19] The development of a national-linguistic consciousness, suggests Anderson, arose in large part because of the convergence of technology and capitalism in "print capitalism" (37). According to Anderson, the spread of "print-as-commodity" encouraged the spread of what he calls "print languages" (commodified vernaculars). These print languages in turn laid the foundations for "unified fields of exchange and communication," which fostered an awareness of others within a shared linguistic grouping and a sense of belonging to this group (44). Readers of print media, he argues, were connected in print; as such, they "formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community" (44). Print capitalism

---

[19] For example, analyzing the role of language in nineteenth-century Irish representations of cultural nationalism, Crowley notes that early Irish nationalists tapped into prevailing European views of language as history to delineate a distinct national identity for themselves. Such views included the idea that "language was the living record of human history" (*Language in History* 124) or, as another put it, "the common memory of the human race" (Schlegal qtd. in Crowley 124). In other words, language as history became a means of constructing a specific race of humans (the Irish) and a way of remembering, of knowing and understanding this nation-race.

also provided an important ingredient for an imagined sense of continuity and cohesiveness; it "gave a new fixity to language, which in the long run helped to build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" (44). It also encouraged "languages-of-power," prestige vernaculars which ensured socio-political stratification along linguistic lines. Anderson suggests that such stratification encouraged a unified image of the nation which helped to distinguish one nation or 'sub-nation' from another (45).[20]

Although Anderson provides important insights into the ways the linking of language and history fostered a specifically modern consciousness of nation, his analysis of language and nation presupposes a natural role for language. In her discussion of the language ideologies that underwrite Anderson's notion of imagined communities, Susan Gal points out that while communities are imagined in Anderson's account, language is not. The process that surrounded the development of unitary language (its fixing, for example) were, according to Anderson, "largely unselfconscious processes resulting from the explosive interaction between capitalism, technology and human linguistic diversity" (45). That is, language simply responded to its environs (diversity necessitated uniformity, and technology and capitalism fixed language, providing a field of efficient exchange and communication). Anderson implies that it was not until unitary languages developed that they became interested, that they were made to work in the service of

---

[20] While Anderson argues that "commodified vernaculars," or standard languages, are the product and outcome of print capitalism, it should be noted that attempts to standardize language appear to be part of a more general tendency, in the nineteenth century, to standardize (or imagine) the nation and its activities along economic and scientific lines. Like arguments for the uniformity of standard languages, arguments for a more scientific standard of measurement often relied on appeals to the competitive advantage of a uniform, efficient means of exchange. Discussing the debates that surrounded the adoption of the metric system in Britain, Eric Reisenauer, in "'The Battle of the Standards': Great Pyramid Metrology and British Identity, 1859-1890," notes that

> Pressure [to adopt the French system] came from various quarters of Victorian society, primarily commercial, technological, and scientific interests, that viewed the scientific origin and decimal nature of metrics as more workable than the rather cumbrous imperial system. Furthermore, since more and more nations were adopting metrics . . . , metric system advocates were concerned that British trade would become more complicated and that Britain would lag behind in technology, manufacturing, and scientific advancement if the nation did not follow suit. In their minds, replacing the imperial system was less a capitulation to France than a measure needed to secure British prosperity over the long term. (941)

nation: ". . . as with so much else in the history of nationalism, once 'there', [print languages] could become formal models to be imitated, and, where expedient, consciously exploited in a Machiavellian spirit" (45).

But as Gal argues, in "Multiplicity and Contention among Language Ideologies," languages are not "self-evident natural facts" (325), responding to then serving socio-political arguments and arrangements. According to Gal, ". . . it is clear that not only communities but also languages must be imagined before their unity can be socially accomplished" (325). In fact, various imaginings of language, including scientific, aesthetic and moral imaginings, have themselves contributed to an image of language as nation. In other words, linguistic consciousness did not develop in tandem with national consciousness; instead, conceptualizations of and attitudes toward language pre-existed national consciousness and contributed to its development and intelligibility. For example, Gal argues that the connection between nation and language as "a necessary, natural and self-evident one" (324) stems in part from late eighteenth-century attempts to delineate a linguistic science, one based on the idea that language was a natural object, waiting to be discovered and analyzed. Because the development and structure of language were treated as naturally occurring entities that existed before "intentional human political activity, they could be called upon to justify political actions, such as the formation of states for populations putatively linked through shared linguistic origins" (324).

Gal notes that aesthetic imaginings of language also contributed to the rationalization and legitimization of the state. Working alongside scientific images (of objectivity and neutrality), aesthetic images of language (of a language's assumed clarity, preciseness and simplicity, for example) could be used to promote one language over another and thus one version of nation over another. For instance, French was imagined as a simple, clear and precise language; as such, its aesthetic virtues were considered particularly suited to "free communication among [the] rational and mobile citizenry" of a modern, newly democratized France (324). These sorts of aesthetic imaginings of language, coupled as they are with philosophical ones, are also evident in American imaginings of language. For example, in his textbook delineating American English, Zoltán Kövecses maintains that the American variant of English reveals much about the

mind of Americans; it is, in his estimation, a representation of a unique intellectual tradition, based on the specificity of American history and experience. In fact, Kövecses unproblematically conflates American intellectual traditions (Puritanism, Utilitarianism, Republicanism, Rationality) and American history with an account of the properties of American English, its supposed rationality, economy, inventiveness and imaginativenss. He then re-works this conflation of intellectual tradition, national history and linguistic property into a representation of "the everyday thought of middle-class Americans" (325).

From this research, we learn that imagined linguistic unities contribute to constructions of national unity, constructions of shared value, thought, history and identity. And we learn that cultivating a common sense of value, thought, history and identity requires the invocation and elaboration of a shared linguistic consciousness. Indeed, common place ideas that envision and enact the nation often rely on a common sense of language and commonsense ideas about it. Moreover, the efficacy of a national-linguistic consciousness rests on its capacity to simultaneously transcend the particularities of language and ground experience in other particularities, in constitutive discontinuities. As linguistic anthropologists Blommaert and Verschueren maintain, the seeming unity or unifying force of language "assumes the character of a clear identity marker" among other identity markers such as history, descent, culture, ethnicity and religion – all are linked together in what the authors term "a feature cluster" (192). The "identificational function" of this cluster, according to Bommaert and Verscheueren, "implies separability, a natural discontinuity in the real world. These discontinuities are 'nations' or 'peoples' – that is, natural groups, the folk perception of which conceptualizes them in much the same way as species in the animal kingdom. If feathers are predictive of beaks, eggs, and an ability to fly, so is a specific language predictive of a distinct history and culture" (192).

As I discuss in Chapter One, the efficacy of commonplace arguments lies in their ability to produce such identifications. But, as Michael Billig suggests, these arguments also open themselves up to dilemmas of categorization and particularization when they are applied and interpreted differently in different situations and under different conditions. I am not sure, however, if commonplace arguments, as they are used in

professional discourses on language, open themselves up to dilemmas of categorization and particularization in the sense Billig intends. Rather, they seem, if anything, to produce what I would call methodological, but functional, dilemmas, contradictions or ambiguities that end up working in the service of commonplace national-linguistic imaginings. When commonsense principles, such as those underwriting professional claims about linguistic diversity and national unity, represent the only available terms of reference in a larger discourse on language, it becomes difficult to disrupt the cognitive force of these principles, the ways they are entangled in and entangle the identificatory terms in Bommaert and Verscheueren's feature cluster. That is, the very terms professionals use in their arguments are themselves commonplaces and so their methods of delineating, of talking about language may in fact end up maintaining these entanglements. However, as I detail in the sections that follow such entanglements not only work in the service of commonplace national-linguistic imaginings, they are professionally serviceable.

A Living Language: Paradoxes of Scene and Substance

Discourses on language, like other discourses, employ a set of principles, or to borrow Burke's words, "frames of acceptance," which represent "the more or less organized system of meanings" by which situations and motives are interpreted and interpretable (*Attitudes Toward History* 4-5). These acceptance frames, as I indicate earlier, can be examined by tracing the hierarchical pairing of terms that make up the pentad. According to Burke, such pairings indicate "what is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it" (*Grammar* xv). In other words, they are a means to examine the ways we talk about experience rather than experience itself. For example, non-expert discourses on language (those not involved in professional delineations of nation) tend to focus, not on scene, but on purpose, act and agency. This focus on purpose, act and agency tends to occur in complaints about declining standards and/or challenges to professional expertise. Indeed, in response to her concerns that changing attitudes toward the teaching of grammar in school have led to "the degradation of language," Victorian Branden, in *In Defence of Plain English: The Decline and Fall of Literacy in Canada*, attempts to re-assert the grounds, the *purposes*, upon which

traditional notions of grammar often rely: "Slovenly language makes it easy to have foolish thoughts; it also makes for careless reading" (150). She argues, therefore, that "ALL teachers should be required to take a good, tough, sound, uncompromising course in grammar, with drills in spelling and pronunciation, so that they'll all be able to set a good example for their students, whether they're teaching art or geography or motor mechanics" (152; emphasis in original). And, students need to learn grammar in school "not for snobbish reasons, to sound 'U' (for Upper Class), but simply in the interests of clarity and precision" (151).

This featuring of purpose can also be seen in attempts to debunk the so-called liberal orthodoxy of scientific descriptivism. In *Language is Power*, for instance, John Honey advocates for the teaching of Standard English, the purpose of which is to empower disenfranchised minorities who have been, argues the author, socially and economically disadvantaged by relativistic views of correctness. Honey's call for a renewed focus on standard English represents a long-standing view of language that highlights the relation between purpose and agency, between social ideal (in this case, social equality) and the method by which we are to achieve this ideal (the systematic teaching of prescriptive grammar in the classroom). Proponents of the teaching of standard English, like Branden and Honey, often use this purpose-agency ratio in their efforts to defend against what has come to be viewed as the permissiveness of linguists and educationalists. Moreover, according to many defenders of Standard English, such permissiveness (or lack of attention to agency, the means by which one learns Standard English) has contributed to a decline in social behaviour, or traditional ideals of behaviour: "As nice points of grammar were mockingly dismissed as pedantic and irrelevant, so was punctiliousness in such matters as honesty, responsibility, property, gratitude, apology and so on" (qtd. in Milroy and Milroy, 41). However, it could be argued that such attention to purpose over agency (e.g. those grammar drills meant to teach students correct usage) can end up camouflaging another, perhaps more compelling motive or in the very least deflecting attention away from this motive: the administration or policing of certain populations. As Deborah Cameron points out, "[t]he teaching of correct English is persistently depicted as part of a more general 'struggle' against dark

social forces, and specifically as a means to counter the anarchy of the (working class) 'home and street'" (*Verbal Hygiene* 96).

In other instances of talk about language and its users, act and agent are foregrounded. Where this pairing occurs, linguistic acts appear to motivate linguistic agents, or perceptions of linguistic agents:

> I guess what I'd like to say is that what makes me feel that blacks tend to be ignorant is that they fail to see that word is spelled A-S-K, not A-X. And when they say *aksed*, it gives the sentence an entirely different meaning. And that is what I feel holds blacks back. (Caller, Oprah Winfrey Show, qtd. in Lippi-Green 180)

> Look, to take one familiar example, at the process of deterioration which our Queen's English has undergone at the hands of the Americans. Look at those phrases which so amuse us in their speech and books; at their reckless exaggeration, and contempt for congruity; and then compare the character and history of the nation – its blunted sense of moral obligation and duty to man; . . . and its recklessness and fruitless maintenance of the most cruel and unprincipled war in the history of the world. (Alford, *A Plea for the Queen's English* 6)

Here, we are directed to a terministic relationship that asks us to view the nature of the agent as consistent with the nature of the linguistic act: the use of *aksed* rather than *asked* (act) marks blacks (agent) as ignorant; seen another way, there is implied in the statement above the notion that because individuals are responsible for their own actions, they are the authors of their own circumstances. In this instance, agents, blacks, control the act, the use of *asked* or *aksed*, and thus they themselves contribute to their lack of socio-economic success: apparently, the choice to use *aksed* is what "holds blacks back" and so their own actions set the stage, or scene, for inequalities to emerge. In the second example, 'reckless' and 'contemptuous' linguistic acts mark the character of the American nation and its actions as reckless, contemptuous, amoral, cruel and unprincipled. However, in this comparison of the character and history of a nation with its speech and writing, the terministic relationship between act and agent appears fluid. That is, the comparison being made here can be read, it seems, as an act-agent ratio, where the nature of the act motivates the nature of the agent, or it can be read as agent-act, where the nature of the agent motivates the nature of the act.

In fact, in all of these examples, the relations between each of the ratios seem indeterminate and so may end up engendering ambiguous statements about language and identity that, in turn, justify any number of universalizing and, conversely, reductive accounts of usage and users. Implied in Honey's hierarchical ordering of purpose and agency, for instance, is a related ratio: act-agent. While the purpose of standard English (its relation to some higher social ideal) is predicated upon standard methods of teaching 'correct' grammar, the use of 'correct' grammar (act) marks one's position or identity in the world (an advantaged rather than disadvantaged agent or speaker). But the use of 'correct' grammar also universalizes identities; Standard English and its use are seen as 'unmarking' identities (e.g. 'unmarking' blackness or poverty). That is, because the defining characteristics of Standard English are its uniformity and commonality (Honey 3), its use signifies one's inconspicuous participation in a unified social commons: "the question of whether we should foster the use of a common form of language, standard English, or instead encourage minorities to express their particularism through their non-standard forms without regard to how far they also acquire the facility in the standard, is an issue with profound implications for the cohesion of our society" (243). In the end, what otherwise seem to be ambiguous features of these ratios can thus be explained as a triangulated justification for entanglements of language and identity: linguistic acts motivate agents and, conversely, agents motivate linguistic acts; agents and linguistic acts also perform purposes and scenes of social unity or disunity.

However, these justifications for entanglements of language and identity – or what might be called functional ambiguities – are not limited to arguments made by language pedants. The use of 'specialist' terms in specialist discourses on language also contributes to the sort of indeterminacies that pedants depend upon for their arguments. The difference, of course, is that rather than highlight agent or agency or purpose, linguists and sociolinguists tend to highlight scene to underwrite their assertions. Earlier, I noted that there is a tendency among specialists to attribute such things as linguistic diversity or language ideologies to place, to the existence of an *a priori* situation, namely the nation-state. This collapsing of place and language stems in large part from the collapsing of spatial, temporal and communal frameworks in expert explanations of language. Such explanations can be seen in early nineteenth-century accounts of

language and in more recent accounts of usage. Detailing the historical tensions between prescriptivist and descriptivist views of language, Edward Finegan, for example, notes that early descriptivist explanations of language were predicated upon what are now familiar commonplaces: that language "changes all the time … and that it varies from place to place and from time to time" (380). From these explanations of language emerge a set of principles or frames of acceptance that represent both the commonsense thinking and commonplace practice of those experts who study language. For example, in *English with an Accent*, Rosina Lippi-Green claims that the statement, *All living languages change,* "is part of the core of knowledge about language, hard won, with which all linguists begin" (8). From this core of knowledge, a number of "linguistic facts of life" are assumed. At the heart of these principles is the notion that language change or variation is governed in large measure by scenic considerations, by geographical, historical and communal circumstances, not individual choices or idealistic purposes: changes are a result of historical shifts; changes are also the result of communities' attempts to make their regional or dialectical languages socially efficient; while written language conveys "decontextualized information over time and space" (21), spoken language conveys immediacy, localizes experience in time and space (20); varieties of spoken language are a result of and so index one's place in the world, one's geographical location, gender, age and socio-economic ranking.

In this collapsing of spatial, temporal, communal and linguistic categories, scene emerges as the controlling element, whereby the character of linguistic acts and linguistic agents are consistent with the character of the scene. This focus on scene may have much to do with attempts to minimize the role of agent, act, agency and purpose in arguments about language. Thus scenic arguments about language may themselves embody a purpose ratio. Scenic explanations of usage, for example, deflect attention from and thus call into question those prescriptivists' accounts of language that tie individual morality and social virtue to correct usage, to a linguistic propriety that features purpose (some higher moral or social ideal) over – but in relation to – agent (speaker of English), agency (method of learning correct English) and act (particular usage).

By highlighting scene, of course, expert statements deflect attention from claims that make 'correct' usage an individual's moral and social responsibility, but, by doing

so, they often end up affirming the wider ground upon which universalizing and reductive claims about language can be justified. For example, in her discussion of accent, Lippi-Green foregrounds scenic elements of place to underwrite her assertions about a correlation between linguistic and social variation. In the process, her statements appear to demarcate and thus guarantee variants of national identity:

> Every native speaker of English has some regional variety, with the particular phonology of that area, or a phonology which represents a melding of one or more areas, for some people. In a similar way, everyone has several bundles of variants which are available to them and which they exploit to layer meaning into their spoken language. Most usually we use geography as the first line of demarcation: a Maine accent, a New Orleans accent, an Appalachian accent, a Utah accent. But there are also socially bound clusters of features which are superimposed on the geographic: Native American accents, black accents, Jewish accents. Gender, race, ethnicity, income, religion – these and other elements of social identity are often clearly marked by means of choice between linguistic variants. (42-43)

What is particularly interesting about this passage (and others' assertions about regional and social varieties of English) is that here accent is configured within the geographic and communal space of the nation. The line of demarcation, by implication, ends at the Canadian and Mexico borders and so appears to restrict explanations of accent to American regions and American socio-historical identities. In this scenic explanation of language, a Maine accent would have little in common with a Nova Scotian accent. And because accents that "mark" racial and religious groupings (Blacks, Jews, Native Americans) are read against regional backdrops (a New Orleans accent, a Utah accent), they may end up signifying or serving the communal, political, and historical preoccupations of the nation. In the conflation or superimposing of accent, place and identity, social identities are thus explained via a scene-agent/scene-act ratio, whereby agents and their linguistic acts are interpreted and interpretable in terms of geographic location. However, it also appears that the reverse is true: scene can be interpreted in terms of act; that is, linguistic acts (choosing between linguistic variants) can perform the scene of national identifications and divisions.

Part of the difficulty here is that while linguists insist that language is governed by the situation in which it occurs and pedants insist that language use should be governed

by some higher purpose, both groups rely on a set of ratios that end up entangling language and identity. In other words, while each group begins their arguments from different premises, they appear to end up in the same place, with terms, or motives, that blur distinctions between linguistic and social categories. But such points of ambiguity offer us an opportunity to understand something about the way statements about language involve us in the vagaries of identification and division, in those paradoxes of substance that emerge when we attempt to define situations as natural and language use and users as naturally occurring context variables. According to Burke, when we attempt to distinguish the substance of a thing, to assign motive or ascribe meaning, we unavoidably operate in the margins of terminological overlap, where "philosophic systems can pull one way or another" (*Grammar* xxii). Because distinctions arise out of and return to a common ground, out of and back into "a great central moltenness," the possibilities for transformation, for assigning and re-assigning motives are endless (*Grammar* xix). For example, in discourses on language, language can be treated as Agency, a means to a communicative end; as a collective Act (e.g. socio-symbolic action) or in terms of individual acts (e.g. one's authentic voicing); as a Purpose, as in pedants' assertions of the role of language; as Scene, as in linguists' and sociolinguists' accounts of situated language use; and as Agent, when linguistic acts are translated into linguistic agents.

It is in the combination of these ratios, however, that real ambiguity and "alchemic opportunity" arise (*Grammar* xix). This fluidity, argues Burke, stems from the very act of identifying and dividing. In our attempt to name what a thing is, we must name what it is not. But these distinctions involve us in a paradox of substance, where what a thing is and is not (A/non-A) are so closely aligned that these distinctions could be dissolved if the vocabularies we use to name situations are carried to their logical conclusions. As Burke suggests, the term "substance" itself encodes this ambiguity, this possibility of transformation and conversion. As part of the "stance" family of words, "substance" can be used to designate both the essence, "something *within* the thing, *intrinsic* to it," and the ground upon which something or somebody stands, "something *outside* the thing, *extrinsic* to it" (*Grammar* 23; emphasis in original).

Expert statements about what language *is* tend to begin with an intrinsic definition of the workings of language. As I noted earlier, the principle that informs these workings

begins with the definitional claim: *All living languages change.* Expressions of this definition can be seen in early accounts of the way language operates and in more recent studies that attempt to account for the sociality of language:

> When all is said and done . . . the real guide to good grammar, to good English in all respects, is to be found in the living speech. (Krapp, *Modern English* 274).
>
> [Good English] is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor freed from all constraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of the language. (Pooley, *Grammar and Usage in Textbooks on English* 155)
>
> . . . language is a social tool or a social organism. As such it is the product of the society which employs it, and as it is employed it is engaged in a continual process or re-creation. (Marckwardt, *American English* 6).

In these linguist and socio-linguist accounts, language, of course, is configured as a natural or living organism and therefore subject to the vagaries of life. This commonplace definition of the intrinsic qualities of language challenges other commonplaces that configure language in terms of the supernatural, in terms of linguistic purity and moral piety. As Edward Finegan notes, grammarians and language pedants have long fostered links between usage and morality, seeing language as a gift from God and so a means to lift "the soul from earth" (Kirkham qtd. in "Usage" 375), from the very vagaries of life that claims about a 'natural' language imply.[21] In defining what language is (living, natural, situated), linguists define what it is not (unchanging, supernatural, sacred) and in the process appear to negate those definitions that underlie attempts to fix language. However, as 'supernatural' talk about language suggests, the premises behind the claim, *All living languages change*, are shared by both experts and pedants alike. That is, pedants too recognize that language changes, that it is subject to

[21] In his discussion of nonlinguists' attitudes toward standardized English, Dennis Preston, in "The Story of Good and Bad English in the United States," offers a similar explanation for abstracted views of language. However, according to Preston, speakers of US English see language, not so much in terms of straight morality, but in terms of some Platonic ideal, whereby "language appears to exist not only free of context but also free of cognitive and social reality. In short, it is other-worldly" (135-36). Morality, it seems, factors into the Platonic view of language when usage violates this exterior, unnatural, other-worldly standard (144-150). Still both kinds of accounts, moral and Platonic, rely on a view of language that locates language (or an idealized version of it) in 'supernatural' rather than 'natural' realms.

the vagaries of life. This recognition is particularly evident in complaints about usage, where interpretations of language change are acknowledged but seen in terms of human nature as it exists after the Fall, in other words, in terms of decline, decay, deterioration, and corruption. As Finegan points out, in "opaque distinctions between inevitable and accidental change, between normality and depravity, we see the association of morality and grammaticality. . . . As the fall of Adam taints us with sin and inclines us to evil, so the effects of Babel permit language to be corrupted" (*Attitudes* 67). Here, some changes are considered natural and/or inevitable, but many others are considered abnormal, the result of a flawed *human* nature rather than the natural workings of language itself. In many respects, then, pedant definitions of language often end up defining language in terms of an 'essential' quality of humanness, as an 'intrinsic' capacity for corruption or depravation: "To deny that language is susceptible of corruption is to deny that races or nations are susceptible of depravation" (Marsh qtd. in *Attitudes* 67).

In configurations of language as natural, as an organic living thing, expert statements about language also end up defining human experience, entangling linguistic and social categories in such a way that usage becomes the ground upon which naturalized scenes and identities are figured. In other words, in statements about the nature of language, experts who designate what is intrinsic to language blur distinctions between a 'natural' language and a 'naturalized' scene and/or identity. Because expert statements on language rely on what is *extrinsic* to language (in scenic explanations of its workings) for their definitions of what is *intrinsic* to language, articulating the substance of language (its nature) involves statements about the 'natural' or 'objective' context in which language is used and the 'natural' identities of language users. As Burke points out, in such alchemic moments, the line between intrinsic and extrinsic can blur: "to *define*, or *determine* a thing, is to mark its boundaries, [to locate it], hence to use terms that possess, implicitly at least, contextual reference" (*Grammar* 24; emphasis in original).

Here, the life of language comes to represent, to figure human life itself. In fact, in a round-about way, the premises that underlie experts' statements on language are never very far from those that underlie pedants' statements. Note, for example, the way in which Marsh (quoted above) links the 'life' of language (its natural capacity for

corruption) to the 'natural life' of a nation or a race. In a similar sort of linking, Albert Marchwardt, in *American English*, associates the life of language with the life of the nation: ". . . language is a social tool or a social organism. As such it is the product of the society which employs it, and as it is employed it is engaged in a continual process or re-creation. If this is the case, we may reasonably expect a language to reflect the culture, the folkways, the characteristic psychology of the people who use it" (6). On the one hand, the "abuse of language, whether from ignorance or obfuscation, leads . . . to a deterioration of moral values and standards of living" (Simon, *Paradigms Lost* 59), to a deterioration of an idealized standard of life. On the other hand, it reflects the life of the people who use it: "The Gage Canadian Dictionary is . . . a catalogue of the things relevant to the lives of Canadians at a certain point in history. It contains, therefore, some clues to the true nature of our Canadian identity" (Avis et al. "Introduction"). The statement, *All living languages change*, therefore leads us from essence (something intrinsic to language) to ground (something extrinsic to it) and back to essence again, from the variable nature of language (conceived positively or negatively) to the natural scene and back to the nature of language as an expression of naturalized identities (personal, social or national), to a paradox of substance that unsettles the distinctions between expert versions of language and pedant versions (between A and non-A).

This collapsing of essence and ground, of the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of language, leads us out of the realms of the scientific (natural) and the moral (supernatural) and into the realm of rhetoric, where "substance" and the naming of substances are treated as both act and a way of acting together. As Burke points out, "substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*" (*Rhetoric* 21; emphasis in original). In naming substances, we not only identify these substances, we also identify and draw on shared interests and values, a general body of identifications (normative, formative ideas and attitudes) that make us consubstantial. Our terminologies, our words for motives, involve us in such matters of identification (and division): "Basically, there are two kinds of terms: terms that put things together, and terms that take things apart. Otherwise put, *A* can feel himself identified with *B*, or he can think of himself as disassociated from *B*.

Carried into mathematics, some systems stress the principle of continuity, some the principle of discontinuity" (*On Symbols* 120). On the surface, it appears that expert statements about language stress the principle of discontinuity, while pedant statements stress the principle of continuity. This apparent difference arises, it seems, because of different methodological approaches to language. Historically, linguists and sociolinguists have insisted that only spoken language (because of its characteristic ability to change or diversify according to situations) can substantiate statements about how language actually works: "The real language of a people is the spoken word, not the written. Language lives on the tongue and in the ear; there it was born, and there it grows" (Matthews, *Parts of Speech* 71). Pedants, however, have argued that written language (its uniformity and capacity for permanence, for fixing) should be the touchstone for authoritative statements about language and usage.[22]

Although these methodological distinctions suggest that expert statements on language will privilege an idea of linguistic change (and attendant ideas of linguistic variation and social diversity) rather than an idea of linguistic permanence (and ideas of linguistic uniformity and social unity), an examination of the terms experts use to delineate national languages indicates that there is an important slippage between these polarities, one that involves expert statements in a methodological dilemma that returns statements about language into commonplace realms. That is, expert statements that attempt to delineate national languages, to delineate socio-political unities, employ terms that entangle principles of discontinuity *and* continuity and, as a result, may append or engender commonplace national-linguistic imaginings.

In fact, in scenic explanations of language, experts rely on a set of commonplace terms (see Appendix A) that, by their very nature, effortlessly shift discussions of a

---

[22] We see these apparent methodological distinctions in, for example, perceptual studies of respondents' claims about the use of phonological features to mark regional speech (Benson 2003, Preston 2003), on the one hand, and, on the other, in nonlinguists' reports of a crisis in usage, of a loss of standards (Safire 1980, Honey 1997). In the first sort of study, attitudes toward certain features of spoken language are investigated to map dialectical boundaries or perceptions of these boundaries. In the second sort of study, written language trumps spoken language; in fact it becomes the standard by which spoken language is measured or assessed. As Lippi-Green points out, definitions of Standard English often collapse distinctions between spoken and written language. Such definitions assume "that the written and spoken language are equal in terms of both how they are used, and how they should be used. It sets spelling and pronunciation on a common footing, and compounds the generalization by bringing in both formal and informal language use" (*English with an Accent* 54).

'natural' language (a living, changing language) into conceptualizations of a 'national' language (language configured in terms of the social, political and cultural life of the nation). The cognitive-rhetorical force of these terms has much to do with the fact that the terms employed by experts to 'name' language are the very same terms used by nonlinguists to name socio-political categories and events: *unity* and *diversity*. These, of course, are quintessential terms for putting things together and taking things apart (as are *permanence* and *change*), and because of their deployment in a range of discourses, these dialectical terms have the capacity to rally social, political, and cultural discourses in support of statements about language as nation. For example, discussions of linguistic similarity or unity are often translated into an identification of a unified nation (Canadian English = socio-political unity). Simultaneously, discussions of linguistic variation or diversification are translated into socio-political divisions within the nation (Newfoundland Dialect = social-political diversity). And so we move, rather easily, from the 'natural, objective' realm of linguistics into the socio-political realm of the nation and back again, into a body of commonplace identifications and corresponding divisions that may "owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement" (Burke, *A Rhetoric* 26) than to linguistic science. The unifying and dividing forces of language, then, may have more to do with the comprehensive, all-encompassing terms we use to talk about these forces, terms that operate at the highest level of generality. Thus the efficacy of a shared national-linguistic consciousness may have less to do with invocations of a specific language, history, descent, culture, ethnicity or religion (Bommaert and Verscheueren's feature cluster) than with the seemingly inescapable use of the general and generalizing terms we use to unify and divide, to attitudinally name continuities and discontinuities in the real world.

The Making of Canadian English

Prelude to a National-Linguistic Consciousness

The attitudinal naming of continuities and discontinuities in the world can, of course, operate at generic levels, at levels where the names we use to define situations reproduce more general "systems of value and signification" that then become "available

for further memory, interpretation, and use" (Miller, "Rhetorical Communities" 70-71). As Miller points out,

> Genre we can understand specifically as that aspect of situated communication that is *capable of reproduction*, that can be manifested in more than one situation, more than one concrete space-time. The rules and resources of a genre provide reproducible speaker and addressee roles, social typifications of recurrent social needs or exigencies, topical structures (or 'moves' or 'steps'), and ways of indexing an event to material conditions, turning them into constraints or resources. In its representation of and intervention in space-time, genre becomes a determinant of rhetorical *kairos* – a means by which we define a situation in space-time and understand the opportunities it holds. (71; emphasis in original)

As a "determinant of rhetorical *kairos*," the national dictionary can be viewed as an exemplary genre: the national dictionary not only defines situations in terms of space-time, it also, explicitly, marshals time and circumstance to reproduce socio-political exigencies in highly regularized and recognizable ways. In its attempt to define words of a national character, it defines, organizes and so offers a way to understand a nationalized exigency and to understand it in a particular way – as a discontinuous entity *and* a force for continuity:

> It is not only important, but, in a degree necessary, that the people of this country, should have an *American Dictionary* of the English Language; for, although the body of the language is the same as in England, and it is desirable to perpetuate that sameness, yet some differences must exist. (Webster, "Preface," *An American Dictionary of the English Language*; emphasis in original)
>
> . . . a *national language* is a band of *national union*. Every engine should be employed to make the people of this country national; to call their attachments home to their own country; and to inspire them with the pride of national character. (Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language* 87; emphasis in original).

As others have indicated, Noah Webster's life-long project to determine a specifically American variant of English was, in effect, an attempt to distinguish the political and cultural character of the nation, to severe the ties that the *Declaration of Independence* had loosened. Moreover, Webster's assertions of linguistic independence, his claims of difference, were nearly always augmented by claims of socio-linguistic unity. Although

Webster, like other linguists of his time, acknowledged the newly emerging principles of language change and linguistic diversity, he believed that the national standard should be based on universal custom rather than the "caprice" of a fluctuating local practice: "If a standard therefore cannot be fixed on local and variable custom, on what shall it be fixed? . . . The answer is extremely easy; the *rules of the language itself*, and the *general practice of the nation,* constitute propriety in speaking" (*Dissertation* 27; emphasis in original). The aim of Webster's dictionary was to construct uniformity out of diversity, "to furnish a standard" that could purify the vernacular of "errors" and "anomalies" and so promote a unified national-cultural identity over and against regional and social particularities:

> If the language can be improved in regularity, so as to be more easily acquired by our own citizens, and by foreigners, and thus be rendered a more useful instrument for the propagation of science, arts, civilization and Christianity; if it can be rescued from the mischievous influence of sciolists and the dabbling spirit of innovation which is perpetually disturbing its settled usages and filling it with anomalies; if, in short, our vernacular language can be redeemed from corruptions, and our philology and literature from degradation; it would be a source of great satisfaction to me to be one among the instruments of promoting these valuable objects. ("Preface" *Dictionary*)

I raise the spectre of Webster not so much to compare the making of American English with the making of Canadian English but to point out the ways the manufacture of national languages, as exhibited in national dictionaries, has itself been generically reproduced. That is, the rules and resources of dictionaries, their steps or moves, their social typifications, etcetera, contribute to an image of language as nation that has held fast, with little variation, since the early nineteenth century.[23] Moreover, the regularity with which national dictionaries have appealed and continue to appeal to commonsense principles of unity and diversity (and related principles of permanence and change) indicates that the function of national dictionaries, and the work of dictionary makers, may have more to do with negotiating the tensions or ambiguities of the nation than with the delineation of language itself. More importantly, a look at the way these terms or

[23] For a more detailed account of the history of this idea ("language as nation"), see Hans Aarsleff's *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History.*

principles cluster together in dictionaries, and the work that surrounds dictionary-making, suggests that this negotiation of meaning has itself become generic.

National dictionaries, of course, have generic structures or forms: introductions that describe linguistic corpora and methods for gathering corpora; essays that explain the precedents for the emergence of national languages; usage guides, including notes on usage restrictions; pronunciation keys; and word entries. These recurring moves or steps, however, are not simply forms, picked up and re-used because they offer convenient blueprints; they symbolize and secure long-standing attitudes toward language and its relation to nation. In fact, what Burke says about individual works could also pertain to genres: "Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are strategic answers, stylized answers. . . . These strategies size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them" (*Philosophy* 1). New national dictionaries (e.g. Canadian or Australian) not only reproduce existing forms, or ways of doing things, but also attitudes, ways of thinking about things. These structures, their organization and content, embody enduring or authoritative ways of narrating the nation in terms of language: "Genres . . . in their *structural* dimension, are conventionalized and highly intricate ways of marshalling rhetorical resources. . . . In their *pragmatic* dimension, genres not only help real people in spatio-temporal communities do their work and carry out their purposes; they also help virtual communities, the relationships we carry around in our heads, to reproduce and reconstruct themselves, to continue their stories" (Miller, "Rhetorical Community" 75). The very term, *Canadian English* (or *American English* or *Australian English*), implies a virtual community, a political-linguistic unity that relies on the reproduction and reconstruction of a meaningful, a coherent national story. National dictionaries, like other genres, "keep in check the divergence of versions of the community's story. . . . This struggle takes the form of a shared concern to construct, enforce, and conform to a common narrative which gives common sense to everyone's endeavour" (Rouse qtd. in Miller 75). So, in dictionaries, we see recurring manoeuvres, typified rhetorical resources that, to borrow Miller's words, "create similarity out of difference, . . . wheedle, as it were, identification out of division" (74). In short, we see moves or steps that negotiate

the tensions between unity and diversity – between the universal and the local, and between the commons and the common.

The negotiation of these tensions sometimes involves a shift from the ideological to the mythical, from the present wrangle of socio-political-linguistic faction to an originary narrative of the past. According to Burke, such attempts to negotiate and move beyond faction, to rise above the discordant clang of sectarian interests, may motivate what he calls a "narrative terminology of essence," of "firsts," meant to sanction "the nature of things as they are" (*On Symbols* 308-309). Referring to Virgil's use of myth in *Aeneid*, Burke notes that Virgil, for example, links imperial power to imperial destiny via a cluster of terms that authorize the emperor's power (his "essence") in terms of his divine ancestors (his "firsts"). But, as Burke points out, ideology and myth are not mutually exclusive; the ideological (political) can leave its trace in the mythic (non-political). That is, while myth transcends the political, Burke suggests that it can have "political attitudes interwoven with it" (310).

We see such traces of political attitude in what could be called a mythic narrative of Canadian English. Those telling the story of Canadian English often employ historicist terms (of origins or firsts) to interpret and name "the nature of things as they are." In this story, the nation, its language, culture and its people owe their existences and essences to a past time and place, not the anxieties and tensions of the present. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly to my study, the work of dictionary-makers, 'the nature of this work as it is', owes its existence to such narrative figurings. While the launch of the Canadian Linguistic Association and the publication of the first Canadian dictionaries, in the fifties and sixties, coincided with a larger political and cultural movement that attempted to re-imagine the nation,[24] stories of Canadian English and accounts of the work that surrounded the making of Canadian dictionaries rarely mention

[24] In the fifties and sixties, of course, a series of federal initiatives were enacted to promote a particular image of the nation: in 1959, the Board of Broadcast Governors instituted Canadian content rules for television, the Canada Council for the promotion of Canadian arts and sciences was established in 1957, the National School of Ballet was founded in 1959, and the National Gallery in 1960. In 1960, the right to vote was extended to Treaty Indians and the Canadian Bill of Rights was passed in the House of Commons. In 1964, the Flag Act was passed, and, in 1966, the federal government instituted a national medicare programme. However, as the formation of a number of separatist organizations, including the Action socialiste pour l'indépendance du Québec (1961), and the publication of Harold Cardinal's *Unjust Society* (1968) suggest, federal initiatives to re-image the cultural and political landscape operated within and against other politics of identity.

or only hint at how attempts to delineate a Canadian English might have contributed to this contemporary movement. Because dictionary-makers, such as Avis and Scargill, appear more interested in establishing the existence and origins of Canadian English, their labour is rationalized in terms that tend to highlight the originary time and place of language and so the cultural and political exigencies that may have informed their work are muted.

Ostensibly, this work, according to Robert Gregg, was mainly the result of 1) the disappointment that accompanied the 1944 publication of *The Dictionary of Americanisms*, which, according to Charles Lovell, the first editor of the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles*, incorrectly listed words of Canadian origin as Americanisms and 2) the perceived need for dictionaries with Canadian content:

> The *raison d'être* for these dictionaries [The Gage Dictionary Series] is very simple. Before they were published, British or American dictionaries were the only ones available in Canada. This situation naturally caused difficulties for Canadians. As we have seen . . . , many Canadian words do not exist in BE, and many British expressions have quite different meanings in Canada: e.g. *ticked off, off colour, knocked up.*
>
> Our linguistic research along the Canadian-U.S. border has also established that there are many differences between CE and AE. ("Canadian English Lexicography" 35)

In Gregg's account of the making of Canadian English, there is only a suggestion of the contemporary debates that surrounded the nation-building activities of the 1950s and 1960s. Because Canadian English is neither British nor American, one might, given commonplace entanglements of language and identity, assume that these distinctions apply to Canadian identity as well. But such concerns about identity are not explicitly discussed as contemporary rationales for the emergence of Canadian dictionary-making; rather, the simple fact of linguistic diversity and concurrent "difficulties" associated with the absence of Canadian dictionaries provide the impetus for work on Canadian English. However, as I will detail in the following pages, the work of dictionary-making involves dictionary-makers in the construction of a national-linguistic narrative, one which employs a scenic terminology of firsts and essences that directs our attention to a mythic 'unity within diversity' and a shared public consciousness at the same time as it deflects attention away from the ideological labour of dictionary-making.

Stories of Existence and Non-Existence

The story of Canadian English, like early stories of American English, typically begins with an assertion of its existence, a definition of language that highlights commonplace principles of linguistic diversity or its collates, distinction and difference, principles that depend for their efficacy on the notion that national borders mark linguistic ones. While some have argued that Canadian English is simply a mix of British and American English, implying that Canadian English has no real identity of its own, no firm border to delineate its character, others have asserted that Canadian English is distinct: "Canadian English is not a mongrel mix of British with American English, it exists in its own right and owes its existence to the Canadians who have made it what it is" (Scargill, *A Short History of Canadian English* 7). These commonplace principles of diversity, or assertions of existence and difference, generally occur in introductory essays, written by lexicographers who have worked on the editorial boards of dictionaries:

> That part of Canadian English which is neither British nor American is best illustrated by the vocabulary, for there are hundreds of words which are native to Canada or which have meanings peculiar to Canada. (Avis, "Introduction," *Dictionary of Canadian English on Historical Principles* 1967 xii)

> Some people, especially recent arrivals from the United Kingdom, refuse to accept the fact that the English spoken in Canada has any claim to recognition. Others, who themselves speak Canadian English, are satisfied with the view that British English is the only acceptable standard. To these people the argument that educated Canadians set their own standard of speech is either treasonable or ridiculous. (Avis, "Canadian English," *Gage Dictionary of Canadian English: The Senior Dictionary* 1967 vi)

> This dictionary marks the culmination of a century of changing attitudes towards Canadian English. In 1998, we can assert with pride the aspects of Canadian English that distinguish us from other speakers of English worldwide. (Chambers, "Canadian English: 250 Years in the Making," *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* 1998)

These assertions of difference, of "native" vocabulary, peculiarity and distinction, hint at a larger 'political attitude'. On the one hand, we hear about those who, in 1967, think it treasonous to assert such an independent view of language in Canada and, on the other,

there are those dictionary-makers who, in 1998, suggest that linguistic independence should be a source of national pride. Here, we move from attempts to describe a 'natural' or 'native' language (its existence, its difference) to an indication of the debates or concerns that inform discussions of the nation itself (in this case, as either dependent on British precedents or independent of them).

What is particularly interesting about these statements about language and its relation to nation, however, are the ways in which national-linguistic independence and the terms of distinction that cluster around this idea depend upon a common sense of the existence of Canadian English and what this existence entails. What is important here is language's "claim to recognition," its ability to be recognized and accepted as a national variety. Indeed, while one might expect a dictionary to assert that it "marks the culmination of a century of changes in Canadian English," the *Canadian Oxford* instead highlights changing *attitudes* toward English as it is used in Canada: "This dictionary marks the culmination of a century of changing attitudes toward Canadian English." The focus on a national-linguistic consciousness, within a text that purports to objectively record vocabulary and usage, may appear to be an unusual rhetorical step, but given the work of dictionary makers and the function of national dictionaries, such a step actually identifies, answers and makes possible a socio-political-linguistic exigency.

> The publishers hope that, as a contribution to Centennial thinking, the *Dictionary of Canadianisms* will assist in the identification, not only of Canadianisms but of whatever it is that we may call "Canadianism." (W.R. Wees, "Foreward," *A Dictionary of Canadianisms* 1967 v)

> The following essay was written by Walter S. Avis (1919-1979) for the first edition of the *Dictionary of Canadian English: The Senior Dictionary*, published in 1967. Since this paper was written, the public awareness of a distinctively Canadian variety of English has increased considerably . . . . This essay is also significant for its early recognition of the importance for Canadians of a dictionary that truly reflects the English language as we ourselves use it. (Neufeldt, *Gage Canadian Dictionary* 1983 xi)

One of the roles of the national dictionary, it seems, is to contribute to nationalistic thinking, to foster an appreciation and understanding of not only language, as it is used in Canada, but also that which marks a unified national character and shared interest. As

Scargill notes, in his preface to the 1973 edition of *A Dictionary of Canadianisms*, the 1967 edition fulfilled its expressed function: "Canadian schools and universities are now seeing in our distinctive Canadian vocabulary a record of the history and sources of their culture" (vii).

Moreover, the phrases that orbit around the term "distinction" indicate that the fostering of a unified national-linguistic consciousness plays an important role in the work of dictionary-makers. Note, for example, the use of "Centennial *thinking,*" "public *awareness,*" and "now *seeing*" above and, in Scargill's 1973 prefatory remarks, the linguist's use of *interest*: "Since 1967," he writes, "there has developed a keen interest in Canadian English, and the editors and publishers of *A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* believe that their original work has made no little contribution to that interest" (vii). It seems that a notion of linguistic diversity helps dictionary-makers identify those national-linguistic distinctions that in turn produce shared recognition, awareness, interest and, most importantly, desire. In fact, these dictionary-makers not only identify a socio-political exigency in the form of a distinct national unity with its own variety of English, they also identify and seek to address an exigency, the apparent desire for a dictionary "that truly reflects the English language as we ourselves use it." *The Dictionary of Canadian English* recognizes its "importance for Canadians" and the 1973 edition of *A Dictionary of Canadianisms* is itself the result of such a desire: ". . . members of the editorial board of the original dictionary have been asked by students and teachers alike if it would be possible to abridge *A Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* in such a way that it could be used in classrooms as a teaching dictionary in courses dealing with Canadian English, in Canadian literature, and also in courses dealing specifically with the history of Canadian speech. The result of these requests is the present book" (Scargill, "Preface" vii).

The idea that a national dictionary responds to and so fulfills our desire for a record of how we use language may be misleading, however. In her account of how craft professionals (publishers, grammarians, dictionary-makers and the like) contribute to the manufacture of uniform standards of usage and the desire for such standards, Deborah Cameron suggests that these professionals have a particular interest of their own in negotiating and perhaps perpetuating the tension between linguistic unity and diversity.

She notes, for instance, that early English printers, such as Caxton, needed a uniform vernacular in order to sell to the largest possible market. So, linguistic diversity necessitated a more uniform standard of usage which could then be turned, and has been, into a commodity (in the form of textbooks, grammars, style books and dictionaries). But, as Cameron suggests, this commodified standard is equally dependent on the existence of linguistic diversity; according to Cameron, "small variations in style may add value to linguistic products" and so increase one's ability to sell in the market of language exchange (45). While most Canadian dictionaries do not purport to sell uniform standards of usage, there is a sense that they are selling a national unity, a uniformity based on "small variations" of English as it is used in Canada. More importantly, their work, as I will detail below, endeavours to produce a desire, a market, for national-linguistic representations of diversity and unity, and for a resolution of the tensions that emerge from these representations. It would appear, then, that while genres, in their manifestation as recurrent social actions, are capable of reproducing roles for speakers and addressees, social exigencies, structures, and rhetorical resources, they are also capable of producing, as if for the first time, a desire for these same roles, exigencies, structures and resources. That is, genres not only answer the question posed by the situation in which they arose, they, it seems, can also manufacture, market and renew situation and question, consciousness and desire.

According to some who write about Canadian English, the market of and for Canadian English is a relatively recent phenomenon compared to the markets of and for American and British English. Mark Orkin, in *Speaking Canadian English: An Informal Account of the English Language in Canada*, notes, for example, that most Canadians were unaware, as of the 1970 publication date of his book, of the existence of Canadian English. He begins his book with the statement, "On first encounter, the most unusual thing about the language of English-speaking Canadians is that many speakers, when they are not merely being diffident, seem hardly aware of its existence" (3). Unlike French-speaking Canadians, who, in their bid to preserve their variety of French also attempt to preserve a minority ethnic and political identity, English-speaking Canadians, according to Orkin, are barely conscious of their variety. Tom McArthur, in a more recently published version of the *Oxford Guide to World English*, makes a similar point:

"Canadians whose first – and perhaps only – language is English have tended to say and write little about linguistic nationalism in their homeland, and in this they differ from Americans, Australians, Icelanders, Malaysians, and indeed from *French* Canadians, for most of whom the recognition and use of their language (as both French and *Canadian* French) is a matter of cultural and even ethnic security and survival" (208; emphasis in original). McArthur attributes the lack of an articulated English linguistic nationalism in Canada to concerns about diversity and cultural fragmentation: an English-language nationalism might disrupt the fragile bilingual balance the country has achieved (209). Orkin, however, attributes this lack of consciousness and articulation to the confidence English-speaking Canadians garner from their British inheritance in spite of the fact that Canadian English, according to Orkin, has more in common with American English than with British English. English-speaking Canadians are, Orkin maintains, "secure in the belief that they are the recipients in full measure of the linguistic and political traditions of England, [and so] have never felt the same need for reassurance as their French-speaking compatriots" (4-5).

Whether the lack of an expressed linguistic-national consciousness can be attributed to English Canadians' concerns about a discontinuity (national fragmentation) or their confidence in a continuity (British tradition), Orkin indicates that there is yet another reason why Canadians, in 1970, had not yet developed an interest in or awareness of Canadian English:

> Of all the reasons for this long neglect of the study of Canadian English, the foremost has undoubtedly been indifference. . . . . This attitude is well demonstrated by Canadian schools and universities which offer courses in many of the important living languages and some of the dead ones; yet the study of Canadian English as such nowhere appears on a school curriculum. "Our French Canadian colleagues have a culture and a language of their own," writes Scargill, "and they study them. Our many Slavic communities are advanced in the study of their own language in Canada. It is the English-speaking Canadians who lag behind, who do not consider their language worthy of study, who do not seem to know or care if they have a culture and a language to give expression to it." (5-6)

Apparently, English-speaking Canadians' indifference to a nationalized language has much to do with their lack of exposure to institutionalized knowledge of it, to the scientific or expert study of its nature and its relation to Canadian culture. Writing in 1965, Avis anticipates Scargill's concern. Avis observes that "Perhaps the chief problem faced by students of Canadian English is the disinterest of those not concerned with this study. Language in Canada, as in most other countries, is taken for granted" ("Problems in the Study of Canadian English" 3). Unlike Orkin and Scargill, however, Avis appears, in the mid-60s, much more optimistic about the study of Canadian English and the emergence of a national-linguistic consciousness: "I am happy to say that an increasing number of my countrymen are becoming aware that there is a distinctively Canadian way of speaking, a way that is neither British nor American. Any Canadian who has spent some time in both Britain and the United States knows that his manner of speaking is recognized as unBritish by Englishmen and (perhaps less often) as unAmerican by Americans" (3).

There seems, then, to be a connection between the lack of study or scientific investigations of Canadian English and a lack of popular consciousness about it. Moreover, this lack of desire for or interest in Canadian English (as a distinct variety of English) and concurrent lack of study indicate that the emergence of a popular consciousness coincides with the emergence of a field of study that makes explicit this distinction as a source of national interest and desire. Although, as others point out, mentions of Canadian English occur in nineteenth and early twentieth-century accounts of language use in Canada and in such things as travel narratives,[25] a professional interest

---

[25] According to both Orkin and Chambers, who details attitudes toward the Americanization of English in Canada during the 19th century in "'Lawless and Vulgar Innovations': Victorian Views of Canadian English," the first reported mention of the term "Canadian English" occurs in Rev. A. Constable Geikie's essay, "Canadian English," initially published in *The Canadian Journal of Science, Literature, and History* in 1857. According to Chambers, Geikie presents Canadian English as a perversion of British English; it was "a corrupt dialect growing up amongst our population [that will] gradually [find] access to our periodical literature, until it threatens to produce a language as unlike our noble mother tongue as the negro patua, or the Chinese pidgeon English" (qtd. in Chambers 6). Such a recognition of difference and perversion, according to Chambers, was not uncommon among early settlers and travelers to Canada. As he points out, nineteenth-century settlers, such as Susanna Moodie, as inferred from her account of Canadian life in *Roughing It in the Bush*, often commented on the deplorable speech of early Canadians: "The accent that Susanna Moodie would hear in the New World was described most superciliously not in her own words but in her report of a friend's description, upon hearing the spiel of the recruiting officer who had been sent to England to fan the enthusiasm for emigration. According to Moodie's friend, the recruiting officer 'had a shocking delivery, a drawling vulgar voice; and he spoke with such a twang that I

in the sustained study of this variety does not occur until the 1950s, with the 1954 inauguration of the Canadian Linguistic Association, which struck a lexicographical committee "to begin promoting and co-ordinating lexicographical work in Canada" (Scargill, "Preface," *Dictionary of Canadian English* vi). The committee's expressed aim was to produce a series of dictionaries, out of which the Gage educational series and the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* emerged. On this committee were, among others, M.H. Scargill (co-editor of the Gage *Dictionary of Canadian English* series and director of the *Survey of Canadian English*, a joint project of the Canadian Linguistic Association and the Canadian Council of Teachers of English); W.S. Avis (founding member of the Canadian Linguistic Association and well known for his compilation of writings on Canadian English); and Robert Gregg (co-editor of the Gage dictionary series and best known for his *Survey of Vancouver English*). The 1954 inauguration of the Canadian Linguistic Association (along with its committees and journal) encouraged a number of research projects, beginning with studies of the differences between Canadian and American Englishes along the border, studies of dialect areas within the Canadian border, and a phonological account of Canadian English nation-wide.[26]

According to Robert Gregg, this early research focused, quite narrowly, on linguistic geography (29). More recent studies, such as deWoolf's 1988 phonological study of the regional and social factors at play in language use in two Canadian cities and

---

could not bear to look at him or listen to him. He made such grammatical blunders that my sides ached laughing at him'" (6-7).

However, there were others who treated Canadian English, not as a corrupt variety of British English, but as a curious one. For example, John Sandiland, who is purported to have produced the first dictionary of Canadian English, viewed the language as a source of understanding, a means of understanding Canadian life for those "friends in the Old Country who want to know about Canada." According to John Orrell, who introduces Sandilands' second edition of the *Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase Book*, Sandilands intended "to include all the most common terms of trade and business that would 'be unknown in the Old Country and in old lands, expressions which the newcomer is up against the moment he lands in the Dominion, and which heretofore he could only fathom by much questioning and consequent betrayal of the fact that he had just blown in'" ("Introduction"). The 45 page book detailing such linguistic innovations as "meal ticket" and "barking up the wrong tree" is amusing and sometimes educational (according to Robert Gregg, Sandilands' project provides some information about Canadian English as it was used in 1912). Yet, his work did not usher in an era of scholarly interest and study.

[26] For a detailed account of the emergence of the Canadian Linguistic Association and the lexicographical and dialectical work of Canadian scholars working in the emerging field of Canadian English, see Gregg's "Canadian English Lexicography," in *Focus on Canada: Varieties of English Around the World*, edited by Sandra Clarke.

Sandra Clarke's 1995 study of the internal and external motivations for language change, combine geographical linguistics with social data, with accounts of sex, age, economic status, and educational levels. One could argue, however, that the early focus on national or regional borders and a concurrent focus on linguistic diversity has driven interest in or desire for an authoritative, a recognized Canadian English. As one book seller, interviewed for a review of the new *Canadian Oxford Dictionary,* points out, ". . . a country such as ours with a reasonably distinct language should have its own dictionary" (qtd. in Nguyen, *Edmonton Journal*, July 28, 1998 B1). Linguistic distinction, in effect, means national distinction, whereby the authorization of a national language translates into the authorization of nation. As one reviewer puts it, ". . . a nation is not a fully sovereign entity until it produces quality word-books . . . . Well, yay (or yea!), my fellow-Canadians. We have arrived" (Garnett, *The Globe and Mail*, Aug. 23, 1997 D14).

Moreover, a survey of recent reviews of Canadian dictionaries indicates that such a focus on distinction is necessary given the small, competitive market of Canadian English dictionaries. As another reviewer suggests, the size of the Canadian market has prompted editors and publishers of the new *Oxford* and most recent editions of the *Gage* and the *Nelson* to emphasize and so promote differences between their dictionaries (Renzetti, *The Globe and Mail,* Saturday, May 30, 1998 C10). More importantly, editors and publishers of the 1997 editions of the *Gage* and the *Nelson* and the 1998 *Oxford* emphasize the distinctiveness of their dictionaries by marketing the distinctiveness of Canadian English itself. Discussing her response to Canadians' questions about the need for a Canadian dictionary, Katherine Barber, editor of the *Oxford*, says, "It's as if Canadians don't realize how distinctive their language is. People use words like 'seat sale', but don't know that other people don't use them" (qtd. in Renzetti C10). Thus the principle of diversity, or distinction, is important both for the marketing of individual dictionaries (to distinguish the usefulness of one from another) and for the marketing of an emerging variety of English.

What is noteworthy about Barber's comment about textual and linguistic distinctions, however, is that there appears to be a lack of national-linguistic consciousness on the part of Canadians (in spite of earlier accounts of the emergence of such a consciousness in the prefaces and introductions of dictionaries published in the

1960s and 1970s). Comments from reviewers, in fact, indicate that Canadians still seem unaware of, or a little surprised by, the distinctiveness of Canadian English: "Canada now joins [other countries] as meriting its own indigenous Oxford Dictionary. And you thought that Canadian English was no more than the word eh, eh? (Richler, *Montreal Gazette*, June 27, 1998 J2). As is typical of news genres themselves (in that they often represent events in terms of a belated public awareness that warrants their newsworthiness), such reports of 'surprise' indicate that each publication of a Canadian dictionary launches Canadian English anew and in the process iterates and encourages, with each new edition or new version, an emerging consciousness about its existence. Apparently, Canadians, in 1997 and 1998, are no more aware of Canadian English's claim to recognition than were Canadians in the 1960s and 1970s, but these dictionaries repeatedly purport to rectify this. As Barber, quoted in another review of the new *Oxford*, claims, "This dictionary will make Canadians realize just how distinctive their language is . . . . But it will also answer all their everyday questions when they need to look up a word" (*British Columbia Report* 41). In this generic confluence of practicality, appreciation and apprehension, Canadians are not only provided with practical solutions to linguistic questions, they are provided with recurring permissions or generic inducements to think of the language we use in Canada as a language that embodies a national identity and consciousness. Barber suggests, in fact, that the "Canadian mind-set" is reflected in our words, and thus one reviewer speculates that it may be our language that "makes us and keeps us different" (Morash, *Edmonton Journal*, July 1, 1998 C1). Canadians, then, are not only encouraged to think of Canadian English as a distinct variety, but because this variety purportedly represents both culture and the codification of an understanding, a "Canadian mind-set," Canadians are also encouraged to think about how this language represents a national consciousness – in short, they are persuaded toward a consciousness about a distinct consciousness.

Stories of Origin and Essence

Like other accounts of national languages, the seeds of a permissible and generic national-linguistic consciousness are planted in the ground of history and geography.

As W. R. Wees notes in the foreward of the 1967 edition of the *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles*,

> By its history a people is set apart, differentiated from the rest of humanity. If, therefore, there is anything distinctive about Canadians, it must be the result of a history of experience different from the histories of the French, the English, the Americans, and all those who have come together to form the Canadian people.
>
> That separateness of experience, in all the bludgeoning of the Atlantic waves, the forest over-burdened of the St. Lawrence valley, the long waterways to the West, the silence of the Arctic wastes, the lonesome horizons of the prairie, the vast imprisonment of the Cordilleras, the trade and commerce with the original Canadians – all this is recorded in our language. (v)

In this mythic narrative of time, space, experience and identity – in this story of Canadian English and Canadian's consciousness of it – the author depends upon an understanding of 1) how language develops from our experience of the world and 2) how this experience, once shared and re-produced, comes to represent the history of a distinct people who necessarily use language in a distinct way. Moreover, this history is predicated upon our experience of a distinct and stylized landscape, one which, in its silence, loneliness, imprisonment and vastness, unifies Canadians at the same time as it makes them distinct, separates them from others' landscapes of nativity, others' origins and histories. Indeed, this scenic backdrop (the silent Arctic wastes, the bludgeoning Atlantic waves and the lonesome prairies) is here configured as the primordial precursor to the emergence of a shared national-historical experience and a recorded language.

We hear, then, in Canadian dictionary prefaces and introductions, mythic stories of origin, where the landscape seems silent, lonely, vast, and distant and so made ready to produce or necessitate a new language that records a new experience and consciousness of this experience. Superimposed on these stories of origin are stories of contact, with the land to be sure, but also with new groups of people, including "the original Canadians":

> The vocabulary distinctive of Canada has developed along lines characteristic of linguistic groups which become separated from their motherland through emigration to distant and strange shores. The stock of words brought with these emigrants will change as they come into close contact with speakers of other languages, as they encounter novelties of

> animal life, vegetation, and topography, as they adopt or devise different ways of coping with their new environment, and as they work out new ways of organizing their political, economic and social life. (Avis, *A Concise Dictionary of Canadianisms* x)

But this story of origins, of contact with "distant and strange shores" and with "speakers of other languages," is really a story of historical and linguistic settlement. In spite of some early debate about the actual origins of Canadian English,[27] there is considerable agreement among linguists that Canadian English is a variant of American English, a result of the settlement patterns of Loyalist who immigrated to Canada during and after the Revolutionary War.[28]

The story, according to Chambers, goes something like this: Canadian English, for the most part, is the result of four immigration waves; the first and second were "the

---

[27] This early debate can be seen in competing accounts about the influence of American usage on Canadian usage in *Canadian English: Origins and Structures*, in a section called "History and Affiliations," wherein two linguists offer their explanations for the origins of Canadian English. According to Morton Bloomfield, in his chapter, "Canadian English and its Relation to Eighteenth Century American Speech," Canadian English was heavily influenced by Americans who settled in Canada after 1776:

> The important group, both in number and prestige, were the Loyalists, who hardy and industrious, opened up Ontario, drove an English-speaking wedge into the Province of Quebec, settled the Maritime Provinces where, since the 1740's, Yankees had been living, and sealed the devotion to their cause by checking the American invasions of Canada during the War of 1812. They were conservatives who had suffered for their loyalty. Hence, to the normal conservatism of emigrating linguistic groups there was added, in this case, a strong political and psychological conservatism. This frame of mind was to have its effect upon Canadian English and Canadian life. (5)

M.H. Scargill is much more cautious in his account of these influences. In "The Sources of Canadian English," he maintains that the theory that Canadian English is a variant of the language spoken by Loyalists denies a place for the variant spoken by early and late British settlers (13). This debate, however, may have more to do with concerns about the cultural and economic influence of America – that is, with Americanization in general. Expressing these concerns in his discussion of British and American influences on the development of a standard of Canadian English, H.J. Warkentyne writes, "Although we might find the thought of a lingering colonial mentality distressing, this attitude actually works to our advantage by helping to prevent Canadian English from merging completely with GenAm [General American], which represents the only real threat to our linguistic independence" (171-72). As Ian Pringle suggests, these sorts of discussion about the origins of Canadian English may, in fact, represent a kind of anxiety of influence, a long-standing unease about our geographical and historical affiliations with the United States:

> Canadian views of their English have a separatist function: they serve to assert the reality of a Canadian linguistic identity which, Canadians sometimes fear, is not as obvious or even as real as they would like it to be. This they do by exaggerating the differences between Canadian and American English (which often entails disparaging American English), and by asserting that at least in some respects Canadian English is more like British English, and is therefore better. Unlike American English, British English is a good safe distance away, and so obviously different that imagining a high degree of similarity does not constitute any threat to Canadian self-image. American English, on the other hand, is so close, so omnipresent, and so similar that it is necessary to insist on whatever differences can be found or imagined. (184)

[28] See for example Laurel J. Brinton and Margery Fee, "Canadian English," *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, vol. 6, ed. John Algeo (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001); Tom McArthur, *Oxford Guide to World English* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

most important linguistically because they took place when the character of Canadian English was not yet formed, and thus they had a formative influence" ("Canadian English: 250 Years in the Making," *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*). The first group consisted of Loyalists from the New England states who settled in what are now the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Other Loyalists, from Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Vermont, settled in and around the Great Lakes. This wave of immigration, Chambers argues, was responsible for the development of key social, political and economic infrastructures. British and Irish immigrants make up the second wave of immigrants. According to Chambers, this group came, in large part, because of immigration recruiters' efforts to recruit British and Irish citizens to settle in Canada to address the anxieties that the War of 1812 generated about the loyalty of the Loyalists. However, British and Irish influence on Canadian English was "less remarkable" because "in the time-honoured pattern, their Canadian-born children grew up speaking not like their parents but like their schoolmates and playmates" (Chambers, "Canadian English"). Their influence, says Chambers, lies in the ways Canadians tend toward variation in both spelling and pronunciation.

The third and fourth waves of immigration, peaking in 1910 and 1960 respectively, seemed to have contributed little to the formation of Canadian English. Although these groups "broke up the old Anglo-Celtic hegemony," their linguistic influence seems negligible: "The immigrants' grandchildren – the second-generation Canadians – sound much the same as their contemporaries whose Canadian ancestry dates further back" (Chambers, "Canadian English"). Chambers situates their linguistic contributions to Canadian English on the same plane as that of the First Nations groups and the *coureurs de bois,* whose wordings Canadians imported then adjusted to fit the grammatical structures and pronunciations of English. That is, Canadians accommodated and continue to accommodate "foreign" loan words from ethnically diverse immigrant groups to suit our grammatical (we pluralize *cappuccino,* "cappuccinos") and phonological requirements (we pronounce *bruschetta*, "brooshetta"). In spite of their lack of 'real' contribution to the shaping of Canadian English, Chambers nonetheless insists that this sort of linguistic accommodation represents language's "age-old tendency" to change and diversify: "Linguistic change is irrepressible even in much more

static societies than ours. The Loyalists did not sound like Shakespeare, and we do not sound like the Loyalists" ("Canadian English").

In fact, in spite of Chamber's construction of the relatively fixed historical unities that shaped the formation of Canadian English, his invocation of this "age-old" principle of linguistic change allows him to make the following claim, which seems, at first glance, to be a contradiction given the supposed tenacity of our linguistic origins:

> Now that Canada has become post-colonial both historically and spiritually, we can expect a great many linguistic changes. Our vocabulary – like the vocabulary of every modern nation – is swelling more rapidly than ever with words from technology, medicine, international politics, and other sources. . . . Our reach may extend around the globe, but in another sense the globe has come to us. Our largest cities and towns make neighbourhoods of people of diverse creeds and colours. The integration of diverse peoples into the social fabric is having subtle effects just as the integration of the Scots and English did in the 1850s. . . . [Thus] *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* belongs to the age of the global village, but with a wholesome Canadian bias. ("Canadian English")

Chambers locates 'great' or accelerated linguistic change in a future scene which arises out of the present, out of current conditions of post-coloniality and globalization. Here, however, we might be witnessing a kind of historical forgetting where the "subtle" linguistic influences of the third and fourth wave immigrant groups from Southern and Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caribbean are disconnected from the present, from the "subtle effects" of modern, urban "neighbourhoods of diverse creeds and colours." To account for the past presence of such diversity in Canadian cities and towns and any future linguistic changes a "swelling" diversity might engender, Chambers appears to contain these changes in his re-assertion of permanence. That is, the transformative pressures of the global are contained within the resilience of the local: linguistic change is kept in check by "a wholesome Canadian bias," a natural, a decent heartiness that seems to leave the influence of the first wave of immigrants intact.

What emerges is a kind of multicultural accommodation that does not disrupt the official, historical narrative of natal influence and related Canadian identity. Indeed, in spite of mentions of diversity and urbanization, the life of Canadian English is often narrated via commonplace, rather stereotypical accounts of this country's experiences

and interests: "Special attention has been given to economic activities, sports, and pastimes of particular interest to Canadians. Thus the vocabulary of logging and wheat farming, of commercial fishing and mining is found alongside the very abundant vocabulary of hockey, figure skating, sport fishing, and hunting" (Barber, "Preface," *Canadian Oxford*). Alongside these commonplace characterizations of Canadian life and vocabulary are mentions of "foreign" loanwords that enliven the language: "New foods such as *focaccia* and *jerk chicken* are constantly being borrowed from other cultures, a process that is particularly lively in Canada's highly multicultural society" (Barber, "Preface," *Canadian Oxford*). Unlike the influence of early American and British English, "foreign" words, it seems, are caught up in a process of assimilation and accommodation, whereby their very foreignness assists and enriches an already existing unity. Moreover, examples of these "foreign" words, in dictionary introductions and other studies of Canadian English, often take the form of food words (*focaccia, jerk chicken, bruschetta, cappuccino*), which, as those working in the field of multicultural studies have suggested, may reflect attempts to contain multicultural diversity through the consumption of unassuming, non-threatening difference. This story of linguistic accommodation and assimilation, in effect, contributes to the construction of a sanctioned 'unity within diversity' that both speaks to and reinforces uncritical accounts of the Canadian scene, its history and its current policy of multicultural tolerance and diversity. As Jaan Lilles suggests, in "The Myth of Canadian English," the construction of an official unity within diversity "present[s] a picture of a Canada that is relatively free of division and strife by presenting a coherent account of a 'Canadian English' that serves to ease anxieties about the fragility of the political nation" (7). According to Lilles, mini-histories of Canadian English tend to omit other historical and political events, including long-standing debates about bilingualism and colonizing exchanges between Europeans and Aboriginals, in favour of a more 'neutral' or 'coherent' accounting wherein "sample token Aboriginal words are often cited as examples of [a] harmonious interaction and implicit assimilation of Native and French words and people into the dominant 'Canadian English'" (6).

James Milroy argues, in "The Legitimate Language: Giving a History to English," that such historical sanctionings represent attempts to codify and thus legitimatize standard languages (and by implication, standard versions of nation):

> Speakers can feel assured that [language] . . . has an ancestry, a lineage, even a pedigree, and it has stood the test of time. . . . The more ancient the language can be shown to be, the better, and it is also desirable that, *whatever signs there may be to the contrary*, the language should be shown to be as *pure* as possible. It should not be of mixed ancestry, and it should not have been 'contaminated' – its intrinsic nature should not have been altered – by whatever influences other languages may have had on it. (8-9)

According to Milroy, the process of historicization involves methods of linguistic analysis that negate the external labour of language, the values and beliefs that shape the selection and inclusion of linguistic items, in favour of a focus on the internal workings of language (its grammar, lexicon and phonology). With such negation, "it is felt that social value judgements are not involved, and the analysis can therefore be viewed as objective, non-ideological, and reliable" (9). Yet, in the process of selecting linguistic evidence for inclusion into a unified history of the language, dictionary-makers and the like, according to Milroy, deflect attention from other sorts of evidence, evidence which may call into question the official story of a language's (and a nation's) unfolding. For example, Milroy notes that in their efforts to maintain the story of a pure, unbroken lineage for British English, researchers in the early twentieth century interpreted linguistic changes, not as a result of contact with other languages, but in terms of internal developments within the language itself. In an attempt to diminish the influence of the Norman Conquest and thus the "pro-Norman bias of historians and literary critics" (21), some researchers, analyzing the internal properties of Anglo-Saxon and Early Modern English, insisted that in spite of the Norman Conquest, many of the properties of Anglo-Saxon English survived into the early modern period. Milroy argues that these findings were "used as part of the argument for the continuity of the language, in times when the historical study of language was an appendage to the study of literature" (21). In this history of the language, contact with foreign languages did not alter the structure of English in any fundamental way (21); in fact, like the influence of the languages spoken

by many Canadian immigrant groups, Aboriginals and French Canadians, foreign language influence on the development of the standard was negligible.

The historicity of standard English, moreover, was established through the use of literary sources, evidence or data culled from educated speakers and writers, which "had the effect of conferring high status and respectability on English" (Milroy 11) and conferring low status on other varieties. In turn, distinctions were made between lawful and lawless influences, between acceptable and unacceptable changes to the language. According to Milroy, early and mid twentieth century scholars, such as H.C. Wyld, set into play a number of assumptions about the historicity of language, assumptions based on the history or lack thereof, of other varieties. Rural dialects, because they possessed a traceable history, were considered legitimate languages, whereas urban dialects, possessing no history, were considered uneducated and incorrect attempts to mimic the standard: "By implication, differences that might be detected in these varieties would not represent legitimate linguistic changes, but illegitimate 'vulgarisms' or 'corruptions'" (Milroy 11). However, as Milroy points out, such distinctions and their attendant assumptions reveal that the evidence used to delineate the standard had more to do with assumptions about social status then with the internal workings of language:

> Evidence for early pronunciation that can be described as 'vulgar' or 'dialectical' was simply rejected. For example, Dobson (1968 II: 151) noted that one source (Pery) 'shows the vulgar raising of M[iddle] E[nglish] *a* to [e]'. This, according to Dobson, is not surprising because Pery's speech 'was clearly Cockney . . . The evidence of such a writer does not relate to educated St[andard] E[nglish]'. So into the wastebasket it goes, along with many other 'vulgarisms', even though it attests to early raising of /a/ -- a feature that subsequently affected mainstream varieties of English. It is as though uneducated speakers are not allowed to be involved in language history. (11)

In his discussion of usage debates in the United States, Edward Finegan also notes this propensity, in American discourses on language, to categorize linguistic change in terms of legitimate and illegitimate change. He notes that, in discussions of what can be considered 'good' and 'bad' change, a version of the standard emerges wherein 'polite' and 'educated' usage comes to represent the legitimate language as it is spoken by legitimate persons: "The history of grammar and usage study shows persistent focus on *who* says *what*, with emphasis on social standing of the *who*" ("Usage" 398; emphasis in

original). These distinctions are particularly evident in dictionary usage guides that delineate usage in terms of its social or cultural functions: colloquial, standard, literary, sub-standard, scientific, vulgar and so on. So, although many linguists have attended to the situated use of language (and so appear to reinforce a contingent or, in American discourses on language, a 'democratic' view of correctness), the very notion of levels assumes a kind of hierarchy of use and a concurrent hierarchy of users (398-99).

Although such overt delineations of users would be considered anathema to many working in the field of Canadian English, particularly given the tendency to characterize Canadian English as a historical representation of socio-cultural tolerance, such delineations do occur in Canadian dictionaries, in notes on usage restrictions and in accounts that configure language within the naturalizing terms of a commonly accepted usage. That is, in Canadian dictionaries, linguistic tolerance, or the invocation of variety and diversity, occurs alongside the invocation of a kind of national commons, a geographically diffused unity, or atmospheric collective. However, this diversity, like mentions of diversity in reviews of dictionaries and in nationalistic claims of distinction, is first used to establish the authority of the dictionary itself:

> The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* is exceptionally reliable in its description of Canadian English because it is based on thorough research into the language: five years of work by five Canadian lexicographers examining almost twenty million words of Canadian text in databases representing over 8,000 different Canadian publications. . . . [T]he sources we read reflect all regions of the country. . . . *West Coast Logger, Beautiful British Columbia*, and Jack Hodgins brought us the words of the West Coast. *Prairie Fire*, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and the fiction of Sandra Birdsell and Guy Vanderhaeghe were a breath of prairie air, bringing with them numerous words borrowed from the Ukrainians, Icelanders, and others who settled the west. Alice Munro spoke the language of Southwestern Ontario, while the English of Daniel Richler and the *Montreal Gazette* had a distinct Québécois accent. . . . (Barber, "Preface," *Canadian Oxford*)

> [The 1997 edition of the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*] is designed not only to keep readers informed about developments in science and technology, but also to emphasize the multicultural society of Canada. Over 13,000 new entries have been added to expand the dictionary's range and bring it up to date. . . . In addition, the distinctively Canadian part of the dictionary has been enlarged to show the richness and variety of Canadian

> English. This makes the new *Gage Canadian Dictionary* an authoritative, contemporary record of Canadian English . . . . ("Introduction," *Gage Canadian* vi)

In order to establish the authority or reliability of these dictionaries (their *raison d'être* and their own claims of authenticity), editors must first establish the "richness and variety" of Canadian English, summon once again the principle of linguistic diversity, configured here in terms of Canadian regionalisms and multicultural borrowings. The delineation of linguistic variation along regional and multicultural lines is noteworthy given this country's official socio-political interests and concerns. In light of Canada's long standing federal-regional skirmishes and more recent attempts to address multicultural issues, it is not surprising to see linguistic variation highlighted in terms that speak to regional and multicultural interests rather than to other interests. Dictionary makers also establish their professional credentials by summoning the commonplace principle of diversity in descriptions of Canadian usage in general: "The fact is that usage is very much divided, varying from province to province and often from person to person. For the most part, however, Canadians respond to these variants with equal ease. Under such circumstances, a Canadian dictionary should include both forms, for here, as elsewhere, the lexicographer's obligation is to record usage, not to legislate it" (Avis, "Canadian English," *Gage Senior Dictionary* 1967 ix). Yet this appeal to Canadians' supposed tolerance of and ease with linguistic variation may allow dictionary makers to mask their selection techniques, their methodologies, here configured as a simple record of diversity rather than the legislation of it.

However, this portrait of linguistic variation, Canadians' tolerance for it and dictionary makers' invocations of it is only a partial picture of the ways in which the making of Canadian English might participate in the masking of linguistic authority. In spite of the fact that diversity emerges as a core principle, which, in linguistic circles, is often associated with spoken language, a look at the data upon which this diversity is based indicates that written language, rather than spoken language, is the actual source for assessments of this diversity. As Barber suggests in her discussion of the range of sources from which Canadian English is culled, the English that emerges in the *Canadian Oxford* is predominantly a "literary" or "unitary" language, to borrow Bakhtin's

description, one based on Canadian novels, journals, magazines and flyers. As such, it is subject to the sorts of limitations and unifying impositions that written languages are subject to. As others have pointed out, to base assessments about usage on written texts, then to 'describe' the usage one finds in these texts as common, is to elide the sorts of normative judgements and values that inform the editing of such texts. So although *Beautiful British Columbia* may represent the language as it is commonly used on the West Coast and the works of Alice Munro may represent the spoken language, the common language, of Southwestern Ontario, chances are that that their words are the result of decisions made by editors and copyeditors who work in the field of publishing. As Cameron notes, while editors and copyeditors consult handbooks and dictionaries to determine acceptable usage, these texts often draw on the published materials of editors and copyeditors to establish these norms of usage. Thus, the "facts of usage," according to Cameron, have less to do with a record of common usage than with the preferences found in publishers' house styles:

> For example, any reference work purporting to describe the 'facts of usage' in the US would be bound to include the that/which rule, since the distinction is observable in just about every American print source. Yet this reflects, not *common* usage, but specifically the usage of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the absolute dominance of that text as a style bible for American publishers and the zeal with which copy editors enforce its prescriptions. (*Verbal Hygiene* 55)

Canadians' so-called tolerance for diversity (their 'essence'), then, may be the outcome of editors' choices, which are based on their own preference for different style guides, rather than any inherent quality of the nation and its people. It appears that a dictionary's record is not so much an account of variety and difference, but an account of the professional play and manipulation of difference. As T.K. Pratt suggests, in "The Hobgoblin of Canadian English Spelling," Canadian spelling norms are difficult to determine, in large part, because editors, rather than Canadians themselves, are not in agreement about these norms. While some base usage and spelling conventions on style guides that prefer American variants, others base their conventions on guides that privilege British variants. For example, Pratt notes that "*The Canadian Press Stylebook: A Guide for Writers and Editors* is the authority for Canadian journalism, both in itself and as a model for in-house guides" (50). Its advice about the use of *-or* spellings instead

of *-our* spellings has influenced the ways media (e.g. newspapers, flyers, etc.) represent such words as *honor, color* and *flavor*. Yet, *The Globe and Mail*, "English Canada's most prestigious newspaper" (Pratt 51), has recently changed its advice about *or/our* spellings: "This decision is defended in the paper's own best-selling style book, comprehensively revised in 1990: 'We have restored elements of traditional Canadian spelling where American usage had come to prevail'" (Pratt 50). This diversity, this means of maintaining professional distinction, is then reflected in dictionary accounts of the ways Canadians, as a whole, use language, with different preferences for *or/our* spellings attributed to an abstracted common usage, suggested in the seemingly innocuous order of headwords (either *-or* or *-our* spellings listed first, depending on the dictionary):

> Because standard Canadian usage, especially in spelling and pronunciation, is more diverse than that of either Britain or the United States, the *Gage Canadian Dictionary* gives a greater range of alternatives than is usually available in comparable British or American dictionaries. For instance, Canadian usage is almost equally divided between *–our* and *–or* spellings in words such as *colour/color* and *honour/honor*, so both spellings are accepted by this Canadian dictionary as standard Canadian spelling. One spelling or the other must be placed first as being the more common, and in light of current trends this edition has been changed to give first place to the *–our* spelling. ("Introduction," *Gage Canadian Dictionary* vii)

However, these orderings, Pratt notes, play a role in the way Canadians privilege one spelling over another: "We should not be in any doubt that dictionary users attach significance to the order in which alternative headwords are presented" (53). Moreover, this ordering or privileging of one variant over another and subsequent interpretation of these orderings in terms of Canadian preference appear to originate from the advice found in style books, not from Canadian common usage. Each style book recommends a particular and often different dictionary as their in-house dictionary of choice (for example, at the time of his writing, Pratt maintains that *The Globe and Mail Style Book* recommends the use of *Funk and Wagnalls Canadian College Dictionary*, while *The Canadian Style* (the federal government's style book) refers writers to the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*) (53). Style books then direct writers' spelling choices: "Both the *CP Stylebook* [*Canadian Press Stylebook*] and *The Canadian Style*, for example, take

care to advise readers to choose the first spelling in such cases" (53). These recommendations, however, can create dilemmas for Canadian dictionaries, especially when in-house style books change their preferences: "... since the federal government has opted for *–our*, its guide is forced to stipulate an exception here, undercutting *Gage* on a major point as an authority for Canadian writers" (Pratt 53). Yet, the *Gage* appears to have resolved this dilemma and so re-asserted its authority; in its 1997 edition, it has opted to change its own ordering of *–or/-our* headwords to reflect "current trends," or the "more common" use of *–our* spellings.

Thus, what appears to be a simple record of language as it is used in Canada is really quite a complicated recording, one that depends upon a reciprocal practice of normative citations, whereby "common usage" emerges, as a titular term, out of a set of obscured but mutually reinforcing professional activities. That is, what gets interpreted as common usage (Canadians' use of variant spellings and pronunciations) and a common identity (Canadians' tolerance for such diversity) may, in fact, be the result of the unifying force of authority, one which shelters itself under the umbrella of a collective. Even Pratt himself appears to contribute to the mystification and hence normative authority of this force by conflating common usage (rather than the reciprocal authorizations of editors and dictionary makers) with essentializing accounts of a collective national character: "It is tempting to end, as do . . . some other commentators . . . , by suggesting that such tolerance for diversity is the kind of thing Canadians do best. At any rate, if a foolish consistency is, as Emerson put it, the hobgoblin of little minds, Canadian spellers might claim to be among the most broadminded people writing English today" (59).

The unifying force of common usage is particularly evident in dictionary mentions of "educated usage." In these mentions, commonness is configured within what, on the surface, appears to be inclusive, rather indeterminate criteria:

> . . . surely the proper test of correctness for Canadians should be the usage of educated natives of Canada. . . . Of course, not everyone uses all of these forms; yet all are used regularly by educated Canadians in large numbers. Who can deny that (ri zôr′ səz) and (spē′ sēz) are more often heard at all levels of Canadian society than (ri sôrs′ əz) and (spē′ shēz), the pronunciations indicated in nearly all available dictionaries? Surely, when

> the evidence of usage justifies it, forms such as these should be entered as variants in any dictionary intended to reflect Canadian speech. (Avis, "Canadian English," *Gage Senior Dictionary* viii)

In an effort to establish the authority and distinctiveness of Canadian English, Avis, in 1967, details what is still considered broad criteria for the inclusion of "acceptable" Canadian forms: "the usage of educated natives of Canada." The apparent inclusiveness of this criterion is reinforced by the fact that Avis does not actually say what constitutes educated usage. In this description, we do not know if educated usage is based on the completion of a high school degree or a university degree. In spite of the fact that a substantial number of Canadians do not hold a university certificate or degree and in spite of his acknowledgement that "not everyone uses all of these forms," Avis nonetheless conflates educated usage with Canadian usage in general, with those items that are "heard at all levels of Canadian society." But this tendency to conflate common or everyday speech with a constructed or conventionalized commons, a unified national public, is not unique to Avis:

> Many scholars, when commenting on this subject, hold that the basis from which a standard is derived is a prestige dialect, presumably that of the upper class or, in the case of North America, upper middle class. . . . Perhaps it is not necessary to appeal to a socioeconomic class at all; instead, we could simply specify our target to be educated users of English. A convenient requirement might be that informants hold a university degree. (Warkentyne 171)

Although Warkentyne does stipulate more specific criteria in his recommendation that a Canadian standard be based on a university degree, his recommendation reinforces the idea that such schooling, as the basis of a standard and a source of legitimate data, can be a more inclusive criterion than class. However, in his attempt to be inclusive, Warkentyne, of course, elides the social and economic factors at play in such schooling and, in doing so, mystifies the workings of language and its relation to class in Canada. Chambers too appears to participate in a similar sort of mystification. According to this linguist, the accent of most Canadians is "geographically widespread" and "socially ubiquitous," the result of a social history that is itself the result of an egalitarian society:

> Like most New-World societies, the first generations of Canadians, preoccupied with survival instead of social conventions, lived in almost

> classless, egalitarian communities. . . . Our social structure never congealed into the rigidly stratified class system seen in, say, Victorian England . . .
>
> Partly, I think, we avoided it because Canada's nationhood has required such extraordinary measures in transport and communications to survive the geographical barriers of distance and climate and the political barriers of French separatism and British-American colonialism. . . . Geographic mobility aids and abets social and occupational mobility, and the economic climate has made skilled workers all but indistinguishable from lower management in terms of income, housing and educational opportunities.
>
> Because of all these factors, Canada's standard accent is heard over a vast territory on the lips of a whopping majority. Far from the mark of status for a privileged few, it is the common coin of inland, urban, middle-class Canada. ("Three Kinds of Standard in Canadian English" 12-13)

Here, Chambers invokes scenic motives, familiar originary elements of history and geography, to affirm "the common [linguistic] coin" of "a whopping majority" of Canadians. In matters related to the Canadian accent (typically referred to as General Canadian English), there is, according to Chambers, a remarkable uniformity, one that marks Canadians as a classless people who are "indistinguishable" from one another because of a levelling history of geographic, social and occupational mobility.

Yet, as Ian Pringle notes, such claims of socio-dialectical uniformity can only be "impressionistic" (184). He maintains that "serious studies of the English of urban Canada have been completed only for the cities of Ottawa and Vancouver. The English of rural Canada has also been little studied; however the collections of dialect data gathered in such areas as Newfoundland and the Ottawa Valley have led one observer to make exactly the opposite claim: that, with the possible exception of Scots, Canadian English is the most varied national variety of English" (184-85). In addition, he notes that there has been little study of the English used by Francophones and by immigrants whose first language is not English (185). Chambers himself acknowledges that the linguistic homogeneity that supposedly characterizes Canadian speech should be qualified. As he points out, this homogeneity "really holds only for urban, middle-class speech," not for the rural speech of those living in places such as Peterborough County and the Red River Valley (11). Linguistic homogeneity does not hold for the working-class either: "And in the large cities from Ottawa to Victoria, working-class accents often differ not only from

standard speech but also from one another, with the ethnic origins of the speakers sometimes leaving traces in the second generation" (12). While Canadian English might not be as varied as the observer above claims, the persistent construction of a socio-linguistic unity (in qualified opposition to rural, ethnic and working-class diversity) may end up eliding the actual facts of common usage, creating, as Jaan Lilles maintains, "a false sense of Canadian linguistic unity" (5). According to Lilles, "The result is that words, expressions, or pronunciations particular to a region, and often to non-urban extremity, are catalogued as 'Canadianisms.' The title intentionally misleads, implying that the features described are somehow true of all those who speak 'Canadian English'" (5).

Such claims of uniformity, based as they are on notions of educated usage or social mobility, conceal another sort of normative and naturalizing history. Richard Watts, in "From Polite Language to Educated Language: The Re-Emergence of an Ideology," notes, for example, that invocations of educated usage are not dissimilar to eighteenth-century preoccupations with polite usage, seen, during that period, as an educational marker of upper class gentility and cultural power. Watts maintains that educated usage, in current promotions of standard English, has a similar sort of "market value" – like polite usage, learned "through '*good Manners*, *correct Writing, proper English* and a *smooth Tongue*'" (165), educated usage links power to a particular sort of learning ('correct' or 'standard' writing and speaking) and a specific category of the learned (the professional, upper-middle class): "The shift to a connection between 'standard English' and 'educatedness' is therefore nothing less than a wolf in sheep's clothing, the wolf being what was referred to in the eighteenth century as 'polite society'. 'Standard English' remains linked to notions of social climbing, prestige, elitism and exclusivity. It is presented as a means of bettering oneself socially" (171). Although those working in the field of Canadian English make a point of shunning notions of exclusivity and elitism, their construction of a socio-linguistic unity in terms of educated usage or social mobility may have a similar effect in that this construction unwittingly contributes to the naturalization of those educational and cultural forces that ensure that Standard English, rather than common usage, represents the commons and one's position in the commons. For example, Chambers, in his delineation of the standard in Canadian

English, maintains that the ubiquity of General Canadian English, its spread westward from Ontario to Vancouver Island, has much to do with Canada's settlement history, in particular with the professional classes who settled the West:

> Soon after Confederation, the Canadian Pacific Railway linked southern Ontario to the western frontier, and Ontarians took full advantage of it by directing the westward expansion and participating in it in large numbers. In many western settlements, they dominated the first white-collar class: they were the doctors, teachers, bankers and merchants in agricultural communities where the producers were Britons, Irishmen, Germans, French Canadians and, of course, other Ontarians. Education broadened the constituency of white-collar workers so that it soon encompassed the offspring of the immigrant farmers as well. Their rise broke up the old-Ontario hegemony ethnically and socially within a generation or two but left its mark linguistically. The accent of western Canada remained the accent that the Ontario founders had imported there. (12)

What Chambers does not say is that this "white-collar" or middle-class accent, if it exists to the extent that Chambers says it does, does so in part because of a series of educational and governmental policies meant to promote an Anglo-hegemony in the West. As detailed in Wilfrid Denis's "Language in Saskatchewan: Anglo-hegemony Maintained," these restrictive policies guaranteed that standard English and the cultural institutions and values associated with English in general would dominate. Denis notes, for example, that during the period between 1875 and 1930, religious tensions (between French speaking Catholics and English speaking Protestants), political anxieties (about Eastern European immigration and Bolshevism), and anxieties about Aboriginal self-determination led to a number of legislative acts meant to alleviate these tensions or concerns: Catholics lost control over curricular content in areas where they were the minority; the 1876 Indian Act ensured that "educational arrangements [were] consistent with the prevailing ideology of assimilation" and led, of course, to the establishment of residential schools where "Anglo-conformity [was] imposed" (428); and in 1917, the Compulsory School Attendance Act forced Mennonite children into English public schools, which favoured "British culture and institutions" (428). Among others, these legislative acts, according to Denis, amounted to a "systematic erosion" of minority-language rights which in turn ensured the "support of one language to the detriment of all others" (439). The assertion that an "Ontario hegemony" has "left its mark linguistically"

on the West, then, is not as innocuous or innocent as Chambers would have us believe. While education may have "broadened the constituency of white-collar workers," it has also secured the place of standard English (taught in schools) and a standard accent as *the* marker of educated usage. But, as both Watts and Denis suggest, educated usage itself is neither a neutral nor a natural criterion. Nor should it be viewed as a *common* criterion. Instead, the principles that underlie notions of educated usage have often been used in attempts to contain or check "the common" and so have become a means of maintaining class distinctions (in spite of linguists' attempts to eschew the workings of class in their delineations of Canadian English). In addition, the existence of an educated usage, upon which many linguists base their interpretations of general Canadian usage, is often a result of coercive policies that have promoted a unified public commons in the face of regional and multicultural diversity.

While not all Canadian dictionaries use the term "educated usage" in their discussions of the criteria upon which Canadian linguistic data are based (in fact, the *Oxford* avoids such mentions in favour of the more general "common usage"), "educated usage" and "common usage" may still converge in the ubiquitous terms "acceptable" or "unacceptable," terms that conjure up a unified commons, a shared sense, or constructed consciousness, of some standard or measure of language as it is used in Canada.

> Many words in Canadian English (and some words in all dialects of English) can be spelled in two or more ways. When both spellings are equally acceptable, they are shown as alternative entry words. . . . In such cases, the form given first is that which is considered to be somewhat more frequently used by educated writers across Canada. (1983 *Gage* xviii)
>
> Variant spellings chiefly restricted to certain parts of the English speaking world are introduced by an appropriate restrictive label. Such labels indicate only that the variants are very infrequent in Canadian practice, not that they are unacceptable. (1998 *Oxford* xii)
>
> *Informal* The word or meaning is quite acceptable in everyday use but would in most cases be out of place in a business letter, scholarly paper, legal document, formal speech or interview, etc. (1997 *Gage* xvii)
>
> *Slang* The word or meaning is not established in standard use but is used mainly in speech and only by certain groups, or by others in imitation or

> for special effects. If a slang word survives and becomes generally known, it usually also becomes generally acceptable and therefore ceases to be slang. (1997 *Gage* xvii)

These standards of acceptability are most often invoked in discussions of disputed usage or the possibility of disputed usage (for example, to assert the acceptable use of informal words in some circumstances); in discussions of linguistic variation (as in variant spellings and pronunciations); and in discussions of 'group' variants or dialects. In other words, standards of acceptability are invoked when linguists are confronted with a word that necessitates the invocation of 'acceptability', a kind of imagined social ratification. But by invoking these standards, linguists may end up containing diversity and difference within the unifying force of a commons, an abstracted majority opinion that sanctions usage according to a vague national consciousness ("If a slang word survives and becomes *generally known*, it usually also becomes *generally acceptable*") or some understanding, left unsaid, of the prohibitions that surround particular uses ("The word or meaning is quite acceptable in everyday use but would in most cases be out of place in a business letter, scholarly paper, legal document . . . ").

Furthermore, the source for this majority opinion, for these standards of acceptability, is rarely revealed. Only the *Oxford* provides some information about how these standards of acceptability are determined: "Favoured Canadian pronunciations were determined by surveying a nationwide group of respondents. These very helpful participants eagerly responded to up to ten e-mails a day asking for their pronunciation of words as varied as *parmesan, diocese*, and *schedule*" (Barber, "Preface"). What the Oxford does not tell readers, however, is who these respondents were and how many respondents were consulted. Therefore, in the end, this 'nationwide' group may or may not be representative of 'majority' or 'common' usage. In addition, in their study of prescriptive attitudes toward spoken language, Milroy and Milroy point out that "it seems virtually impossible to rely on speakers' reports of their own usage or of their attitudes to usage. . . . Linguists and social psychologists who have investigated popular attitudes have found that people's overt claims about language are inaccurate and often contradict their own actual usage" (15). Pringle too notes that when people are asked about their pronunciations or asked to read passages to determine their pronunciations, they often

monitor their responses or reading to reflect their consciousness of a 'correct' pronunciation instead of responding or talking "the way people talk when they are talking in a relaxed, unselfconscious way with people with whom they feel comfortable" (22).

Whether the force of a unifying acceptability originates from the mutually reinforcing authorizations of professionals in the field (configured as common usage) or from unexpressed notions of 'correct' and 'incorrect' standards (configured as acceptable or unacceptable usage), there is a sense that the very terms "common," "educated" and "acceptable" elide, as I indicate above, the labour that surrounds the making of Canadian English. This apparent consensus, in effect, allows Canadian dictionary makers and the like to appeal to and in the process instantiate a common sense of language, one which is based, not on common usage *per se*, but on commonplace ideologies of language and nation. Indeed, it appears that rhetorical *kairos*, the ways in which Canadian linguists define and construct national languages in terms of a mythic space-time, also relies on the invocation of *doxa*, the rhetorical appeal to unified opinion, to a common sense of those scenic commonplaces of history, geography and community that most effectively speak to Canadian beliefs about language. So language becomes a place – or *topos* – where these standard and standardizing themes of history and geography, community and the social order can be played out, can be practised and enacted.

In fact, by examining the genre of Canadian dictionaries, this chapter has detailed the ways in which talk about language as nation constructs a place, a locale and a stance, for the enactment or play of linguistic authority – here configured as a kind of national consensus. I began this chapter by tracing the ways those self-evident entanglements of language, history, geography and identity worked in the service of an imagined nation (an imagined unity/diversity), but also noted that these associations, when they rely on scenic principles of time, place and community, bring the professional discourse on language in line with more authoritative or commonplace discourses. I suggested that this alignment contributes to those indeterminacies that blur motives, attitudes and acts, that blur ideas about the life of language with life in general and the work of experts with those generic acts that move 'national' language users along a predictable course of linguistic action and attitude. However, such entanglements and the indeterminacies they produce are functional, or rhetorical. That is, they allow for the identification (and division) of

language as nation to be articulated in familiar and so authoritative terms, for scenic significations of place, time and community to be imagined through the lens of a 'natural', a living language that reflects the 'natural' life of the nation and the 'essential' attitude of its people. But these indeterminacies also allow for the obscuring substance (the stance, or acts, attitudes and motives) of linguists and sociolinguists who produce the genres that enact this life and attitude; in fact, these indeterminacies involve the work of professionals in a paradox of substance that shelters the authority of this labour under the umbrella of a codified national-linguistic consciousness. As my account of the making of Canadian English dictionaries indicates, the performance of these rhetorics relies on a unified stance of linguistic authority, a constructed social commons or rhetorical community variously conceived in terms of acceptable, educated or common usage.

More importantly, the performance of these rhetorics, as revealed in a Canadian context, indicates that the construction and codification of a unified national-linguistic consciousness is functionally paradoxical: on the one hand, generic notions of acceptability *require* a shared consciousness of linguistic authority (in dictionaries, configured as an already existing unity, an awareness and agreement about matters of a national linguistic nature); on the other hand, this very consciousness is treated as new or as being in need of constant renewal, which in turn ensures that the authority of dictionary makers and their products (or genres) will also be required. This paradox, relying as it does on both the common and the uncommon for its functionality, has particular relevance for an understanding of the ways in which ideologies of language work in contexts where the construction of linguistic authority appears to need a practical, but recurrently incomplete consensus for its efficacy. As will be seen in the next chapter, the appeal of linguistic authority relies not so much on bald imperatives, but on the persistent reiteration of more polite, culturally diffuse authorizations that can reconcile authoritative statements about language with seemingly impersonal social imperatives.

Chapter Three
The Grammaticalization of a Common Sense and Sensibility: Genteel-Scientific Talk in *The Globe and Mail Style Book*

A cursory glance at the promotional commentary of newspaper style guides tells us much about the promissory appeal of linguistic authority. Configuring these commodities of linguistic expertise within symbols of reverence and influence, publishers entice consumers to buy their products by advertising, it seems, confidence and conviction:

> Witty, concise, and enlightened, The Economist Style Guide is an authoritative resource for all your written communication. (Back Cover, *The Economist Style Guide* 2005)
>
> The official style guide used by the writers and editors of the world's most authoritative newspaper. (Front Cover, *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage* 2002)
>
> Authoritative, concise, and a pleasure to read, it's all here from "abattoir" to "Zuider Zee." (Back Cover, *The Globe and Mail Style Book* 1998)

The source of this confidence and conviction, however, is generally assumed. When the source of linguistic authority is hinted at, it is usually articulated in terms of a newspaper's standing, its historical place on the national landscape or its guide's widespread circulation and use: "*The Economist Style Guide* has become the reference of choice for businesspeople everywhere" (Front Flap); *The Globe and Mail Style Book* "has become a valued reference for anyone who works with words" (Back Cover). Aside from their standing, newspaper style guides also seem to derive their authority from their perceived function. As materials that make claims for the promotion of clear, uniform and reliable usage, they are seen as transparent, uniform and reliable themselves. In fact, in spite of differences in the types of guides available (e.g. for newspapers or for research), there is a remarkable similarity between general descriptions of style guides and commonplace talk about language. That is, in their descriptions, style guides borrow from a cluster of shared principles that not only unite different kinds of style guides, but also authoritative talk about language itself. For example, in a review of the *MLA Style*

Manual, John Avis details the "humble but serviceable virtues of a manual" in terms of the trinity of good usage: simplicity, consistency and clarity (48).[29] In the process, he describes the function of his guide in rather idealistic and commonplace terms. Perhaps, then, it is somewhere in this conflation of function and content, this fusing of linguistic ideal and expert pronunciation on language, that linguistic authority emerges, is apprehended, as a self-evident and disinterested force.

However, as Cameron notes, linguistic ideals and expert pronunciations are not self-evident nor are they disinterested; they are a product, she argues, of the economic self-interest of copy editors and other craft professionals whose demand for a uniform and clear style have shaped the standard by which usage is now evaluated (*Verbal Hygiene* 42). Thus, it is not surprising that commentary that describes style guides and talk about language should express similar ideals of uniformity and transparency. In fact, according to Cameron, the involvement and influence of craft professionals in the production and maintenance of uniform standards (that is, the production and maintenance of guides and ideals of usage) can not be underestimated; originally an attempt to produce a "single market for linguistic products," standardization and the professional body that promoted standardization encouraged a need for dictionaries, manuals, style guides, grammars and textbooks – all of which address and continue to address consumers' desires to reach these professional standards themselves (43). And, "[t]oday, the professionals themselves turn to the same authorities for guidance as they formulate and reformulate the conventions of published printed text. . . . It is an endless circle, turned by commercial interest – and today it revolves at an ever-increasing speed" (43).

Cameron refers to this recursive activity as a feedback loop where authority on matters of language is "presented as a seamless consensus, maintained over decades or even centuries, and its precise character is felt to need little elaboration" (54). For example, in her discussion of the authority of *The Times* style guide, she notes that Simon Jenkins, its editor, has a tendency to defer authority, to locate authoritative

[29] Here and elsewhere, I use the term "usage" in its looser sense, to refer to the use of language in general rather than as a separate classification, as seen in handbook taxonomies (e.g. grammar, punctuation, spelling and usage).

pronouncements on language in established wisdom or common usage. This deferment preserves one kind of linguistic authority at the same time as it mystifies another:

> On the one hand decision makers in journalism and publishing consult existing authorities to find out what they regard as acceptable usage; but on the other hand, the examples that will 'authoritatively' illustrate acceptable usage tomorrow come overwhelmingly from the published text of today, . . . [texts which are] the outcome of some very specific decisions and stylistic choices, made by identifiable individuals. (54-55)

In Cameron's discussion of this professional feedback loop, authority emerges as a mystification, a coherent and anonymous position, whereby the ideals of a uniform and clear language work in the service of professional uniformity and transparency. However, authority in language can also be seen as a practice, a specialized routine for performing uniformity and transparency, for enacting the transparent codes or norms that legitimate expert statements about language. In this configuration, authority emerges as both a practice and a position, whereby routine and interest intersect in the construction of a practical consensus that provides the epistemological framework for authoritative knowledge and activity. The authority of the language expert, then, may have less to do with the fact that craft professionals and others repeatedly invoke conventional wisdom than with their common ways of doing so. This is a fine distinction, but one, I think, worth pursuing. Given the circulation of expert statements about language, their travel and replication outside of the institutional or professional contexts that condition their use, it seems that an analysis of authoritative statements about language may lead to a better understanding of how authority in language is maintained by *discursive goings-on*, by routinized methods for talking about language.

As customary routines for talking about language, the style of these statements might, in fact, enact and permit certain ways of thinking about language and the extralinguistic phenomena associated with it. As a recognizable type, a style of talking, statements about language might participate in the naturalization of certain perspectives on language, becoming, in effect, a grammar of practice, position and perspective that manages what can be said, how it can be said, and who can say it. As Janet Giltrow maintains, a way of speaking "realizes a particular *experience of the world*; the grammar both *represents* the experience and makes it possible. It enables a way of thinking which

has woven itself into the texture of our . . . lives" ("Modernizing Authority" 267-68; emphasis in original). This idea is consistent with Foucault's theory of discursive formation, whereby a limited number of statements, objects of knowledge, and strategies for producing that knowledge are brought into play by a set of regulatory practices that define the conditions of their enunciation. And it is consistent with Bakhtin's view of speech genres, where "[s]tyle is inseparably linked to particular thematic unities and – what is especially important – to particular compositional unities: to particular types of construction of the whole, types of its completion, and types of relations between speaker and other participants in speech communication" (*Speech Genres* 64). And, finally, it is consistent with my own experience in the classroom, where invitations to report on notions of 'good' writing and usage produce recognizable types of statements. Each semester, I ask students to record ideas about 'good' writing. And each semester, students produce similar statements – familiar notations such as "Don't use passive voice" and "Be clear and concise." What is noteworthy about these recordings is that they often take the form of imperatives, the grammar of authoritative statements about language. While there might be other ways to represent this kind of talk, students successfully reproduce recognizable routines for prescribing and proscribing usage, incorporating as they do the social relations of authority and consensus evident in these statements.

Discussing the implications of what he terms "magisterial language" or "pedagogical communication," Bourdieu, in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, delineates these relations of authority and consensus in terms of the expertise of professors and their "confident use . . . of the university idiom" (180). According to Bourdieu, this idiom has been granted a special "status authority," an institutionally consecrated authority that in turn authorizes (both in terms of conferring a status and in terms of 'writing') the social relations found within the university. Bourdieu suggests that contexts of utterance will produce certain kinds of utterances, socially agreed upon codes that are received and accepted within a context that legitimates them, makes them meaningful or intelligible. Therefore, "a relation of pedagogical communication" (109) presupposes the institutional authority of both code and message. According to Bourdieu, social perceptions of authority and expertise rely on the institutional language

or idiom an addressor uses to symbolize his or her authority, an idiom that allows him or her to occupy the office of expert: "Magisterial language, a status attribute which owes most of its effects to the institution, since it can never be dissociated from the relation of academic authority in which it is manifested, is able to appear as an intrinsic quality of the person when it merely diverts an advantage of office onto the office-holder" (110).

Here, Bourdieu raises a number of issues significant to the present study. In Chapter One, I indicated that the repetition and recognition of official discourses on language might ensure a position of expertise for those who utter statements about language. That is, the official discourse has a kind of "status authority" which confers authority on those who participate in it. As Bourdieu suggests, official discourses can grant official status to those who speak them. But I also noted that statements about language had to 'speak to' language users, had to elaborate a commonsense practicality that encouraged shared interests and identifications. The authority garnered from one's participation in official discourses on language is not a matter of bald imposition and obligation, on the ready acceptance of institutional authority as straight authority. As Sandra Harris suggests, in "Politeness and Power: Making and Responding to 'Requests' in Institutional Settings," the relation between discourse, power and authority is more complex. According to Harris, in "power-laden" or asymmetrical institutional contexts, authority is often 'politely' negotiated by more powerful institutional members. An analysis of the politeness strategies employed by members of, for example, a magistrate's court indicates that although their authority derives from their institutional role, "relatively powerful people are often also 'polite' when faced with less powerful hearers" (37). Harris's work suggests that more attention to the ways in which official discourses grammaticalize 'polite' socio-institutional relations might lead to insights into the ways linguistic authority itself relies on a kind of civil or civic negotiation.

To provide a sense of the ways systems of speaking might enact 'polite' social orders and associations and inform authoritative statements about language, the study described in this chapter gathers data from four editions of a meta-genre, *The Globe and Mail Style Book*: 1963, 1969, 1981, and 1998. For Giltrow, meta-genres refer to those "atmospheres of wordings and activities" (190) that surround genres and that regulate their production (190-95). In short, meta-genres are prescriptions and proscriptions

motivated by their contexts of use. These materials often organize, generalize and sometimes naturalize the ways in which people typify their writing tasks, offer writing advice, explain writing practices, or rationalize writing conventions. In other words, meta-genres refer to those forms of discourse (e.g. handbooks, style guides, marking commentary) that, arising out of particular contexts that warrant them, negotiate activity or movement in and across discourse contexts. According to Giltrow, analyzing meta-genres can lead to insights into the socio-political contexts of writing or language, into the ways in which talk about writing or language often negotiates a consensual solidarity – negotiates, perhaps even consolidates, commonsense and community-forming assumptions about these matters. And, because meta-genres frequently operate at "the thresholds of communities of discourse, patrolling and controlling individuals' participation in the collective" (203), an investigation of style guides allows for an analysis of the ways in which meta-generic practices, exemplified in *The Globe and Mail Style Book* by a kind of genteel-scientific talk, may ratify the language expert.

In order to tease out the implications of this patrolling activity and the social relations it represents and to explain the genteel-scientific talk I found in *The Globe and Mail Style Book*, I draw on Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's work on politeness. As meta-generic materials that offer advice, prohibit some uses and sanction others, style guides are a particularly rich site for the investigation of politeness phenomena, for the ways in which such things as advice, criticism, directives, commands and offers can be structured to maintain or create polite social relations in the context of possible face-threatening or impolite acts. Brown and Levinson's account of politeness phenomena, in fact, allows for an investigation of addressivity in terms of the linguistic strategies one uses to construct a socio-cultural context intended to match the discourse expectations that surround certain kinds of utterances. According to Brown and Levinson, assessments of this context will involve assessments of the social distance between addressor and addressee, the relative power of these discourse participants and the level of imposition an utterance might evoke in a specific socio-cultural context (74). While one might view the proscriptive and prescriptive expressions in style guides as a sort of acceptable imposition, one that indexes perceptions about an addressor's straight authority or power to make expert claims about language (to offer advice or to sanction

and prohibit usage), an analysis of *The Globe and Mail Style Book*'s use of politeness expressions indicates that imposition, distance and authority must still be negotiated in terms of a "consensual solidarity" rather than simply assumed or asserted. So, this examination of the grammar of talk about language – a shared way of speaking measurable in its characteristic syntactic and pragmatic features – allows for an analysis of authoritative assumptions and attitudes about language at their very foundation: at the linguistic materials that construct, substantiate and perhaps naturalize them. Contrasting these editions, I examine imperative structures (e.g. Use *x*. Avoid *y*.), noting when imperatives are presented with explanations and when they politely presume background knowledge. I also analyze modal expressions (e.g. must, may, might), noting their type (deontic, epistemic, dynamic) and their rate of occurrence in these editions of *The Style Book*. And, observing a trend in modalized estimates of others' ideas about language, I look at agentless passive constructions (e.g. It seems that *x* has not been accepted).

Authority in Canadian Usage: An Ennobling Position

As a style guide that defines itself in terms of its national character, in terms of its role as an expert on language matters in Canada, *The Globe and Mail Style Book* offers a valuable opportunity to examine authoritative statements about language uttered in and for a Canadian context. In fact, in the 1998 edition of *The Globe and Mail Style Book*, Editor-in-Chief William Thorsell comments on *The Globe*'s long-standing role as the arbitrator and guardian of Canadian English. The newspaper's "fervent commitment" ("Preface") to 'good' Canadian usage is touted as an ennobling particularity, distinguishing *The Globe* since its foundation in 1844.[30] For Thorsell, *The Style Book* reflects this commitment, this "noble cause" ("Preface"). That is, as the style guide of a "newspaper with serious pretensions" ("Preface"), it symbolizes a certain nobility of purpose, a dignity or respectability where matters of language are concerned. The newspaper's claims of national and historical pre-eminence regarding language matters are perhaps a reflection of its alleged place in the national-historical consciousness. According to David Hayes, in *Power and Influence*, most Canadians assign some

[30] This date represents the year that George Brown founded *The Globe*, not the year (1936) that *The Globe* merged with *The Mail and Empire* to form *The Globe and Mail*.

authority and prestige to *The Globe* in spite of the fact that circulation rates (at the time of writing, 518,000) indicate that relatively few Canadians actually read the paper (perhaps 1,000,000 Canadians if we account for shared subscriptions). This consciousness of the paper is also reflected in comments about *The Globe*'s role in social and political affairs. The paper, according to a 1981 Royal Commission on Newspapers, is an agenda setter, "a uniquely powerful agent of information and opinion" (qtd. in Hayes 5). It is, another commentator insists, "a 'shared value' of the ruling elite" (qtd. in Hayes 5), of those who, apparently, characterize or typify *The Globe*'s readership. And, presumably, it is a shared value of those who may wish to identify with these elite. As the 1963 edition of *The Globe and Mail Style Book* points out, "Judges, lawyers, doctors, statesmen, clergymen, bankers, teachers, professors all prefer The Globe and Mail. . . . The judgement of such professional men and leaders of opinion is reflected in the wide acceptance of The Globe and Mail by readers in all walks of life."

It appears, therefore, that *The Globe*'s authority to make pronouncements on language comes, not from specialized knowledge about the workings of language, but from its rumoured role in Canadian public life. Its rumoured place in the Canadian consciousness, coupled with its long-standing commitment to the cause of good usage, are invoked as *the* rationales for its authority to intervene in a national-historical consciousness. In fact, authority seems to rely on the construction of a shared national-historical consciousness, on an identification of interests and values as well as a deliberate configuration of history, one which would transcend, in this instance, the particularities of class, region and institution. The paper represents all "walks of life," all regions and is itself a cherished national institution that "like a monarchy, draws on its own historical perspectives and traditions" (Hayes 5). This construction of a globalizing authority that can transcend the particularities of the local is echoed in the ways *The Style Book* constructs its purpose. While *The Style Book* constructs itself as national arbitrator and guardian of Canadian English, it does so by invoking 'global' precepts about language, commonplace principles to talk about its purpose that in turn make claims about *The Globe*'s role – its authority to intervene in local matters of language – recognizable and so intelligible.

Unlike the 1998 edition's dictionary-like layout, which covers usage issues from A to Z across 424 pages, the 1963 edition of *The Globe and Mail Style Book* is divided into sections that focus on capitalization (of such things as government bodies, educational degrees, and religious titles), forms of address, punctuation, abbreviations and figures, spelling, and contempt and libel. Its section on usage, although arranged alphabetically, only spans 9 pages.[31] The purpose of *The Style Book* is outlined in a short forward: "The expansion of the newspaper in recent years has tended to set up variations in style among departments. It is the hope of the editors that this book will stem the diversification" ("Forward"). Here, the book's purpose is conceived of in terms of in-house concerns about linguistic variation or, more precisely, in terms of a growing diversification. In his rationale for the prescriptions and proscriptions that follow this foreward, editor E.C. Phelan appeals to the commonplace touchstone of standardization: consistency and uniformity for the purposes of communicative efficiency.

Like the 1963 edition, the 1969 edition includes sections on such things as capitalization, spelling, punctuation and forms of address. However, in the 1969 edition, the number of pages on usage has increased from 9, in the previous edition, to 26. And added to this edition are a number of shadow boxes highlighting particular usage problems (e.g. "Weather Words" and "Vogue Words"). The 1969 edition underscores the touchstone of standardization, but denies that attempts to standardize the use of certain linguistic forms are attempts at uniformity: "The purpose of this book is to provide a climate of consistency, but not of uniformity, in which the writers and editors of The Globe and Mail can work to maintain the standards and improve the quality of the paper" (Phelan, "Foreward"). Given the semantic similarities between consistency and uniformity, one can only speculate that Phelan means that the suggested forms in the book are consistent, a good thing, but not necessarily uniform, a bad thing given contemporary perspectives on linguistic variation. Here, Phelan seems to be making an implicit distinction between the eulogistic "consistency" and the dyslogistic "uniformity." But this distinction is abruptly checked by a dictate about arbitrary forms, that they should be "accepted" because they are consistent with the unifying principles that will

[31] The 1963, 1969 and 1981 editions of *The Globe and Mail Style Book* were written by E.C. Phelan, news editor. The 1998 edition was written by J.A. (Sandy) McFarlene, a senior editor at *The Globe* and Warren Clements, editor of its commentary page and writer of "Word Play," a popular column.

ensure the quality of the newspaper: "Where arbitrary choices are identified . . . , these are to be the accepted forms in all departments in the paper" ("Foreward").

In the 1981 edition, a revised and expanded version of the 1976 edition, sections on such things as forms of address, punctuation and spelling remain (with some alterations). The section on usage is again expanded (to 34 pages), and included in this edition are sections titled "Guidelines" and "Sub-Standard Usage," which provide explanations about 'problematic' grammatical constructions and "a collection of non-felicitous usage and phrasing culled from The Globe and Mail with more suitable or correct use in parentheses" (23). The shadow boxes which highlight specific usage problems remain, but more are included. These new inclusions provide brief commentary on "The Watergate Legacy" (here, an example of "the appalling depths to which English as fallen") and "Language and Jargon." While the preface remains as it was in the 1969 edition, there is a new section called "A Word to the Wise" that extends Phelan's explanation of the book's purpose:

> The purpose of language is to transmit information, speaker to listener, writer to reader. A newspaper's function is to provide information quickly from many informants to many readers.
>
> Simplicity and consistency are the over-riding elements in communication. Simplicity requires the choice of direct, unambiguous language, building on a base of short, familiar Anglo-Saxon words. Consistency demands that syntax and idioms convey the same meaning in all contexts.
>
> English is a complex language. It contains words which have more than one meaning and words that sound the same but are spelled differently. It uses idioms which violate the acceptable rules of grammar; and connectors which have no apparent consistency.
>
> To work in such a language intelligently, as the writers and editors of a newspaper must do, the newspaper must have standards, and that is what this little book is about. Good English usage is our goal. . . .
>
> In spelling choices, some of which must be arbitrary, we tend to follow a middle line between British and American, slavishly following neither. We retain as much Canadian idiom and flavour as possible in our choice of language. (1)

In this explanation, Phelan explicitly extends the commonplace value of consistency to apply to language itself. By doing so, he conflates the purpose of the newspaper (and *The Style Book*) with the purpose of language. In spite of the supposed complexity, inconsistency and unruliness of English, the purpose of language (and the paper) is

transparent communication, the direct transmission of information from speaker/writer to listener/reader. Thus, good English usage – here, the use of direct Anglo-Saxon words and consistent meanings – can only be realized in the standards that tame or order language. Both language and the newspaper are configured as transparent communication, where good English usage (the standard that produces transparent communication) is needed to facilitate this communication. Hence the rationale for *The Style Book*: "the newspaper must have standards and this is what this little book is about." Here, Phelan is talking about an ideal, a notion of language that presumes its ability to provide unmediated access to the world, but only if the right conventions are used. Cameron refers to this preoccupation as a "fetish of communication" (25). As she points out, journalism, in particular, has a great deal invested in this ideal, as it is "uniquely suited to the prevailing ideology of news reporting" (75). Simplicity, clarity, precision and impartiality represent an apparent disinterestedness, but are themselves transparencies that attempt to order language, to make it "'do as it is told', to prevent it from drawing attention to itself and to the values it embodies" (76).

But what are the values that underwrite Phelan's characterization of language and his account of the purpose of *The Style Book*? Hints of these values are evident in his mention of "short, familiar Anglo-Saxon words" coupled with his mention of "Canadian idiom and flavour." In these mentions, we see configurations of language, history and identity, hints of language's commonplace entanglement with historical and national formations – but only hints. Left unsaid, but assumed, is the supposed mutual recognition of or familiarity with the value of a long history of usage (not English generally, but Anglo-Saxon), which authenticates one vernacular as most appropriate for the ideals of transparent communication (directness, shortness). In fact, this mutually recognized value is fortified in a subsequent passage: "We resist the more objectionable foreign intrusions and other aberrations . . ." (2). However, as James Milroy notes, in "The Legitimate Language: Giving a History to English," such appeals to the pedigree of Anglo-Saxon have often been used to establish a 'pure' Germanic (as opposed to French) national-linguistic ancestry (14-15). Indeed, also left unsaid, but implied, are contemporary concerns about distinguishing Canadian national-linguistic identity from others'. In his assurance that *The Globe* does not "slavishly" follow either American or

British spellings, Phelan configures language as a barrier that both protects Canadian national identity (against excessive foreign influence) and preserves it, or retains its "flavour." While Phelan attempts here to distinguish contemporary Canadian spellings from American and British spellings, his appeal to the value of Anglo-Saxon words underscores the value of a long-established and 'pure' pedigree for the language and the nation.

It appears, then, that the principles of simplicity, consistency and clarity have other uses, are linked to other issues. Socio-linguistic change (hinted at in the earlier mention of arbitrary spelling choices) can simply (or not so simply) be re-worked in terms of the paper's need for greater consistency and efficiency, values which act as bearers of higher ideals, of valued histories, traditions and identities. Moreover, in a stunning rhetorical move, language as protector/preserver is conflated with the paper's role as the guardian and arbitrator of such a language. Language, thus configured, must rely on the authority of *The Globe* for its maintenance and promotion. *The Globe*'s authority, in turn, relies on the presence of a standard, or more precisely, the idea of a standard, an imagined unity that develops, to borrow Bakhtin's words, "in vital connection with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization" (*Discourse* 271). By extension, nation, as configured through this unity, must also rely on *The Globe*. Through a confluence of purpose and role, *The Globe* becomes the authoritative repository and protector of national history, culture and interest, and it gets this assignment, in this instance, by means of its commonsense attention to language.

As Bakhtin suggests, unitary language and the authority it yields must be continuously reinforced:

> A unitary language is not something given [dan] but is always in essence posited [zedan] – and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. But at the same time it makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystallizing into a real, although still relative unity – the unity of the reigning conversational (everyday) and literary language, "correct language." (*Discourse* 270)

In other words, *The Globe*'s authority to make pronouncements on language, to define language in terms of a "maximum of mutual understanding" and to promote an ideology

of the standard relies on the persistent articulation of imagined unities. At the same time as unitary language and the authority it yields are expressions of centralizing forces, it seems that they themselves must be continuously posited or expressed in terms of socio-political and cultural centralization to be intelligible and recognizable, and thus authoritative. That is, authority in language relies on typified ways of talking, on those practices and routines that confirm mutual understanding and solidarity. While the vocabulary of centralization (explicit references to, for example, identity and nationalism) contributes to the maintenance of authority, the linguistic materials that make up these statements about language must also be constructed in ways that enact and encode the presence of a centralizing, or normative, authority.

The Normative Authority of Imperatives

Drawing on Goffman's understanding of *face* as "public self-image," Brown and Levinson argue, in *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, that socio-linguistic interaction is often conditioned by one's need to maintain face and one's recognition of others' needs to maintain face (61). According to Brown and Levinson, there are two kinds of face: *positive face*, or a person's need to be well thought of, and *negative face*, a person's wish not to be imposed upon. Because politeness theory is really an account of how people account for or negotiate social distance, power differentials and degrees of imposition, Brown and Levinson are primarily concerned with how a notion of 'public' face in social interaction informs the linguistic strategies we use to mitigate or re-dress face-threatening behaviour. These strategies include positive politeness redress and negative politeness redress. According to Brown and Levinson, positive politeness strategies include the use of names, jokes, compliments, jargon and presupposing expressions. These strategies are used to establish common ground and agreement, to redress possible discord and disagreement. Negative politeness strategies include questions, hedges, apologies and the use of passive constructions and nominalizations. These strategies are often used to account for or redress power differentials and degrees of imposition.

However, "bald on-record" utterances, acts "done in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible" (69) are not considered redressive. According

to Brown and Levinson, bald-on-record utterances, such as imperatives, register the degree to which speakers conform to Grice's maxims of communication in contexts that warrant communicative efficiency over concerns about face. These contexts include situations of urgency (e.g. *Put out the fire*!) and situations in which tasks need doing. According to Brown and Levinson, many imperatives are task oriented. Like the imperatives used in recipes (e.g. *Slice 4 carrots*), they presume a reader's desire for directives that will help him complete a task (97). In other cases, bald-on-record strategies can be viewed as registers of straight authority in social contexts that make expressions of this authority acceptable (e.g. in a hospital where doctors provide medical instructions). Drawing on Brown and Levinson's point about task-oriented imperatives, I have examined imperative structures for what they might suggest about the ratification of linguistic authority and desire. As materials for giving advice, permission, and orders and for requesting and commanding, imperatives are, not surprisingly, commonly found in task-oriented style books that direct or guide a reader's use of 'proper' or 'correct' language. In fact, I have chosen to examine imperative structures, in part, because of their ubiquitous presence in meta-generic texts that direct usage and do so in ways that appear to assume an easy authority and an easy compliance.

As I indicate above, because imperative statements encode social and institutional relations, they also encode positions of presumed authority, bolstered by the social and institutional contexts that license them. In *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, Habermas indicates that the intelligibility and/or validity of imperative statements – their acceptability and their illocutionary force – are "'embedded' in normative contexts and are 'authorized' by a normative background" (324). In other words, speakers and addressees consult contexts and shared background knowledge in order to assess the validity and intelligibility of imperatives. As normatively justified, imperatives meet certain "acceptability conditions" (200): participants understand and accept the conditions under which a speaker can issue an imperative and the conditions under which an addressee can be expected to carry out the requested action (264). To borrow Habermas' example, the illocutionary force of a demand or request for money (Beggar: "Give me some money") cannot be understood unless some kind of normative

background or authorizing norm, however weak, is consulted (people *should* help others in need) (200).

But, as Sperber and Wilson suggest, in "Mood and the Analysis of Non-Declarative Sentences," the presumed authority to command or grant permission is made more complex by other considerations. They look at the semantic aspects of imperatives, arguing that an account of imperatives should be broadened to include notions of achievability and desirability. Sperber and Wilson claim that "imperative sentences are specialised for describing states of affairs in worlds regarded as both potential and desirable" (269). To this end, they maintain that requests, commands and orders can be understood as desirable from the speaker's point of view. The speaker also assumes that the hearer is in a position to bring about the state of affairs being described in the command, request or order. Advice and permission can be interpreted as desirable from the hearer's point of view. The speaker assesses the hearer's desire for advice or permission and, in the case of permission, the speaker guarantees its potentiality. In other words, by granting permission, the speaker removes a potential obstacle preventing the hearer from completing the task.

What makes the use of imperatives interesting in style books and handbooks of usage is that these expressions of desirability and potentiality are made ambiguous by the very nature of these texts. As a meta-genre that purports to offer advice, the existence of the style book or handbook of usage presumes that this advice is desirable from the reader's point of view: its production fulfills a reader's imagined desire for advice. If we apply Habermas' acceptability conditions to Sperber and Wilson's conditions of desirability, we could say that this meta-genre consults normative contexts (justifications) for understanding and interpreting desire: "People should want to improve their usage, want to know how to use language correctly and consistently." Yet, within these texts, many imperative structures can be read as commands or orders (*use, don't use, never use*), which can be interpreted as desirable from the writer's point of view: "I desire that people should or should want to use language correctly and consistently." Traces of this point of view are evident in the introductory remarks of the 1963 and 1969 editions of *The Style Book*: "It is the hope of the editors that this book will stem the diversification" (1963); "Good English usage is our goal" (1969: 1).

Moreover, both points of view (estimates of desirability) seem to encode a higher authorizing norm for their efficacy: the commonplace assumption that there is a correct, consistent and good English, an existing ideal which one can invoke or embrace as a desirable goal or outcome. Yet, as Cameron notes, "English speakers' belief in uniformity (both in its existence and desirability) far exceeds their ability to produce it in their actual speech and writing" (*Verbal Hygiene* 39). Standard language, according to Milroy and Milroy, is "an idea in the mind rather than a reality – a set of abstract norms to which actual usage may conform to a greater or lesser extent" (*Authority in Language* 23). While imperative sentences might generally describe "states of affairs in worlds regarded as both potential and desirable," imperatives that direct, advise, command and permit language users may actually, to borrow Cameron's words, "betray a deep desire to believe in the perfectibility of communication" (75), an ideal of language rather than an actual existing potential. That is, because the recycling of handbooks and style guides presupposes an ideal *and* a general failure to attain this ideal (their *raison d'être*), these texts endlessly reproduce this promise of perfectibility. Although an ideal of correct English is never really achievable, it is nonetheless desirable, hence the continued or persistent need for such texts and the imperatives that make up these texts. The desire for this perfectibility and the myth of its potential, then, may provide the normative contexts for these imperatives. The presumed authority to make linguistic demands or provide advice about matters of language may, in fact, come not so much from one's position as expert, an institutionalized authoritative self, but from the normative authority of commonsense ideas about language.

An analysis of imperatives in *The Style Book* suggests this possibility. Typically, the recognition of expertise tends to be socio-institutionally dependent; the expertise of judges, for example, is apprehended as an institutional authority. However, the fact that those who advise on matters of language often flout linguistics and its expert findings suggests that linguistic authority or expertise is not domain dependent. It seems that the rehearsal of certain ideas about language, rather than their staging in specific socio-institutional domains, dress speakers of such statements in the costume of expert. Indeed, my findings indicate that the normative justifications for the use of imperatives in *The Style Book* fall into a least three categories that challenge the idea that imperatives merely

index socio-institutional positions of straight power and authority: (1) imperatives that rely on unexpressed contextual implications for their relevance; (2) imperatives that rely on routine mentions of grammar or meaning for their authority; and (3) imperatives that rely on commonplace judgements about language for their authority.

Unexpressed Contextual Implications

Although the simple imperative statements below may be read as an index of the editors' socio-institutional authority to make commands or to provide advice, the normative justifications for these statements rely on other considerations.

From the 1963 Edition:

> Negress – use Negro woman or girl.
>
> Owing to the fact that – use because.
>
> Squaw – use Indian or Eskimo woman.
>
> Subsequently – use afterward.

From the 1998 Edition:

> Paddy Wagon – Use police van or patrol van.
>
> Xmas – Avoid in both copy and headlines.

These bald imperatives do not, of course, explain why readers are directed to use Indian or Eskimo woman instead of Squaw or to avoid Xmas in copy and headlines. This lack of explanation may lead some to conclude that readers, indulging an editor's expertise, simply accept these prescriptions and proscriptions at face value. However, the very nature of this unexpressed information will direct readers to consult other contexts to substantiate and corroborate the authority of these imperatives. Here, we enter the world of relevance, where readers consult background knowledge – unstated, but mutually known or manifestly mutually known information – to interpret the efficacy of these statements. Relevance, according to Sperber and Wilson, in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, refers to the unexpressed contextual implications of an utterance and the processing effort it takes for readers to identify a context (a set of assumptions, beliefs,

schemata) for understanding. For example, readers, coming to style guides, already bring with them a context for understanding the imperative statements in them; likely, this context will include a general schema about correct English (e.g. about its desirability). In their efforts to understand, readers will also consult particular assumptions about language to make imperative statements meaningful and, in this case, authoritative. And, writers choose or are likely to choose easily accessible background knowledge to facilitate this understanding and hence assure the authority of their statements. So, the authority of the simple imperatives above may have more to do with their unexpressed content, with the construction and recognition of mutually shared background knowledge.

Aside from the obvious (the presumption of a history of 'misuse' regarding these terms), readers, in the imperatives above, are constructed as sharing certain assumptions located in the social worlds of 1963 and 1998, or more precisely in communities where the use of terms such as *Negress, Squaw, Paddy Wagon* and *Xmas* are seen as inappropriate or insulting. While some imperatives construct readers as having access to background knowledge which explains why social groupings or religious holidays should or should not be identified in certain ways, other imperatives construct readers as sharing commonsense assumptions about 'good' writing. For example, the imperatives directing the use of *subsequently* and *owing to the fact that* appeal to background knowledge related to the commonplaces of precision and conciseness. In these instances, readers are constructed as knowing that *subsequently* has a precise meaning and so should be used appropriately and *owing to the fact that* lacks the conciseness of *because*. We see, then, two orders of prescriptive assumptions, those which are socially predictable and therefore less arbitrary and those which are less predictable, more arbitrary, but which excite consciousness of grammatical authority (indeed, the editor's pen could land on anything if the ideals of precision and conciseness are at stake).

If we compare similar entries from other editions, we see that these assumptions are not always constructed as shared and so need more explicit explanation:

> Paddy Wagon, Black Maria – Do not use paddy wagon (or black maria) for a police van or patrol wagon. The terms are pejorative of the Irish in one case and of the blacks in another. Rate them archaic. (1981)
>
> **Owing to the fact that** is grammatically correct but wordy; simply say **because**. (1998; emphasis in original)

Therefore, in some instances, we see information left unsaid; in other instances, in other editions, this information pops up as an explicitly expressed rationale for a given imperative. What is interesting about these shifts in the construction of knowledge and those in the know is that while the imperatives advising readers about such things as identity terms require explicit information in earlier editions, those advising readers about precise or concise usage often require explicit information in later editions. That is, these few examples suggest that over time the need for explicit information regarding some identity terms lessens, but the need for explicit rationales that draw on commonplace ideals of language becomes greater. These shifts probably have something to do with changes in usage; as the use of terms such as *Negress* and *Squaw* become infrequent, become socially unacceptable, the need to explain away these terms becomes less. However, the need to explain away the use of other words becomes greater because of their persistent use. Explicitly appealing to and thus reinforcing commonplace ideals, these editors may be shoring up 'correct' usage in the face of linguistic diversity or change.

In yet other instances, background information appears to adjust to socio-political shifts. In fact, a possible fourth category, or normative justification, for the imperatives in these books might be those imperatives that consult changing socio-political norms for their authority. This type of normative justification and the rationales that support it are most commonly found in the 1998 edition with respect to the use of terms having to do with culture or identity. For example, the 1998 edition's proscriptions against the use of *half-breed* and *English Canada* presuppose shared, but shifting historical and socio-political realities to rationalize content in the imperative.

> Half-breed – . . . Avoid such expressions as "part Indian" and "part black" if the reader might interpret an implication that white is the normal or the ideal.
>
> English Canada – . . . Its implication is that everyone in Quebec speaks French, and everyone outside speaks English. Prefer such terms as the rest of Canada.

Within this category are imperatives that summon the unexpressed authority of socio-political identifications and divisions, or more precisely, that rely on the commonplace conflation of nation, identity and language:

> Armories – is a singularly Canadian word and is worth preserving even though the Department of National Defence seems to have switched to armory, which is the common American usage. Use armories for singular and plural. (1981)
>
> Pop -- . . . For soft drinks, avoid the regional U.S. term "soda," which in Canada is used almost exclusively for club soda or a drink made with ice cream. (1998)

These examples suggest that underwriting an editor's socio-institutional authority is a more important norm authority, one dependent on shared understandings, histories and affinities. As Giltrow points out in her study of relevance and reports of sentencing, information retracted as background knowledge marks "a site of crucial affinity among users" (156) of a genre, a site of consensus "so assured as not to permit expression" (174). But, unlike the background information particular to reports of sentencing (specific assumptions about, for example, family life and violent behaviour), the background information left unsaid in the imperatives above is not particular to style guides, which may point to an important distinction between genre (reports of sentencing in a newspaper) and meta-genre (how to write in and for a newspaper). Perhaps because style guides (and other meta-genres of this type) rarely provide 'how-to' information that addresses specific genres (e.g. reports of sentencing), their unexpressed propositions must summon generalized principles and values that exceed the specificity or contexts of genre. In other words, they must appeal to more widely dispersed, commonsense assumptions about language and usage to make information relevant and commanding.

Rules of Grammar

Although a number of imperatives in *The Style Book* rely on shared, but unexpressed assumptions for their authority, many more rely on routine mentions of grammar and rules.

> Type – a noun or verb. Never use as an adjective as [in] a new type machine. (1963)

> Graduate – as a verb can be either transitive or intransitive, and so avoid its use in the passive: he was graduated. (1981)

> Orient, the verb – The noun created from this is orientation. Resist the temptation to transform the noun, in turn, into the verb orientate, and to transform this in turn in the adjective orientated. (1998)

In these examples, descriptions of grammatical components (nouns, verbs and adjectives) and properties (transitive, intransitive and passive) provide the rationales for injunctions against certain uses and structures: some nouns and/or verbs should not be converted into adjectives and some forms should not be made passive. According to Milroy and Milroy, such routine justifications constitute "legalistic" arguments, based on specific points of usage. The assumption or principle at work in these sorts of arguments is that "there must be one, and only one, correct way of using a linguistic item (at the level of pronunciation, spelling, grammar and, to a great extent, meaning)" (52). However, in spite of explicit mentions of grammar, the linguistic principles that motivate these particular imperatives are not fully expressed. Because many nouns and/or verbs are used as adjectives, the principles in these examples may be located elsewhere. If we leave aside arbitrary, legalistic arguments against particular wordings, what survives is an imagined ideal, a higher ruling – one should resist inelegant or "loathsome" wordings:

> Contact – As a verb it is recognized in both the Oxford Dictionary and Funk and Wagnalls. But A.P. Herbert calls it a "loathsome word." Ivor Brown, nevertheless, says: ". . . Contact is self-explanatory and concise." But that doesn't make it good English. Use with exquisite care. (1981)

It seems that the imperatives directing the use of type, graduate, orientate and contact rely less on a notion of the workings or rules of 'correct' grammar than with an ideal of grammar located in some aesthetic realm of "good English."

In fact, when *the idea* of rules is explicitly summoned in these imperatives, contradictory ideals that pit uniformity and correctness against aesthetics are sometimes resolved in favour of aesthetics.

> Farther and Further – further cannot be entirely barred in the sense of distance but for lack of a better rule let's use further when the idea of distance is not implied. (1963)

> Try to keep the time angle in the proper place – usually directly after the verb. A sentence becomes jerky and difficult to read when its elements are arbitrarily transposed. Try to find the most natural sequence and don't worry too much about the rules. (1969)
>
> If a sentence reads better with an initial conjunction, write it that way. (1969)

In spite of the recognition that *further* does not have a fixed, correct meaning, the invitation "let's use" implies the need for a uniform rule, some consensus about the use of *further*.[32] But while rules or notions of correctness are necessary, they may be flouted if they conflict with notions of "good English," or a "natural sequence," with some higher aesthetic norm: "If a sentence *reads better* with an initial conjunction, write it that way" (emphasis mine). It seems that the normative justification that guarantees the authority of these imperatives entails at least two commonplaces: (1) we need rules to ensure uniformity and (2) rules may be broken when aesthetic considerations are involved. These commonplaces are so prevalent in meta-generic materials of this type that, together, they represent a familiar and authoritative touchstone in talk about rules and usage: "It is an old observation . . . that the best writers sometimes disregard the rules of rhetoric. When they do so, however, the reader will usually find in the sentence some compensating merit, attained at the cost of the violation. Unless he is certain of doing so well, he will probably do best to follow the rules" (William Strunk qtd. in *The Elements of Style*, xvii-xviii). All of this suggests a capacity to respect an authority that can seem arbitrary, but which meta-genre users respect nevertheless – often by complying with rules and leaving higher level aesthetic decisions in the hands of those with the taste and judgement to risk playing with fire.

---

[32] The call for consensus, for a uniform rule in the face of diversity, is prevalent in imperatives that direct readers to use words according to fixed meanings:

> Olympiad – the four year period between Olympic Games, not, as most broadcasters and many writers seem to have assumed, the period of the Games themselves. Perhaps we are bound to lose this one, but let's continue to use it correctly. (1981)
>
> Decimate – means to eliminate one in ten – nothing else. Let no one persuade you otherwise. (1963)

In these examples, common usage gives way to commonplaces, to the ideals of language (accuracy and correctness) that trump actual use.

Judgements about Language

Indeed, as the quotation above suggests, good writers can violate the rules of 'good' grammar, but most of us should probably stick to the rules, tread lightly on this linguistic landscape, because, as the passages below indicate, moral imperatives have been mapped onto linguistic ones:

> Interesting – a feeble adjective. Consider its meaning before you use it. (1963)
>
> A Super-haute Culture – Avoid such Tower of Babel phrases; it's difficult enough to keep our English straight. (1969)
>
> Affect, Effect – Beware the inherent vagueness in the verb affect; we should often look for a more precise word. (1998)
>
> Ize – Be alert for easy ways to avoid the longer, inelegant –ize words in the dictionary, just as we seek to avoid all polysyllabic conglomerations. (1998)
>
> Nation – Shun the current careless use of the term nation-state to mean any sovereign country. (1998)
>
> It is occasionally apt to call someone a loose canon, a spent force or a battering ram . . . , but beware triteness. (1998)

While the imperatives in the previous section rely on legalistic arguments for their efficacy, these imperatives rely on what Milroy and Milroy call moralistic arguments, moralistic judgements about the use of standard language in public domains (41). The purpose of these arguments, according to Milroy and Milroy, is "to promote clarity of usage and careful thinking about choice of words" (52). These sorts of appeals are more concerned with linguistic abuses of the standard, with a use of language that distorts, confuses and lacks character. While the imperatives in the previous section acquire their authority via commonplace mentions of grammar and rules (i.e. specific points of usage), the imperatives in this section acquire their authority through the commonplace practice of describing usage in dyslogistic or moralistic terms: *a feeble adjective; Tower of Babel phrases; inherent vagueness; the longer, inelegant –ize words; the hackneyed expression; the current careless use; beware triteness.* Most of these descriptions, of course, are

recognizable, are readily intelligible; in fact, they make up what could be called a normative vocabulary and attitude that justifies the linguistic imperatives cited above.

Moreover, in these entries, advice about commonness (hackneyed and trite words and phrases) and unintelligibility (vague language) may be read as attempts to censure the self (a careless, inelegant, feeble, batty self). In other words, to conform to certain standards of usage is to conform to the standards of a moral, or ethical, self. This, of course, is a commonplace too. Connections between bad grammar and some deficiency of character are themselves touchstones in the discourse on language. In fact, linguistic imperatives that garner their authority through such extra-linguistic, moral imperatives can be read as attempts at socialization, both in terms of constructing consensus[33] and in terms of checking identity. That is, they operate, to borrow Burke's phrase, as a kind of "verbal coercion" (*Philosophy* 5) wherein a normative vocabulary alongside the use of imperative verbs such as *consider, avoid, be alert, beware* and *shun* mark sites of identification and division – of accord but also of caution, threat and denunciation.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted that the promotion of an ideology of the standard depends, in large part, on defining language and its use in terms of a "maximum of mutual understanding," on the persistent articulation of imagined unities. A look at the normative justifications for the use of imperatives in *The Style Book* indicates that the articulation of imagined unities is indeed an important factor in the diffusion and acceptance of certain ideas about language. Imperatives are intelligible and authoritative, not because editors of *The Style Book* are language experts but because they convene, in the very language they use to talk about language, mutual understandings, commonsense assumptions and social judgements that confirm particular unanimities. But the analysis of imperatives also indicates that these are complex identifications; just out of sight, on the periphery of these agreements and associations, lurks a functional distinction between "commonsense" and "commonness," one that repudiates common practice at the same time as it constructs a common practicality that encourages and ratifies shared interests. These imperatives appear to warn or advise against commonness (triteness, overuse, and

[33] The construction of consensus can also be seen in these writers' use of presupposing noun phrases, given information that constructs writers and readers as sharing mutual knowledge about *the batty expression; the inherent vagueness of the verb affect; the longer, inelegant –ize words; the current careless use of the term nation-state.*

common but misguided usage) at the same time as they summon commonplace ideals about language. Indeed, in some instances, these ideals, such as the commonplace of clarity, supersede 'common' preference or practice. In their discussion of native leaders' preference for the term "aboriginal" or "aboriginal person," McFarlene and Clements note that ". . . the terms 'native' and 'Indian' are still used by the vast majority of native people themselves, as well as by our readers . . . We should respect the wishes of the particular person being referred to *whenever this is consistent with clarity* . . ." (McFarlane and Clements 229; emphasis mine). In this modalized configuration, the authority of commonsense (an *idea* of language that manages socio-linguistic difference) trumps the actual linguistic practices of some Canadians: that is, "folk wisdom," or a commonsense consciousness about language, pre-empts the everyday experience of it.

Modality: The Deferment and Distribution of Authority

In the preceding section, I analyzed the ways in which commonplace imperatives travel along routes of identification and shared interest, picking up authority and power along the way. In this section, I continue my investigation of authoritative statements about language by looking at modal expressions, another set of linguistic features that can mark sites of social judgement and involvement. Modal expressions such as CAN, MAY, WOULD, COULD, MUST, WILL, OUGHT TO, HAVE TO and MIGHT are common resources for expressing attitude, belief or degrees of commitment. They can also encode social norms, conventions and shared background knowledge. That is, they express perspectives and interests; they are estimates that consult physical, mental and social worlds, estimates of capability/ability, possibility/probability and obligation/permission. As estimates, modal expressions operate between yes and no: *It is warm outside/It is not warm outside/It MAY be warm outside.* As indeterminate estimations, modals, according to many researchers, are indications of opinion or position, of subjectivity.[34]

Indeed, many of those working in the field of pragmatics read the positions encoded in these expressions as social subjectivities arising out of and responding to

[34] For a recent account of modality as index of position or marker of subjectivity, see Jan Nuyts, "Subjectivity as an Evidential Dimension in Epistemic Modal Expressions," *Journal of Pragmatics* 33 (2001): 383-400. Also see Minna Vihla, *Medical Writing: Modality in Focus* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).

social contexts. In a discussion of the use of modality in medical texts, Minna Vihla, in *Medical Writing: Modality in Focus*, draws attention to the social nature of epistemic positioning. She notes that writers of medical texts employ expressions of possibility as forms of politeness in institutional and disciplinary contexts where such strategies are necessary (e.g. to mitigate criticism of another source, to accommodate readers who may differ or to acknowledge multiple findings) (89-101). Tracing the social construction of knowledge and interest in her account of the expert subject, Giltrow, in "Modern Conscience: Modalities of Obligation in Research Genres," observes that the use of modality in the sciences has been interpreted as a strategy of acceptance and association, as having "*social* objectives" (172; emphasis in original). These social objectives are nearly always located in specific research contexts, as indications of scientific neutrality, authority, insider knowledge and tribal membership (173-74). Yet, as Giltrow argues, sociality and the authority it engenders may extend beyond a research context that supposedly shields knowledge-making from worldly concerns, values and influences. For example, in her discussion of the use of deontic modalizing expressions in Forestry articles, Giltrow interprets the statement "we SHOULD stop felling when the equilibrium condition is satisfied" as an attempt to obligate public actions, worldly actions based "on research-attested knowledge" (184). According to Giltrow, the authority of the expert may be based on its moral and social profile as much as its construction of neutral insider.

Earlier, we glimpsed such profiles figured in talk about language – the expert voice commanding and confirming shared values and interests in imperative structures that accumulate and manage the surplus value of commonsense ideas about language. The authority of the expert voice to command, accumulate and manage ideas about language seems to depend on its involvements, its identifications, on gestures of expertise signalled by a body of commonplace ideas. In fact, we saw bald on-record imperatives consulting normative justifications, reconciling the autonomy and detachment of expert and authoritative statements about language with social and moral imperatives. Configurations of authority show up in modalities of possibility/probability, capability/ability and obligation/permission as well, in epistemic expressions that index the status of knowledge and belief, in dynamic expressions that register the constraints or

resistances of the physical world or an agent's capabilities or disposition, and in deontic expressions, estimates that consult social domains of conduct, norm and regulation.

While deontic expressions permeate *The Style Book*,[35] of the 253 entries I recorded from its four editions, there were approximately 83 epistemic modals, a relatively large number given the meta-generic nature of these texts. Indeed, in such a heavily deontic atmosphere, where the sound of permission and obligation reverberates, the existence of epistemic modals is noteworthy. A large portion of these epistemic expressions fall into three categories: 1) modal adjuncts such as USUALLY, GENERALLY and PERFECTLY; 2) modalizing adjectives such as ACCEPTABLE and PREFERABLE, which can be read as dynamic-epistemic mergers; and 3) modal verbs such as APPEARS and SEEMS.

Issued from a position of limited knowledge, the modal adjuncts below make rough generalizations or estimates of understanding and acceptance:

> Maximum and minimum – can USUALLY be avoided by the use of the good Anglo-Saxon greatest and least. (1963)
>
> Previous to – . . . Before is USUALLY the best word. (1963)
>
> Granted, in modern usage like is PERFECTLY acceptable as a substitute for such as . . . (1981)
>
> The expression Negro spirituals is still MARGINALLY acceptable, but the word spirituals USUALLY suffices. (1998)
>
> The term anti-Semitic is GENERALLY taken to mean anti-Jewish . . . (1998)

In these examples, writers consult some general premise, general knowledge of language, to make broad inferences about customary or preferred practices (USUALLY the best word, can USUALLY be avoided, USUALLY suffices) or to express a high degree of commitment (though still limited) regarding shared meanings and knowledge of others'

---

[35] Examples of these deontic expressions include:

> Writers and editors MUST be alert to the dangers . . . . (1963; 8)
> . . . their imprecise use SHOULD be avoided . . . . (1963; 15)
> MAY be used as an adjective . . . .(1998; 226)
> It MUST be replaced . . . . (1998; 243)

abilities to understand or willingness to accept such meanings (PERFECTLY acceptable, MARGINALLY acceptable, GENERALLY taken to mean). These estimates of others' understandings and agreements, coupled as they are with modalizing adjectives (ACCEPTABLE) or with other markers of agentless (GENERALLY taken to mean), elide the agents of this understanding and agreement and, in doing so, distribute knowledge and acceptance into wider domains: it is not just the editor who accepts/does not accept *x*, many people accept/don't accept *x*. In such cases, "the commentary on the status of knowledge includes not so much an estimate of its probability (as possibly or may, for example, would provide) . . . , but a measure of the position from which x is known" (Giltrow, *Academic Writing* 294).

A clearer picture of this position emerges in dynamic modalizing adjectives, those agentless expressions that register capabilities or dispositions. Given the suffixes (*able*, *ible*) in the modalizing adjectives below, these expressions can be read as a kind of capability or disposition on the part of those who utter them (*I can/have the ability to permit you to use . . . ; I can/have the ability to accept this usage*). But their agentlessness suggests something else at work here:

> . . . PREFERABLE to preventative (1963; 13)
>
> The latter idiom is, alas, becoming ACCEPTABLE in better
>
> circles. (1963; 16)
>
> . . . is a DEPLORABLE example of the progress towards abstraction in our language. . . . (1981; 47)
>
> It carries two OBJECTIONABLE connotations (1998; 134)
>
> Slang is PERMISSIBLE in direct quotes. (1998; 339)

These mentions of preference, acceptance, objection and permission avoid, of course, direct reference to those who prefer, permit, accept or object. Brown and Levinson indicate that agentless expressions such as these can be a means of making impositions seem impersonal. As a form of negative politeness (a strategy to minimize imposition), they reduce the force of potential face threatening acts by deleting the one who imposes and the imposed upon from the surface of a sentence and so mitigate confrontation and

resistance. Consequently, agentless expressions can serve other objectives, act as polite commands, which disperse responsibility for the desired action into wider social domains (278-280). *I can/have the ability to permit you to use slang* becomes *slang is permissible*. Jan Nuyts, in *Epistemic Modality, Language and Conceptualization: A Cognitive-Pragmatic Perspective*, notes that these sorts of expressions can shelter a speaker's own capability, disposition or point of view: instead of indexing a single position, these expressions locate evaluations and actions in groups of people who hold similar opinions and practices and so share responsibilities for these opinions and practices (73). In other words, these intersubjective expressions locate estimates in agreement and solidarity, in a shared consciousness of language and its use.

Yet, these dynamic modalizing adjectives can also be read as dynamic-epistemic, as modal mergers of the sort Jennifer Coates details in *The Semantics of Modal Auxiliaries*. As others, including F. R. Palmer and Eve Sweetser, have noted, modal auxiliaries can have different functions depending on their contexts of use. For example, the modal auxiliary MUST can be read as either a deontic expression, registering the force of social obligation and order (This MUST be spelled correctly), or an epistemic expression, registering constraints or resistances to full knowledge (This MUST be spelled correctly). According to Coates, such ambiguity allows for an understanding of modals as modal mergers. In fact, she argues that there are cases where the use of a modal will produce two meanings at once (e.g. both deontic and epistemic), which results, not in an ambiguity that can be resolved when the context of use is understood, but in an indeterminacy "in the sense that the context fails to exclude one of the two possible meanings" (16). So, while the examples I cite above could be interpreted as estimates of capability and disposition in the natural world or as estimates of knowledge, the context of utterance does not preclude an indeterminate reading; indeed, these modals can be interpreted as both dynamic and epistemic, as estimates of capability/disposition and estimates of knowledge: *one can/has the ability to accept, deplore, object to x + one may accept, deplore, object to x = slang is acceptable, deplorable, objectionable*. These examples suggest that the meta-generic activities surrounding language and the attitudes toward language that inform these activities might have undergone some naturalization, where linguistic consciousness and the possibility/probability that register it merge with

ability/capability in the natural world, with linguistic authority configured as a naturalized agent who is able to accept, deplore, permit or object to x.

When agents are suppressed (as they are in the modalizing adjectives above) and desire is dispersed into a cooperative atmosphere, these expressions may serve to consolidate and so naturalize practices, positions and interests. As Giltrow notes in her analysis of the politeness strategies used in a romance novel, the tacitness of agentless expressions can shelter the circumstances surrounding judgement, acceptance and permission ("Ironies of Politeness" 221). With agency suppressed and action diffused, these modalizing adjectives mark practice, position and interest as far-reaching and consensual. As an unspoken imperative, the sentence below, for example, leaves the reader to draw on some tacit understanding of language or, to borrow Giltrow's words, "a shared understanding of [language and its use] politely assumed" (221).

> We resist the more objectionable foreign intrusions and other aberrations, but welcome fresh, colourful and useful words as they become acceptable. (1981; 2)

is more polite than

> Resist the use of words we (and others) object to, but feel free to use the ones we (and others) accept.

In this sentence, the attitudes and authorizations surrounding language and its use are configured within the coercive force of unity and polite accord. As Giltrow maintains,

> politeness has just this effect of withdrawing elements from areas of contest, leaving contradiction with no focus. And, as they appear to *distribute* force generally, as an atmospheric condition, agentless expressions diffuse or muffle the point of contact between the executors of the social order and the individual acted upon. But contact is made nevertheless and executed through elliptical sites of shared understanding . . . . (221-22; emphasis in original)

The modalizing adjectives above suggest that authority in language and the obligations surrounding usage are maintained through such sites of shared understanding; that is, the writer's authority to accept, deplore, permit or object to – to judge and order usage – is

deflected, distributed as an uncontroversial social force, a civic constraint that works in the service of linguistic civility.[36]

These polite authorizations and constraints are particularly evident in definite nominal phrases that solidify, at the same times as they suppress, the socio-historical circumstances surrounding attitudes toward language:

> The ACCEPTABLE rules of grammar (1981; 1)
>
> The more OBJECTIONABLE foreign intrusions and other aberrations (1981; 2)

By politely assuming rather than asserting, these entities presume common ground, consensual understandings of rules and deviations from rules. They construct the position from which ideas about language are known as shared, as common. Brown and Levinson interpret this strategy of presupposing as positive politeness, as an attempt to establish solidarity with an individual addressee or community of readers. Thus, the definite nominals above could be read as polite expressions of good intention that construct mutual understanding and association even though the referent may not be mutually known (Brown and Levinson 127-129). That is, to be polite, the editors of these style guides assume that users of this meta-genre are also familiar with the acceptable rules of grammar and foreign intrusions referred to here. But the construction of common ground can be a subtle form of domination, rather than polite deference. In talk about language, the possibility of intimidation and compliance arises, in part, from the construction of a wider solidarity – not simply the construction of common ground between editor and meta-genre users, but the coercive construction of a long-standing and wide-spread common ground. Lacking tense as well as agent, the modalized nominals above distribute processes and perspectives through time and across space, into remote

[36] Pragmatic cousins of modalizing adjectives, agentless passive constructions are also common in these texts:

> it will be accepted (1963; 10)
> should be considered (1963; 12)
> has not been accepted (1963; 13)
> more often than not associated with (1969; 30)
> these words are preferred (1998; 29)

These forms have the same effect of distributing the force of this talk about language into more authoritative social domains of common practice and perception.

spheres of activity and ideology. What are the rules, the foreign intrusions? When did these rules become acceptable, these words become objectionable? Who is able to or who may accept or object to them? In their combined nominal and modalized forms, they chronicle a history of acceptance and objection so longstanding as to seem transparent, or natural. As polite wordings that construct shared, but unidentifiable interests and activities, these nominals end up neutralizing, and naturalizing, the social positions, processes and incorporations involved in the maintenance of language ideologies.

Where modalizing adjectives can be read as polite attempts to influence ways of thinking and acting, of urging incorporation and compliance, epistemic modal verbs can be read as attempts to gain incorporation, or acceptance. Detailing the use of epistemic modals as hedging strategies in scientific writing, a number of researchers have observed that these markers of politeness can be a means of making scientific claims more acceptable to scientific communities.[37] In research contexts where consensus marks the site of authoritative knowledge, hedging, often realized in the form of epistemic modals, encodes possible resistance or objection to new knowledge; acknowledging this status and the scrutiny it entails can make claims more persuasive, more acceptable to readers. However, in his study of the status of knowledge in scientific textbooks, Greg Myers claims that scientific textbooks rarely hedge information; as introductory materials that present the current consensus regarding knowledge, they have a tendency to assert information as indisputable fact. In another study examining textbooks across three disciplines (physics, sociology, and economics), Tim Moore found that while physics textbooks were more likely to represent knowledge in the form of existing agreements, sociology textbooks represented knowledge as provisional, incorporating, in its hedges, disparate views and positions. By contrast, economics, like physics, was more apt to construct "a paradigmatic consensus," to represent knowledge as unattributed, unmitigated fact ("Knowledge and Agency" 359).

Given the meta-generic similarities between textbooks and style guides such as *The Globe and Mail Style Book*, the ways both share a propensity to advise, direct or

[37] See, for example, Vihla 99-107; Greg Myers, "The Pragmatics of Politeness in Scientific Articles," *Applied Linguistics* 10.1 (1989): 1-35; and Ken Hyland, "Writing without Conviction? Hedging in Science Research Articles," *Applied Linguistics* 17.4 (1996):433-454.

guide thought and practice, an investigation of the effects of hedging in *The Style Book* seems appropriate. Does the existence of hedging signal an acknowledgement of diverse opinion and perspective, inscribing, as it were, potential debates about language? Does the absence of more authoritative wordings (i.e. unattributed, unattentuated claims) mean that, unlike economics textbooks, *The Style Book* defers authoritative, scientific constructions of knowledge, paradigmatic agreements surrounding matters of language? Or, like scientific research articles, does the existence of hedging point to offers of claims, politely worded and attenuated for acceptance by the larger community? Does its use signal a recognition of the provisional nature of knowledge about language?

In the editions of *The Style Book* I examined, hedging in the form of epistemic modals clusters around the editors' estimations of current practice or credible explanation:

> There APPEARS to be no justification as yet to use this word [foofaraw] to describe a riotous argument or shouting and scuffling . . . (1963; 10)
>
> This SEEMS to be one of the major factors in the decline of language. (1981; 56)
>
> The controversy about hopefully has been going on for a dozen years and its use SEEMS to be still increasing. (1981; 51)
>
> Although such offensive connotations APPEAR to have dropped away from the adjective . . . (1998; 174)

Rather than more objective sources of data, these estimations seem based on 'universal' principles surrounding language and its use; that is, editors consult commonsense ideas about the nature of language (some uses increase, some connotations drop off, language is in decline, usage needs justification) to evaluate the probability of the state of affairs being described. In these instances, long-standing and wide-spread reasoning about language appears to substantiate and standardize claims or observations about language. In fact, in spite of the degree of uncertainty encoded in these observations and the particularities of the observations themselves, there is a sense of having heard these things before. Still, these observations are attenuated. While the use of modal verbs may signal a recognition of the limits of a knowledge rooted in commonsense assumptions, their use may also shelter this knowledge from scrutiny. Unlike the use of modal verbs in

research articles, which invite scrutiny, the use of modal verbs in these examples deflect attention away from the validity of their observations by withdrawing the evidence for them from dispute.

Epistemic modality also shows up in estimations of others' preferences, understandings, agreements and affronts – alongside projected items that are realized through passivized verbs of perception or nominalized constructions:

> . . . centennial SEEMS to be generally preferred over centenary. (1963; 7)
>
> Trodden SEEMS to be preferable to trod . . . (1981; 43)
>
> If the generic term is unavoidable, senior SEEMS to be the least offensive . . . (1998; 7)
>
> . . . the term mentally handicapped SEEMS to be clearer to readers . . . (1998; 94)

Here, editors mitigate their claims about others' perceptions of particular wordings. In doing so, they may be mitigating responsibility for their interpretations of how people experience language. But in the world of standardization, marked as it is by community preference and acceptance, by possible slights and probable transgressions, the use of projection alongside modality allows for the staging of social imperatives. By projecting and dispersing these propositions about language into more cooperative atmospheres, editors may be offering others' experience and perception as a more credible source of knowledge. That is, they may mitigate their own positions in order to invest themselves with the force of a more representative authority.

Like modality, projection (a form of citation) can help "writers to establish a persuasive epistemological and social framework for the acceptance of their agreements" (Hyland, "Academic Attribution" 344). Through the use of such things as direct quotations, indirect speech and footnotes, writers in the field of science, for example, situate their claims in existing knowledge, situate "the new work in the scaffolding of already accredited facts" (Hyland 354). But, according to Ken Hyland, there is a tendency in some scientific constructions of knowledge to suppress agency: "An important aspect of the positivist-empirical epistemology that characterizes a great deal of scientific endeavour is that the authority of the individual is subordinate to the

authority of scientific procedure" (355). The use of footnotes, typified groups (*researchers*) and agentless constructions (e.g. *It has been shown*) in scientific writing highlights the authority of shared procedures rather than individual contributions to knowledge. The use of projected, but agentless passive constructions (*to be generally preferred*), typified groups (*readers*) and nominalized projections (*the most acceptable description*) in *The Style Book* has a similar effect. Direct attributions are rare.[38] More often, beliefs about and attitudes toward language are assigned unidentifiable or typified points of view, constructions which, as I suggest above, contribute to the staging of ideas in consensual theatres. Thus, *The Style Book*'s tendency to use agentless projection, particularly alongside epistemic SEEM and APPEAR, may be linked to language's historical status as an object of knowledge, to early methodological practices that worked in the service of national and social unity. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, the modern study of language relied on an epistemological framework that privileged, where matters of language were concerned, the authority of allegiance and accord. What is highlighted in this modalized and projected talk is not the authority of editors, nor the authority of individuals who have something to say about language, but shared procedures for thinking about language. It seems that language as object of knowledge must reproduce itself with those methodological unities (configured as shared perceptions, preferences and wide-spread acceptance) that cultivate a common sense of language.

This politely constructed agreement and deference, or genial incorporation of common belief and attitude, seems consistent with a socio-cultural field of knowledge whose early formation can be seen in the "courtly-genteel language" of eighteenth-century English dictionaries. According to McIntosh, in *The Evolution of English Prose, 1700-1800: Style, Politeness, and Print Culture*, the eighteenth century witnessed a new cult of sensibility and so new attitudes toward writing and usage. McIntosh argues that the politely worded dictionary became, in effect, "an instrument of polite learning" itself, especially in circles where "using words according to their accepted meanings was a form of politeness" (215). McIntosh implies that the use of genteel language in dictionaries

[38] When ideas about language are attributed, assigned an explicit point of view, the positions from which ideas about language are offered are generally located in recognizable authorities: "It is a mistake, says Fowler, to suppose that the pronoun is singular only and must at all costs be followed by a singular verbs" (1963; 12).

and these dictionaries' calls for the widespread use of 'polite' speech and writing originated in the formality of the court, where the language of status and deference signalled appropriate social distances and relations of dependency. He suggests that even "after the British court had ceased to be a direct model of politeness" (219), its social norms and practices played "a role in language standardization, and language standardization is one of the things that was happening during the decades when English was becoming more polite" (220). As Richard Watts notes, in "From Polite Language to Educated Language," there is an important link between the eighteenth-century ideology of politeness and the emergence of an ideology of the Standard: ". . . the acquisition and use of Standard English appeared to guarantee social climbers in the eighteenth century access to the world of politeness, the result being that 'polite language' came to mean 'standard language' (155). But, of course, formal scientific modes of talking also gained ascendancy during this period. Perhaps, then, the language used to advise and manage could be characterized as a genteel-scientific language, one which is consistent with a socio-cultural field of knowledge, but which, in its attempt to codify language and synchronize its use, plays at the scientific. We see traces of the scientific in projecting clauses, but also in the use of epistemic APPEARS and SEEMS, which can be viewed as a means of politely cultivating a specific kind of authority: the authority of the new court, science itself. That is, meta-generic materials that delineate language and its use for contexts of probability and possibility may seem oddly out of place but may nonetheless be cultivating the official status of more 'scientific' accounts of language.

This chapter has examined the ways in which authoritative accounts of language can seem oddly confident, can be articulated with such conviction in spite of the fact that the prescriptions and proscriptions that surround usage are often arbitrary and sometimes nonsensical. My analysis of imperative structures and modalizing expressions, in four editions of *The Globe and Mail Style Book*, indicates that authority in language is not constructed and maintained via direct appeals to an institutionalized authority that relies on its expert status in the discourse on language. Nor is it necessarily maintained via direct appeals to the established wisdom and practice of professionals. Instead, it is the more subtle enactment of polite social orders, relations and associations which secure the dictates and rulings of those who make commanding claims on and about language.

Indeed, my examination of imperatives reveals that these dictates and the judgements that accompany them are authoritative because they enact and excite a 'polite' consciousness of language. I found imperatives expressing commonplace injunctions against the use of 'bad' English (English that is not simple, consistent and clear). But I also found these imperatives expressing familiarizing identifications, consensual understandings of language and the self rooted in shifting, but recognizable, social exigencies and long-standing moral precepts. This mapping of linguistic imperatives onto socio-moral ones indicates that linguistic authority requires a shared consciousness of language, politely construed, for its efficacy. Moreover, in my analysis of dynamic and epistemic modals and modal mergers, I observed a tendency to naturalize this consciousness of language, to distribute knowledge about language into cooperative domains where linguistic impositions, dictates, and judgements seem consensual and so impersonal, objective and uncontroversial. In the naturalization of a commonsense linguistic consciousness, the authority to make claims on and about language emerges as a natural perspective and practice itself, one that dominates thinking and action precisely because it appeals to the compelling force of polite accord.

As my analysis of imperative statements and modalizing expressions indicate, these social enactments may be rooted in a long-standing and wide-spread ideology of politeness, a genteel-scientific practice that makes the ratification of 'objective' perspectives and 'polite' positions possible. In fact, my analyses suggest that there are two intersecting planes of politeness phenomena at work in the meta-generic text looked at here. On the one hand, we see evidence of an ideology of politeness in the very purpose of *The Globe and Mail Style*: as a text that purports to guide Canadians' use of efficient, clear and consistent English, it guides *civil* usage and thus access to more 'polite' worlds. On the other hand, its style of talking about language is itself civil: rather than invoking the institutional authority of its editors, *The Style Book* invokes a *civic* authority, an abstracted Canadian public – a politely configured public interest and desire – to shore up its advice about language.

While the use of imperatives might indicate the presence of writers' and editors' desires to complete a practical task, the social relations encoded in the imperatives I examined indicate that the 'task' of writing simple, consistent and clear prose is tied to

commonplace, but nonetheless problematic, values that link the practical act of writing to social practicalities, to one's position in a field of polite exchange. Commonplace linguistic values (of simplicity, consistency and clarity) signal larger social imperatives or obligations (to demonstrate trustworthiness, honesty, good taste, refined elegance and to avoid possible offence or insult). These socio-linguistic imperatives, of course, have long represented the obligations "of any newspaper with serious pretensions" (Thorsell, "Preface," *Style Book*). Ostensibly, such imperatives are linked to a newspaper's desire to sell its papers, to market itself to an educated, professional public, one that wants its information presented accurately and objectively, in a simple, consistent, clear and tasteful manner. However, as my examination of *The Style Book*'s use of modal expressions suggests, linguistic authority and the socio-linguistic ideals that bolster this authority rely on the pragmatic construction of readers' practicalities, attitudes and desires. While it may appear that the newspaper's attitudes are simply in line with its readers', linguistic practicality and desire are genteel-scientific configurations that tie public attitudes to institutional and institutionalizing notions of usage. Here, practicality and desire are configured as a common sense and sensibility that preserve the seemingly disinterested character of an interested linguistic consciousness.

Chapter Four
Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Public Talk and Mutual Assumption in Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor

This chapter examines the enactment and play of commonsense opinion on and 'public' debates about language in the letters section of *The Globe and Mail.* As others have noted, letters to the editor are generally perceived as a site for the expression of popular opinion and an important index of democratic participation in the public sphere. According to Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, in "The Construction of the Public in Letters to the Editor: Deliberative Democracy and the Idiom of Insanity," newspaper editors tend to see the letters section as "a debating society that never adjourns," one that, in its effort to represent actual public opinion, attempts to reflect "the community's heartbeat" (Kapoor and Botan, qtd. in Wahl-Jorgensen 183). However, those who analyze representations of the public sphere maintain that letters to the editor should not be seen as actual indicators of common concern and interest; rather, "letters to the editor are [but] 'hazy reflections of public opinion'" (Wahl-Jorgensen 184). Wahl-Jorgensen herself moves beyond attempts to find a correlation between an actual existing social reality and the letters section, arguing instead that "the normative ideals of journalism, public discourse and the public are themselves constructed creatures" and so the public, as represented by letters to the editor, should be treated in light of the discursive practices of the newsroom (184).[39] In fact, according to Wahl-Jorgensen, the criteria that determine a letter's inclusion have been standardized, to a large extent, along conventional principles of newsworthiness. In "Understanding the Conditions for Public Discourse: Four Rules for Selecting Letters to the Editor," she notes that although the inclusion rate for letters differs according to a newspaper's circulation rate (e.g. *The New York Times* publishes approximately 6% of letters received, while regional papers tend to publish a much higher percentage),

[39] Also see Luke Gregory and Brett Hutchins' account of the ways public discourse is constructed in an Australian newspaper. In "Everyday Editorial Practices and the Public Sphere: Analyzing the Letters to the Editor Page in a Regional Newspaper," they argue that the letters page is "a complex social space mediated by the routine practices of editorial staff" (188).

selection rules "are informed by dominant news values, or understandings of what constitutes bona fide news" (73). A letter, to be considered for inclusion, must be relevant (topical, useful and interesting to readers), entertaining (humorous, imaginative or rousing), brief (succinct and hard-hitting) and authoritative (eloquent and readable, not the "words of 'illiterates' and 'madmen'") (73-76). More importantly, the standardization of these rules of inclusion, of what constitutes good and bad letters, can end up standardizing public debate itself. Wahl-Jergensen argues that the criteria that inform the selection of letters are forms of "cultural mediation" that rule the kinds of debates that can take place in letters pages and the kinds of voices that can be heard (70).

However, Melody Hessing, in her account of the construction of environmental issues in letters published in the *Vancouver Sun*, argues that the letters page can be an important site for the mediation of conflict and change. She found that sometimes letters challenge, rather than confirm, the salience of some debates and the perspectives they entail. For example, many letters concerning the protection of the Carmanah forest introduced ecological rather than commercial interests in the debate constructed in the newspaper, contributing, in the end, to a shift in public discourse and a shift in government policy. Moreover, although rules of selection may 'rule' public discourse, readers and contributors generally treat letters to the editor as if they were a representation of actual, or legitimate, public opinion. In their study of *The Australian*'s letters page, Jane Mummery and Debbie Rodan argue that letter writers often inscribe a collective voice, an assumed we-ness, that confirms opinion and debate as public phenomena: ". . . in writing on behalf of all 'Australians', 'patriots', 'fellow human beings', etc. letter writers not only assume that their views are embodiments of public opinion . . . but in effect legitimate certain discourses as proper to the public discussion of current events" (434-35).

John Richardson suggests that such assertions of collectivity are not uncommon in the sort of argumentative domain the letters page represents. Drawing on rhetorical theories of argumentation, Richardson notes, in fact, that letters to the editor can "appear to represent an . . . ideology of consensus" (144), whereby appeals to commonsense or normalized precepts can be interpreted as attempts to foster common understandings seemingly shared by editors, readers and letter writers alike (146-48). Yet, the systematic

privileging of some ways of arguing over others, alongside the work of copy-editors whose job it is to ensure that letters conform to the newspaper's house style, to some standard of eloquence and readability, can construct, not a public with shared concerns, but the newspaper itself, its opinions, interests and readership. Richardson, among others,[40] notes that editorial staff frequently change words, re-order sentences and paragraphs and group letters to adjust, refine and legitimatize the debates that occur in letters pages. And often these letters are selected and edited in accordance with the newspaper's larger political and economic interests. Richardson's focus on the legitimation of some letters and topics over others and his description of copy editing practices suggests that a closer examination of relevance (topicality) and authority (eloquence), as key selection criteria, might yield important insights into the ways letter writers' appeals to a collectivity and the newspaper's role in the construction of a collective might intersect in letter writers' debates about language. A closer look at these two criteria might also offer ways to understand how ideologies of language themselves are calibrated, are adjusted or amended, according to print media criteria.

To provide a sense of how the newsroom configures relevance and authority as criteria for a letter's inclusion, I first detail the work of Wahl-Jergensen, a journalism scholar whose ethnographic studies of newsroom practices detail the ways the letters page may or may not be a site for democratic participation or what, in some circles, is called deliberative democracy, a process whereby citizens engage in rational deliberation in an attempt to articulate "a shared conception of the common good" ("The Construction of the Public" 186). As I indicate above, Wahl-Jergensen is primarily concerned with the ways criteria for the selection of letters are based on principles of newsworthiness. While her study contributes to an understanding of how these criteria might shape democratic participation in the public sphere, her analysis of these criteria seems to assume an *a priori* conception of the newspaper's values and interests. Because commonplace principles of newsworthiness are taken at face value, are considered *the* basis for the selection of letters, Wahl-Jergensen's study might not fully account for the workings of relevance and authority, especially with regard to those recurring topics or matters (i.e.

[40] See, for example, Karin Raeymaekers' study of the editing practices of Flemish daily newspapers in "Letters to the Editor: A Feedback Opportunity Turned into a Marketing Tool," *European Journal of Communication* 20.2 (2005): 199-221.

matters of language) that do not appear, at first glance, to be newsworthy but that may play an important role in the public reproduction of a newspaper's principles. Indeed, given print media's material interest in language and literacy and in its readers' attitudes toward language, the standards by which letters to the editor pertaining to language are selected may have more to do with the ways these particular letters reproduce linguistic value and interest as 'newsworthy', as relevant and authoritative.

Suspecting that the relation between principles of newsworthiness and ideologies of language calls for a more complex account of the phenomena of relevance and authority, this chapter draws on Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson's theoretical model of relevance to analyze the way statements about language are actually made relevant, are calibrated, syntactically and semantically, to make mutually manifest those authoritative assumptions and identifications that typify discourses on language in print media. While some have criticized relevance theory, seeing its focus on mental processes or cognition as perpetuating an "a-contextual" or autonomous model of communication (Jordan 47), others see in Sperber and Wilson's model a way to explain the socio-cognitive dimensions of language use, particularly as these relate to the stylistic construction of mutual knowledge, value and interest or to what Sperber and Wilson call "mutual cognitive environments" (41).

With Sperber and Wilson's account of the relation between style and interpretative frameworks in mind, I examine a set of letters to the editor culled from the letters section of a number of editions of *The Globe and Mail.* Specifically, I consider two features of these letters, both of which are structured to optimize the relevance of certain ideas about language, that is, to direct readers to construct the most appropriate contexts in which to interpret the relevance of statements about language. I analyze the style of the headings given to these letters to examine the newspaper's role in the construction of a collective and commonsensical context of interpretation and I analyze the use of metaphors within the letters to understand how public contexts of interpretation might intersect with the newspaper's construction of these contexts. Anticipating that the situations and communities assumed in these letters would change over time and hence affect efforts to maximize relevance, the sample of letters I analyze in this chapter is taken from a small corpus of 136 letters, collected from the Simon Fraser University

library archives of *The Globe and Mail* dating from 1911 to 1999.[41] Of course, letters were collected that featured the topic of language or grammar.[42] These letters invariably focus on long-standing debates about usage and/or complain about it. But within these debates and/or complaints are hints of other concerns, routinely expressed in and so always relevant to Canadian discourses on language (e.g. national identity and Americanization) and those concerns which are not typically expressed in Canadian discourses on language (e.g. the environment), but which are made relevant through their association with commonplace ways of talking about language. The letters dating from 1911 to 1989 were chosen randomly, by scanning the letters page of editions blocked out in a three month grouping on microfilm (e.g. May, June and July of 1915). If I did not find letters in the year I scanned, I moved on to the following year and a different reel (e.g. May, June, and July of 1916). If I did find letters, then I searched in editions published five years from the date of the last letter I found. Letters dating from 1990-1999 were stored on a disc and were found using key search words (language, grammar). I collected all letters pertaining to language published between 1990 and 1999.

[41] Studies of letters to the editor, while not addressing longitudinal differences in the content of letters, do indicate that the length and authorship requirements of letters have changed over time. For example, according to Earnest Hynds, in "Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters," editors report that because there has been a general increase in the submission of letters in the past decades, editorial staff now require that letters be shorter (approximately 250 words) to accommodate the publication of more letters. Editors also report that, for the most part, they no longer publish letters written by anonymous authors. Prior to the 1970s, it was fairly common to publish unsigned letters or letters signed with initials or pseudonyms such as "A Concerned Citizen." Reader *et al.*, in "Age, Wealth, Education Predict Letters to the Editor," note that current 'must sign' policies are the result of editors' perceptions that signed letters are easier to select, that the publication of such letters encourages others to submit signed letters, and that letter writers who do not sign their letters are "crackpots" or have unworthy opinions (64). Reader *et al.* argue that the introduction of these requirements may have affected the types of letter writers who submit letters and the types of opinions that get published (57). They note, for example, that a third of their respondents (many of whom were women) said they would write letters to the editor if they could remain anonymous (64).

[42] While letters to the editor pertaining to language, grammar and usage represent a relatively small percentage of letters compared to the overall number of printed letters (for example, I located 27 letters to the editor pertaining to language written over a three year period, 1996-1999), their continuing existence nonetheless represents the extent to which matters of language are preoccupying concerns both for the newspaper and its readers.

Relevance and Authority: A Media Account

According to Wahl-Jergensen, relevance – that which is topical, useful and of interest to a general readership – is perhaps the most important criterion upon which letters are selected. However, comments about letters to the editor, found in *The Masthead*, a trade journal, and elicited from interviews with editors of American newspapers, indicate that there is a preference for letters which directly address topics the newspaper itself generates. That is, the newspaper sets the agenda in terms of which topics are considered relevant and which are not. Wahl-Jorgensen maintains that letter writers can rarely introduce topics on their own; instead, they must speak to those topics that have already been established by the newsroom, respond to stories that have recently appeared on the pages of the newspaper. Letters about, for example, gun control, will rarely be accepted for inclusion unless the issue of gun control addresses a report of recent events (e.g. proposed legislation by a city council member, a school shooting) (73). Wahl-Jorgensen also notes that assessments of a letter's relevance not only include assessments of the timeliness of its content, but also whether or not the letter is written from a contributor who lives in the newspaper's circulation area. This preference for the local (in spite of the fact that many stories or topics might have wide-spread interest) has, Wahl-Jorgensen argues, "more to do with passion than with public interest" (74). Content generated from local events and concerns and written by local community members is more likely to foster passionate engagement than content written by 'outsiders' addressing wider concerns.

Because letters to the editor about language often address long-standing debates about the finer points of usage (e.g. the use of split infinitives) or address wider concerns about the general use of language (e.g. complaints about the so-called decline of language), they can seem, on the surface, to violate media criteria of relevance, specifically with regard to the timeliness and regional significance of topics. For example, writing in response to a 1921 *Globe* editorial[43] arguing against the use of "it is me" and "he don't," one letter writer insists that, contrary to the editorial's position that the use of such "slang and slipshod English" is "common and offensive" (Editorial, "Me

[43] This editorial and the letter that follows were published in *The Globe* before it merged, in 1936, with the *The Mail and Empire* to form *The Globe and Mail.*

and Don't"), the everyday use of English, its common expression, can represent improvements to it. According to this letter writer, the reduction of present tense forms of *do* (from six forms to two: *do* and *does*) is simply one example of how the English language, over time, has undergone a "beneficial simplifying process" (A. Stevenson, "'Me' and 'Don't'"). Such arguments about language, about its growth and development, can be written by anyone, in any place, at any time. In fact, in this letter, there is no information that anchors it in contemporary issues. Yet, in spite of the seeming irrelevance of this letter's topic, its disassociation from current events and concerns, this letter meets the criterion of relevance namely because it addresses a topic initiated by the newspaper, in the editorial lamenting the use of "he don't" and "it is me." One might wonder, however, why such a topic about "slang and slipshod" usage – given its wide-reaching and rather timeless quality -- can be construed as relevant, as newsworthy, by the editorial staff of *The Globe*. Hints of this relevance are evident in the opening and closing sentences of the editorial, which question the decision of a Chicago area Superintendent of Schools to allow the use of "it is me" and "he don't."

> Mr. Edward J. Tobin . . . [argues] that it does no good to teach children forms of expression "outlawed" by common usage and a sense of good form. As Cook county embraces Chicago with its large foreign population, Mr. Tobin's authority for common usage and good form is not above suspicion. . . .
>
> . . . Slang and slipshod English are so common and so offensive that he would do better to start a campaign to keep the well undefiled. (Editorial, "'Me' and 'Don't'")

Here, general concerns about usage and declining standards are raised in relation to the 'permissive' actions of Mr. Tobin. While such concerns and activities may seem outside the purview of a Toronto newspaper, the editorial implicitly frames its discussion of "me" and "don't" within a set of issues that would have been of interest and therefore relevant to the newspaper and its readers in 1921: the perceived permissiveness of Americans, especially with regards to language standards; the perceived Americanization of Canadian educational standards; and, more generally, increased immigration and its

perceived effects on Canadian urban landscapes.[44] 'Permissive' arguments about language based on common usage, especially in light of foreign populations who might 'defile' a pure linguistic well,[45] are here seen as suspect and so must be countered, campaigned against lest the commons becomes too common. Even though the letter writer, in his or her response to this editorial, does not address concerns about Americanization or 'foreign' populations and their perceived effects on language standards in Canada, the letter writer nonetheless legitimates the relevance of the newspaper's concerns through an engagement with aspects of these concerns, with assertions that linguistic change and simplification (what might be termed permissiveness by the writer of the editorial) has actually benefited English. This suggests, of course, that it is not only agreement that encourages or secures common ground; disagreement can also work to build and consolidate common ground by maintaining the commonsense connection between language and the extra-linguistic.

The Globe's decision to publish this letter, in fact, appears to reinforce the relation between debates about language in general and the extra-linguistic, those local events and localized interests that *are* the expressed purview of *The Globe*. Another letter, also in response to the editorial, "'Me' and 'Don't'," and in response to a letter writer who focuses on the role parents, teachers, and the press should play in efforts to keep the language of Canadian children pure, does engage in a discussion of language with some

[44] In "'To Become Part of Us': Ethnicity, Race, Literacy and the Canadian Immigration Act of 1919," Lorna McLean maintains that the high levels of immigration during the first decades of the twentieth century resulted in more frequent and elaborated expressions of anxiety regarding Canadian national identity. Concerns about labour unrest (e.g. the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike), the 'Red Scare' and fears of 'foreign' encroachment were fairly common topics in public discussions related to national identity and citizenship. These discussions, moreover, contributed to the efficacy of the 1919 Immigration Act, which sought to limit the influx of 'undesirable' immigrants (those from Eastern Europe, Asia and South Asia who did not speak English or French and who were considered 'ethnic') through the testing of immigrants' abilities to read texts written in their own languages. According to McLean, this testing amounted to a "politics of literacy" whereby beliefs about educational levels and their relationship to an immigrant's ability to assimilate worked to delimit who would be considered Canadian and who would not. It was felt by policy makers that a level of literacy, in any language, was the result of some level of education and that, if an immigrant had been educated, he or she could more easily be educated, or assimilated, once in Canada.

[45] According to Gerald O'Brien, in "Indigestible Food, Conquering Hordes and Waste Materials: Metaphors of Immigrants and the Early Immigration Restriction Debate in the United States," such metaphors of purity, contamination and defilement were common in the early twentieth century, particularly in discourses on immigration, wherein metaphors of contagion "were especially apt to be used in conjunction with those groups that were viewed as posing a threat to American democracy. Shortly after the turn of the century [one commentator] wrote that 'the law-abiding citizen fears from the immigrant, not only the germ of bodily disease, but the germ of anarchy and also favorable media for its growth'" (310).

of these localized interests in mind. In this case, the letter writer implicitly, through the use of a metaphor of citizenship, articulates a concern about the effects of immigration on linguistic standards: "Certain phrases there are, such as "It is me" and "he don't," that linger along the borders. They seem to have taken out their papers, but have not yet received their full citizenship" (C. Carson-Talcott, "Grammar and Usage").

Letter writers, though, are just as likely, in their responses to editorials and articles that do not topicalize language issues, to raise these issues on their own. In some cases, letter writers respond to the newspaper's use of grammar and word choice, suggesting, as one letter writer does, that the newspaper's use of such phrases as "to beg the question" reveals a tolerance for corrupted meanings (J. Parr, "Improper Usage"). In other cases, items mentioned in editorials or reported elsewhere in the pages of the newspaper prompt letter writers to comment on some matter of language. For example, responding to the reported speech of a witness in the trial of Warren Glowatski, who allegedly murdered 14-year-old Reena Virk in Victoria, British Columbia in 1997, a letter writer initiates the topic of teenagers and their use of language in spite of the fact that the newspaper's report of the trial does not. The report itself focuses on what was said at the trial and raises concerns about teen violence, reflecting much of the commentary that surrounded Virk's murder and the Glowatski trial. In fact, a glance at the titles of articles reporting on this event indicates that, aside from the brutality of the crime, much of the attention on this event focused on the issue of teen violence, particularly among young females: in the December 8, 1997 edition of *Mcleans,* we can read about "Bad Girls: a brutal B.C. murder sounds an alarm about teenage violence"; in the January 19, 1998 edition of *Alberta Report* there is also talk about teen violence, in an article titled "Sugar and spice and cold as ice: teenaged girls are closing the gender gap in violent crime with astonishing speed." However, the letter writer does not explicitly mention this larger issue; instead, referring to Glowatski's girlfriend's use of reported speech (her repeated use of forms such as "*he's like*" to mean "he says"), the letter writer asks, "Does anyone suppose that 14-year-olds throughout Canada are so limited in the use of language . . . ? Or . . . is this teenage affliction exclusive to Victoria?" (J.A. Sullivan, "Verbatim").

While this letter meets the media criteria of relevance in that it addresses, peripherally, recent events of particular interest to Canadians (the murder of Reena Virk

and the subsequent trial of Warren Glowatski), its topic, *language*, seems unrelated to the larger concern these incidents generated: the perceived increase in violence among female teens. Yet, left unsaid, but implied, is a connection between teenage violence and teenagers' abilities to express themselves in Standard Spoken English. The connection between 'substandard' uses of language and violence, between 'afflicted' language and anti-social behaviour, is of course not a new one. As Deborah Cameron points out, conservative proponents of the teaching of grammar often equate the 'improper' use of language with a potential for criminal behaviour: "If you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, were people turn up filthy at school . . . all these things tend to cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose standards then there's no imperative to stay out of crime" (Norman Tebbit MP, qtd. in *Verbal Hygiene* 94). The relevance of this letter lies, it appears, in a set of unexpressed background assumptions – assumptions that construct readers as able to make a link between teen speak and teen violence.

Whether letter writers engage in on-going debates about usage, point out a newspaper's misuse of language or link linguistic matters to social concerns, the relevance of letters pertaining to language, it seems, is already secured by the newspaper's own preoccupation with language. That is, matters of language are always-already newsworthy. This preoccupation with language, its relevance or newsworthiness, can be seen in mid twentieth-century editions of *The New York Times* and the column space these editions provided for editorials, articles and letters pertaining to language: "In the course of the year 1942 the New York *Times* [sic] published no less than 122 items of linguistic interest. . . . When one considers the vast number of subjects available for comment in the course of a single year, one must conclude from the figures just given that questions affecting the English language . . . are of considerable interest to the public in general" (Neumann 99). While Neumann attributes the frequency with which "items of linguistic interest" were published in *The New York Times* to public interest (and one could argue that a newspaper's own interest in language stems from the fact that it needs 'literate' readers), comments in the 1998 edition of *The Globe and Mail Style Book* indicate that this interest in language might also have something to do with a newspaper's attempt to define itself as a newspaper of distinction. *The Globe and Mail*'s "distinctive

character" lies in its role as guardian of English usage in Canada, in an historical peculiarity that, suggests its Editor-in-Chief, makes this newspaper distinct from other newspapers in Canada ("Preface"). In short, it is a newspaper with a national-linguistic pedigree, with ties to Confederation *as well as* a keen interest in the use of language. It is, according to a recent commercial campaign, "well-written" and therefore "well-read." Moreover, as a national guardian and exemplar of good usage, it is an important site for the staging of discussions about usage amongst its readers. In fact, Thorsell, in what appears to be a kind of ironic detachment, describes the newspaper's readers as external "guardians of proper standards," who, because of their own interests, "hawkishly" monitor *The Globe*'s use of language ("Preface").

However, as John Algeo has noted, "what people know and think about language is to a great extent molded by what they read in the popular press. If the press is a mirror [of public opinion], it is also a template, producing multiple reproductions of the views it espouses" (57). In his ironic description of hawkish readers, Thorsell constructs a division (a kind of dissociation of the paper from its overzealous readers), reflecting perhaps a kind of amused ambivalence about the authority of readers to make judgements about language and its use. Yet, at the same time, Thorsell constructs an identification of interests that reproduces the paper's views on language, views which result in the kinds of socio-cultural distinctions attributed to those who are truly concerned about and understand matters linguistic. He suggests, for example, that the success of *The Globe* depends on its editors', writers' and readers' "pleasurable pursuit of knowledge," especially knowledge about language ("Preface").

This "pleasurable pursuit of knowledge," this shared concern about and interest in language (which has resulted in a bestseller), could be interpreted as an instance of what Pierre Bourdieu calls linguistic capital, the process whereby one acquires "a profit of distinction" (*Language and Symbolic Power* 55) by (mis)recognizing the 'legitimate' language and the judgements and tastes that inform it. As Bourdieu might suggest, such identifications of judgement and taste ensure one's position (and presumably one's newspaper) in the market of socio-cultural exchange (*Distinction* 6). Distinctions of taste and judgement, especially with respect to language, have been, historically, the hallmark of some newspapers' claim to fame. For example, Richard Watts suggests that

eighteenth-century periodicals, such as *The Spectator*, helped to define the use of English in public domains – and, by implication, a new reading and writing public -- in terms of 'good' taste and judgement, in terms of a set of values (grace, order, decorum, symmetry, and beauty) that then became the model, as exemplified by *The Spectator* itself, for polite language (162). In fact, according to Susan Fitzmaurice, in "*The Spectator*, the Politics of Social Networks, and Language Standardisation in Eighteenth-Century England," grammarians often cited *The Spectator* as a "representative of the best in English prose and thus . . . a candidate for the model *par excellence* of polite language of the period" (201).

Like early periodicals, the authority (linguistic and otherwise) of *The Globe and Mail* lies, in part, in the construction of a particular reading public, one that has the capacity to recognize and enact good taste and judgement:

> Judges, lawyers, doctors, statesmen, clergymen, bankers, teachers, professors all prefer The Globe and Mail because of its awareness of new trends and its in-depth reporting of the difficult and specialized fields in which they are interested. The judgement of such professional men and leaders of opinion is reflected in the wide acceptance of The Globe and Mail by readers in all walks of life.
>
> The Globe and Mail values its reputation for integrity and accuracy and is proud that so many people believe in it and quote it with confidence. ("Introduction," *The Globe and Mail Style Book*, 1963)

The writer of this introduction to the 1963 edition of *The Globe and Mail Style Book* does not discuss matters of language; instead, suggestions of shared judgments and reputations and mentions of acceptance and confident citation help to construct a reciprocal relationship based on a set of mutually reinforcing distinctions, which presumably, given this description of readers in a style guide, extends to an interest in and concern about language. It appears, then, that the immediate and enduring relevance of letters pertaining to language lies in their capacity to embody a reading public that performs a knowledge of and interest in language, confirming in turn the distinction or authority a newspaper garners from this same knowledge and interest.

According to Wahl-Jorgensen, such knowledge and interest in language extends, more implicitly and with less obvious implications, to the language used in letters to the editor, to the ways in which the letters themselves might enact and demonstrate a

proficiency for authoritative styles of speaking, namely the ability to use Standard English. Wahl-Jorgensen argues that there is a "subtle proclivity for the words of authority," and therefore letters, she notes, are also selected based on a "rule of authority" (7). This rule of authority may mean that letters are chosen based on the social status of the letter writer (e.g. the letter writer is a politician or a professor), but more often than not this rule refers to a "requirement for linguistic eloquence," which is seen, by editors, as a neutral, disinterested and commonsensical criterion, one that does not disturb the belief that the letters page is a democratic domain where a range of positions or voices are included (77). According to Wahl-Jorgensen, editors believe that it is only commonsense that letters adhering to a certain standard of literacy should be published; therefore, grammatical proficiency plays a key role in whether or not a letter will be chosen for inclusion on the letters page (77). Yet, despite editors' desires to appear democratic, to publish a fair and balanced letters page, the reliance on eloquence as a key criterion indemnifies, Wahl-Jorgensen argues, the workings of privilege and distinction. She maintains that an ideal of eloquence endorses certain forms of educational capital that are denied to many writers and as such ensures that the opinion or position of these writers will also be denied. More important to my discussion, this criterion, according to Wahl-Jorgensen, operates as an unconscious business imperative, one meant to guarantee the esteem with which the newspaper is held: "This rule is perhaps the most slippery one, since its existence is often denied . . . ; it is not based on a conscious choice, but is built into the structure of the newspaper business, which depends on eloquence and readability for its success. It has to do with selecting culturally specific forms of competence for participation in public conversations," forms which presumably contribute to the good opinion or authority of the newspaper (76).

Such culturally specific forms of competence also extend to notions of rationality, to ideals of comprehensibility and intelligibility, a kind of stylistic persuasiveness that 'illiterates' and 'crazies' can not hope to attain. In her ethnographic study of the newsroom talk that surrounds letter writers and their letters, Wahl-Jorgensen notes that the editorial-page staff of *The Bay Herald*, a San Francisco daily, frequently speak what she terms an "idiom of insanity," whereby letter writers who do not meet standards of rationality or intelligibility are deemed 'insane' or 'nuts'. These letter writers, according

to the editorial-page staff, have incomprehensible or polarizing positions, repeat the same arguments *ad infinitum*, and/or produce rigid arguments, "expressed in uncompromising form" (196). Thematic letters about abortion, gun control and rights, for example, are often dismissed as irrational because they participate in a formulaic "stale debate," which is not "oriented toward consensus," to a form of rational deliberation that seeks a common understanding and a common good (195-96).

Given their frequency, consistency and even, in some instances, obstinacy, letters to the editor pertaining to language could be interpreted in light of the sort of thematic genre Wahl-Jorgensen discusses above. For example, one letter writer offers an argument about the use of gender neutral pronouns and in doing so appears to participate in a formulaic "stale debate," one which has been taking place in letters sections for at least two decades. Referring to two other letters, which use feminine and masculine pronouns differently, the letter writer insists that the use of the feminine pronoun "is jarring" and "is condescending to women" (Sutherland, "The Generic Term"). While the rationale that the use of gender neutral pronouns is condescending to women could be viewed as a different perspective in this old debate, it is articulated alongside the premise, repeated *ad infinitum* in debates about language, that the best usage is based on aesthetic standards of beauty, decorum and grace – indeed, usage should not grate, or jar. Sutherland also hints at another commonplace standard of usage. In his citation of another's point that pronoun forms should be treated as neutral forms (neither feminine nor masculine), Sutherland appeals to the notion that usage should be disinterested; it should not be subject to the kinds of special interests a change in usage might symbolize.

In spite of these commonplace or 'stale' arguments, arguments that do not advance the kind of understanding editorial-page staff purport to require, this letter is deemed authoritative (eloquent, intelligible and persuasive) enough to be published. Wahl-Jorgensen maintains that editorial-page staff tends to publish letters which are oriented toward consensus and a common good. While this tendency could be interpreted as a requirement for the sort of rational deliberation that results in innovative arguments leading toward a common consensus or good, this requirement seems absent in the selection of letters pertaining to language and therefore raises a number of questions. How do letter writers, writing about language, actually make 'stale' arguments about

language seem relevant and authoritative? While letters to the editor pertaining to language are certainly oriented toward consensus, it appears that this consensus is not so much about a deliberative movement *toward* common acceptance and the common good. Could relevance and authority, then, be more about stock-piling a surplus or excess of agreement, of mutual interest and identification, that guarantees the always-already relevance of debates about language? And, given Burke's assertion that division is identification's ironic counterpart, how does this surplus enable those identificatory distinctions that enact but contain necessary divisions?

Relevance Theory: A Pragmatic Account

Sperber and Wilson's account of relevance provides a more nuanced guide to such questions of mutual understanding and agreement, of distinctions and divisions. Building on Paul Grice's notion that communication is a cooperative venture governed by four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner), Sperber and Wilson argue that one principle, that of relevance, is sufficient to account for utterance understanding. In *Relevance: Communication and Cognition,* they maintain that every communicative act makes ostensive the intention to communicate and therefore comes with a "tacit guarantee of relevance" (49). Because every act of communication presumes "its own relevance," a listener/reader will (1) assume that the speaker/writer intends her utterance to be relevant "enough to make it worth the addressee's while to process" it and (2) assume that the utterance is "the most relevant one the communicator could have used to communicate" (158). Moreover, understanding utterances, for Sperber and Wilson, is a matter of weighing costs and rewards, of aiming for "cognitive efficiency," of seeking the greatest cognitive effects for the least cognitive effort.

The search for relevance involves recovering explicatures, explicitly communicated assumptions obtained by fleshing out the propositional form of an utterance, and *implicatures*, implicitly communicated assumptions that the speaker "manifestly intended to make manifest to the hearer" (95). Hearers consult encyclopaedic knowledge, also known as background knowledge, to recover both explicatures and implicatures. For example, readers reading the editorial that discusses Superintendent Tobin's choice to allow "it is me" and "he don't" will assume that the

editorial's mention of "Chicago with its large foreign population" will have some relevance to the editorial's discussion of language. In order to recover the explicature of this phrase, the reader would have to know, for instance, what constitutes a 'large' population (e.g. not 10, 000 persons, but say 200, 000). In order to recover its implicature, the reader would need to know something about the perceived relation between immigrant populations and their ability to use English and likely (but not necessarily) know something about this letter writer's views on language (e.g. his belief that the English spoken by certain populations should not represent 'common' usage).

This sort of encyclopaedic knowledge comprises what Sperber and Wilson call *context*, "a psychological construct" or "a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world" (15-16). According to Sperber and Wilson, information is stored as a concept, an encyclopaedic entry, which, in part, is a kind of address or "heading under which various types of information can be stored and retrieved" (86). For example, an encyclopaedic entry for the concept *foreign populations* will contain a set of assumptions about these sorts of populations and an entry for the concept *Chicago* will contain another set of assumptions. Sperber and Wilson note that the organization of information stored in memory has been variously explained, in the literature, in terms of frames, scripts, scenarios and schemata. In their account of cohesion and coherence, [46] close cousins of relevance, Gillian Brown and George Yule point out that these explanations not only

[46] In *Discourse Analysis*, Brown and Yule examine Halliday and Hasan's account of what makes a text a text, specifically their assertion that the interpretation of a text as a text relies on its texture, on cohesive properties, such as reference and lexical ties, which bind a text and force a particular interpretation (190). For Halliday and Hasan, the texture of a text "is provided by the cohesive RELATION . . . where the INTEPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSES the other in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it" (*Cohesion in English* 2; emphasis in original). Yet, as Brown and Yule argue, cohesion does not fully explain how listeners and readers actually decode or understand utterances, an important point to consider when dealing with any notion of discourse because discourses (e.g. discourses on language) rely on both linguistic and extra-linguistic decodings for their interpretation. This is especially true in cases where there are no obvious textual traces of connectivity, in cases where sentences are not connected by explicit markers of relation. Because listeners/readers generally assume some connection between sentences of a 'text' (after all, sentences are usually strung together for some purpose), they will assume a relation between them even in the absence of textual cues and so, according to Brown and Yule, the cohesive aspects of text are not indispensable to its identification and understanding (196). For Brown and Yule, the process of interpreting the meaning of a given utterance is more complex: it involves "computing the communicative function (how to *take* the message), using general socio-cultural knowledge (facts about the world) and determining the inferences to be made" (225). Brown and Yule suggest that the act of making a text coherent, rather than simply cohesive, relies on the background knowledge one accesses to understand the information in a text and the resultant inferences one makes to 'fill in its gaps' (265-70).

attempt to describe how information is stored but also to "account for the type of predictable information a writer/speaker can assume his hearer/listener has available whenever a particular situation is described" (236). Chicago, for example, is a 'scene' or 'scenario'. In such a scene or scenario (mentioned in the course of an exchange), likely a speaker would not have to tell his listener that Chicago has a large population, that it is located in the United States, that it is a northern industrial city and so on. This information can be assumed.

Yet, as Brown and Yule point out, while some treat knowledge representations as deterministic in that they "predispose the experiencer to interpret his experience in a fixed way," others treat these representations as "the organised background knowledge which leads us to *expect* or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse" (247-48; emphasis in original). Although they acknowledge that background information stored as schemata might be of the stereotypic type (i.e. based on highly regularized or common cognitive/cultural experience), Brown and Yule suggest that stereotypic schemas work together with more 'active' schematic structures to make the process of utterance understanding *constructive*. This account of schemata allows researchers to explain how utterance "production and interpretation which does not take place *ab initio* on each occasion" (250) can work as a dynamic process wherein background knowledge is often assumed but its sharedness is not assured or fixed. For example, earlier I suggested that in order to recover the implicature of the letter writer's comment, "Chicago with its large foreign populations," the reader might need to access background information about the writer's views on language. Yet, I also suggested that a presumption of shared background knowledge is not absolutely necessary to recover the implicature of this phrase. Shared assumptions can develop in the process of utterance exchange because background information stored as schemata is active or constructive. In the case above, the reader can infer that the writer thinks that the use of English by immigrant populations should not represent 'common' usage if she can access schemata about language and society, that is, if she knows that some believe there are legitimate and illegitimate uses of language and that those who mention social groups in arguments about language often believe that the language of some groups represents legitimate usage while the language of other groups does not. She need not have access to mutually

shared background knowledge about the letter writer's particular views; such shared contexts can become possible in the course of the writer's and reader's interaction.

In order to understand how context or background information plays such a crucial role in utterance understanding, Sperber and Wilson insist that context itself should not be treated as given common ground (sometimes called mutual knowledge).[47] Instead, context unfolds during the process of communication; assumptions become *mutually manifest*, "perceptible or inferable" (39), in the *process* of making information relevant. Making information relevant is about (1) making assumptions about the assumptions which are or could be made manifest to the listener/reader and (2) the listener's/reader's selection of a context that allows him to "construct the assumptions needed to understand" the utterance (44). Establishing relevance, then, is more about prompting or selecting the most appropriate background information than it is about an *a priori* context that presumes 'fixed' mutual knowledge. In fact, Sperber and Wilson argue that it is relevance – rather than context – that is given:

> It is not that first the context is determined, and then relevance is assessed. On the contrary, people hope that the assumption being processed is relevant (or else they would not bother to process it all), and they try to select a context which will justify that hope: a context which will maximise relevance. In verbal comprehension in particular, it is relevance which is treated as given, and context which is treated as a variable. (142)

They also argue that listeners and readers will generally choose the most accessible context that yields the greatest cognitive or *contextual effects,* defined as any change to

---

[47] According to Herbert Clark and Catherine Marshall, in "Definite Reference and Mutual Knowledge," mutual knowledge is that knowledge which is shared mutually and known to be shared mutually between those involved in a particular discourse. Yet, as Clark and Marshall point out, assumed knowledge can pose problems for discourse participants – participants must continually assess (sometimes incorrectly) the knowledge they mutually share. The authors, in an effort to resolve this paradox, argue that people assess mutual knowledge by checking their memories to see if they and their listeners have ever been co-present (physically, linguistically or indirectly). They also determine if referents are mutually known within the community each knows they mutually belong to. Definite reference, then, is important to the mutual knowledge hypothesis because a speaker's choice of reference will determine the degree of knowledge mutually shared. Demonstratives (*this, that*) indicate that speaker and addressee are or have been physically co-present. Pronouns or definite descriptions can indicate linguistic copresence (e.g. "I bought a used computer, but *the* hard-drive was already full." This example is an instance of indirect linguistic copresence. Within a particular community, computers are known to have hard-drives, knowledge that along with the linguistic copresence of "computers" secures mutual knowledge of "hard-drive"). Proper nouns are indicative of shared community membership (e.g. "I left *Bakhtin* and *Bourdieu* at the office last night."). For a detailed account of Sperber and Wilson's critique of the mutual knowledge hypothesis, see pages 15-20 of *Relevance*.

context. This change results from the comparison of our existing assumptions with those assumptions we form when we encounter new information. If the comparison between newly formed and existing assumptions strengthens, elaborates or contradicts existing assumptions, it can be said to yield a contextual effect. If the contextual effects of an assumption are large and the effort it requires to process these effects is small, then the assumption formed is optimally relevant.

From this account of how readers/listeners might be directed to construct the best contexts for the interpretation of an utterance's relevance, a picture of relevance emerges which, in a technical sense, is different from the view of relevance articulated in Wahl-Jorgensen's research. In Wahl-Jorgensen's account of the relevance criteria upon which letters to the editor are chosen, editors claim that they base their selection decisions on commonplace principles of newsworthiness, on whether or not a letter is topical, interesting and useful to readers – whether or not a letter speaks to a topic previously mentioned in the pages of a newspaper, "touch[es] the lives and emotions of readers," and is informative or educational (73). This sense of relevance, however, does not attend to the ways in which assessments of relevance might entail considerations of mutually manifest value, belief and assumption. Nor does it attend to the ways in which editorial staff and writers of letters might construct value, belief and assumption in an effort to optimize the contextual effects, or relevance, of their statements.

Val Gough and Mary Talbot point out, in "'Guilt over Games Boys Play': Coherence as a Focus for Examining the Constitution of Heterosexual Subjectivity on a Problem Page," that "the construction of coherence [or relevance] relies heavily on the ability of the reader to fill in details not provided by textual cues themselves. In other words, the reader must draw upon what is thought of as 'common sense'" (221). As suggested above, readers will access schemata, or commonsense assumptions, in their efforts to understand an utterance. And writers will attempt to direct readers to access the best contexts, those mutually manifest assumptions, which will optimize the relevance of what they write. But as Sperber and Wilson suggest, such knowledge and its commonsensical characteristics should be treated as variable, as situational, rather than given. As I detail in Chapter Two, situation itself is constructed, is a definition that names circumstances and provides routes for interpretation. That is, definitions of

situation involve us in definitions of what is or can be considered intelligible, meaningful and thus authoritative. Such an account of situation is similar to Sperber and Wilson's account of context. Like situation, a shared context (configured as shared assumption and mutual knowledge) does not precede discourse, or discourse understanding. With every effort after relevance, it seems that speakers and writers not only define a situation, they define those assumptions that make this situation and the knowledge produced from it mutually manifest, or commonsensical. Thus commonsense itself should not be treated as an *a priori* or fixed set of beliefs mutually shared by members of a community; rather, commonsense is enacted and made mutually manifest *in* discourse.

This distinction has particular significance for a study of language ideologies and their appearance in public genres mediated by private interests. The appearance of language ideologies in letters to the editor should not be seen as an index of pre-existent public belief, but a sign of an *exigency* that warrants the continual construction and calibration of this belief. In fact, the strength of their contextual effects, or the ways in which formulaic ideas about language make letters pertaining to language always-already relevant, may lie in their ability to make mutually manifest the commonsensical (a set of shared assumptions) and a commons (a set of shared identifications). That is, like other commonsense schemata, ideologies of language become mutually manifest, are made commonsensical, in discourse; in the process, efforts after relevance contribute to the redefinition and renewal of discursive roles, desires, interests, values and beliefs. Therefore, rather than seeing the relevance of these letters and the ideas about language they articulate in terms of their topicality, interest and usefulness, their relevance is better seen in terms of the interests or identifications they can make mutually manifest.

Contextual Effects and 'Popular' Assumptions

Letter Heads as Relevance Optimizers

In "On Newspaper Headlines as Relevance Optimizers," Daniel Dor analyzes a corpus of headlines in an attempt to explain their communicative function. He moves beyond typical explanations of these news print items, arguing that the distinctions others have made between types of headlines (e.g. summarizing headlines, quotation headlines

or highlighting headlines) and their location in specific kinds of print media (e.g. 'quality' newspapers, tabloid newspapers) can better be explained via Relevance Theory. According to Dor, the function of all types of headlines is inextricably linked to their role as relevance optimizers; that is, in spite of the fact that they may have different properties and be used differently in different kinds of newspapers, the headline "acts as a textual negotiator between the story and its readers" (696; emphasis in original). While Dor himself interprets the properties of headlines in terms of explicitly expressed news values (e.g. of readability, interest and newsworthiness), he also notes that these properties can be reduced to a set of implicit strategies meant to optimize contextual effects and minimize processing effort: (1) if a headline is short and easy to read, it can minimize processing effort; (2) if it is interesting and new, it can maximize contextual effects; (3) if it is contains concepts and names with a high 'news value', draws on prior expectations and background knowledge and avoids presuppositions that are not shared, it can construct a wider, more effective context of interpretation, one that strengthens, elaborates or changes an existing assumption.

Headings of letters to the editor can also be analyzed as relevance optimizers, as "textual negotiators" between the content of letters and readers. While these headings are not headlines in the strictest sense (because they do not capture the gist or highlight aspects of *news stories*), some call them headlines.[48] For the purposes of this analysis, however, I take my cue from Wynford Hicks and Tim Holmes, who, in *Subediting for Journalists*, call these entities "letter heads" and therefore differentiate them from news and feature headlines in their chapter on how to write such entities. Calling these "letter heads" allows me to acknowledge that while some view them as a subset, they should be

[48] A search for details about letters to the editor in copyediting guides and journalism textbooks yielded little information about letters and their headings. However, in a web page designed to answer questions about editorial practices, one editor implicitly endorses a questioner's use of the term "headline" to refer to letter headings in a question asking why the "headline" for a letter he had submitted to a newspaper was changed. Doug Floyd, an editorial page editor for *The Spokesman-Review*, replies, "Headlines are written by our staff as part of the page layout and copy editing process -- just as with news stories, columns and editorials written by staff members. There are a variety of reasons for this, among them the difficulty in making headlines fit the space available. This is standard practice throughout the industry" ("Ask the Editor"). In a newspaper data base (FPinformart.ca), available for those who wish to search the archives of newspapers published by CanWest Global Communications Corporation, searches for key words in headlines will yield results from letter 'headlines' as well as story headlines. In "Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters," a study of editors' perceptions of letters to the editor, Ernest C. Hynds refers, in passing, to the headings of letters as headlines too: editors "use various other illustrative devices such as pull out quotes and larger headlines for more thoughtful letters" (129).

distinguished from main headlines because their form, in *The Globe and Mail* at least, often differs from the form of story headlines. Although both story headlines and letter heads capture the gist or highlight aspects of the content to which they refer and the style of both is conditioned, to a large extent, by considerations of layout (e.g. column size and white space), writers of story headlines are encouraged to include both a subject and a verb in their headlines and to use active voice.[49] However, in *The Globe and Mail*, letter heads are, more often than not, constructed without a verb form.[50] In spite of this important stylistic difference or perhaps because of it, letter heads manage to construct a wide context of interpretation because they frequently draw on background knowledge or prior expectations and rarely presuppose unshared information. That is, successful letter heads yield a significantly large number of contextual effects even though letter heads, because of their form, require much less effort to process than the content of letters. In fact, like story headlines, letter heads attempt to define and 'terministically' direct, as Burke might say, the best and widest contexts for the interpretation of content.

---

[49] In some kinds of headlines, notably 'hammer' headlines (items written in a larger font above the main headline), verbs are often deleted (e.g. "War Clouds"). It should also be noted that while copyeditors are encouraged to use verb forms and active voice in main headlines, there are a number of different styles of headlines, but these styles and their functions, like main headlines, are considered with respect to layout and visual impact (e.g. standing heads, jump heads).

[50] Of the 136 *Globe and Mail* letters I examined, only 17% of their heads included a verb form. An inspection of recent editions of *The Toronto Star* and *The Vancouver Sun*, however, indicates that other Canadian newspapers use a much higher percentage of verb forms in their letter heads. Compare, for example, the following heads from recent print editions (May 1, 2006) of *The Toronto Star* and *The Globe and Mail* respectively (*The Star*'s heads generally consist of two lines of text, while *The Globe*'s generally consist of one line; in both *The Star* and *The Globe*, column space on the letters page is 2 inches in width):

Want to be seen as valued citizens
Maybe time to bring back bibles
U.S. bully scoffs at own agreements
Cell conversations hinder driving
Liberals staged veteran's funeral

A great man's wit
One-language answers
No balance here
A matter of rights
All or none

Moreover, *The Vancouver Sun*, unlike *The Globe and Mail*, has tended toward a higher percentage of verb forms in their letter heads since the mid-1980s at least and a scan of news databases reveals that the *Sun*'s letter heads have, over time, increased in length. In the mid-80s, for example, letter heads, on average, were comprised of 5 words; at present, the *Sun*'s letter heads, on average, are comprised of 7 words.

For example, in the following letter, written in 1978, the reader is directed to construct a fairly wide context of interpretation, one that is echoed, distilled and attitudinally framed in the letter head. In the letter itself, the writer refers to the American pronunciation of, among other words, "hostile" (as "hostel") on Canadian television and argues that such pronunciations mark the "spread" of American language. The letter writer laments the loss of Canadian phonetic standards in this country's media and observes that no one working for the CBC seems to be willing "to take a stand against the erosion of the language of our fathers" (Clifton). This letter requires the construction of a context that includes background knowledge about phonetics, phonetic differences and/or adaptations, perceived distinctions between American and Canadian announcers, the nationalizing role of the CBC, and certain assumptions about national languages and their propensity to erode – that American pronunciations are symbolic of a language's erosion; that American television, as a vehicle for the importation of American pronunciation, contributes to the erosion of Canada's language; and that the cultural protection and maintenance of the "language of our fathers" (read the language of British settlers) will ward off this erosion. For Canadian readers who can construct the most appropriate contexts, the letter carries a number of contextual effects: likely it will strengthen (depending on the existing assumptions of the reader) related assumptions about, for example, the linguistic inferiority of Americans. It might also strengthen those assumptions which may not always be related to assumptions about language, but are related in this context: that America's cultural products have negatively affected Canada's culture and, in the context of debates about Canada's economic relationship with the United States, that American imports, including its cultural imports, threaten Canada's national identity.

The two-word head of the letter, "Phonetic Imports," requires very little processing effort, but a number of the contextual effects of the letter survive, directing readers to access their background knowledge about language, trade and national identity. In turn, for readers who can construct these contexts, the head directs their understanding of the significance or relevance of the letter's content. As the head suggests, this letter is not so much about the role of the CBC, television announcers who use American pronunciations, or even specific phonetic differences, but about the corrosive effects of

linguistic trade, the cultural erosion that results from the "spread" of undesirable linguistic imports. Here, assumptions about phonetic imports are made mutually manifest, are constructed in such a way that commonsense or general assumptions about language (e.g. that it erodes or that it is in perpetual decline) can be strengthened and then converted for a new, a localized context – a late 1970s Canadian context in which many Canadians expressed their unease about the impact of increased cultural trade with the United States. The letter head, then, in its ability "to optimize the ratio between processing effort and contextual effects – and thus optimally negotiate between the story and the ordinary reader" (Dor 705) could be read as an attempt to shape how readers might interpret, more generally, the relevance of talk about language. That is, the interests of the letter writer and the letter's readers intersect with the interests of the newspaper, which, through its heads, negotiates and guides readers' understandings of why this talk about language should warrant their attention.

The style of letter heads, as I indicate above, is conditioned by considerations of column size and white space and hence we see a propensity for the use of short noun phrases in *The Globe and Mail*'s letter sections. While the stylistic features of these phrases accommodate the practicalities of newspaper space and newsroom practice, they also lend themselves quite well to the creation of letter heads that will direct readers to construct the most predictable or commonsensical of contexts. Thus, although Dor maintains that in order to maximize contextual effects, editors will select headlines which contain newsworthy or interesting information, letter heads, particularly those pertaining to language, do not seem newsworthy or interesting in the sense Dor intends. Instead, their high 'news value' is generally dependent on their ability to make manifest stereotypical assumptions about language that confirm the relevance of language matters. In their efficient use of presupposing and modifying elements, these short, easy to read noun phrases make manifest an 'old' set of assumptions for 'new' contexts of interpretation; this, in turn, makes the information in them 'newsworthy', attractive to those who share an always-already interest in debates about language.

For example, information in a heading of a letter to the editor is often treated as given, as in the following heads, which are noun phrases that begin with presuppositional triggers (definite descriptors or proper names): "Our Mother Tongue," "The Queen's

English," "The Generic Term," "The Stuff of Language," "Mrs. Thatcher's Prose," and "Shakespeare's English." In these instances, readers are assumed to share specific assumptions (or the ability to make manifest specific assumptions) about language. The presupposing and rather commonplace noun phrase that makes up the head "The Queen's English" directs readers to access a familiar context, one that includes encyclopaedic knowledge about linguistic propriety and social class and about the relation between usage, status and social mobility. In the letter, the writer focuses attention on the 'pervasive' use of the word "guy" in the United States and Canada and in doing so connects this example of 'limited' expression to restricted movement and to the flouting of "social niceties" (J. Glenny, "The Queen's English"). In this way, old ideas about language are re-articulated and renewed, are made mutually manifest or relevant, for new contexts of interpretation, in this case for the interpretation of a particular concern about the use of "guy."

Often, the headings of letters will be in the form of a compound noun, a two-word nominal grouping that directs readers to consult contexts of interpretation that involve commonsensical assumptions about the state of language, recognizable values associated with language, and/or recognizable qualities of repudiated usage. What is important to note about these sorts of heads is the ways in which their modifying elements direct readers to access stereotypical concepts, concepts indexed for their commonness and so their ability to optimize the widest contextual effects possible:

Loose Usage
Broken English
Established Usage
Simple English
Improper Usage
Barbarous English
Atrocious English
Correct Spelling

Although the editorial staff of *The Globe* has, throughout the paper's history, selected more neutral modifiers (e.g. "English Usage"), the modifying elements of these particular letter heads represent conventional ways of talking about language, of describing or naming usage: loose, broken, simple, improper, correct, established, barbarous or atrocious. The information in these heads represents long-standing assumptions about

linguistic values that are manifestly shared by letter writers and their readers, assumptions which in turn confirm, rather than contradict, existing assumptions about English and its use. For example, the heading of a letter written in 1935, "Correct Spelling," while not particularly informative or newsworthy, summarizes the commonsensical frames or beliefs about the value of correctness articulated in the letter. In doing so, it may be directing readers to access or construct specific schema for *spelling* and those stereotypical or oft-cited scenarios in which correctness might be violated or encouraged. The letter writer is primarily concerned with *The Globe*'s explanation for the spelling of the word "practice," a spelling it rationalizes with reference to Webster's *New International Dictionary*, which says that both "practice" and "practise" are correct. The letter writer dismisses this rationale, noting the American origins of the dictionary, which somehow explain its "laxity or looseness in spelling" (C.E. Oster, "Correct Spelling"). Oster contextualizes his concern about the use of American spellings with reference to his children, who learn "Anglo-Saxon" spellings at school but read the newspaper at home. Because he is concerned that his children will be exposed to inconsistent spellings, he implores the paper to use "Anglo-Saxon" dictionaries rather than American dictionaries.

Before reading this letter head, a notion of correct spelling is likely already available within readers' contexts of interpretation; accordingly, the head prepares readers to access known contexts of reference to optimize the letter's relevance. Such a notion of spelling is likely to include encyclopaedic knowledge about the value of correct and consistent spellings in Canadian contexts where both American and British spellings are often used in the same document and where concerns and prejudices about the use of American spellings have been articulated alongside assumptions about the primacy of British spellings. Moreover, in a mid 1930s Canadian context where British spellings are preferred and often treated as Canadian and where *The Globe* is treated as a national exemplar of correct usage,[51] the encyclopaedic entry, *correct spelling,* is likely to

[51] The idea that there are exemplars of usage or that certain people, groups and institutions should set a good example is a common theme in letters to the editor pertaining to language. Exemplars, or those with some linguistic authority and influence, include politicians, teachers, parents (the home), the bible, Shakespeare, the radio and, of course, the press. What makes comments about exemplars interesting is that while the idea of a linguistic exemplar (an authority) is always-already relevant, the relevance of specific kinds of exemplars to discussions of language increases or diminishes over time. For instance, in a 1921

include manifest assumptions about *The Globe*'s role. Therefore, requests for its defence of Anglo-Saxon spellings would likely be viewed as relevant to this appeal for 'correct' and 'consistent' spellings.

The commonsensical effects of these sorts of heads are not limited, of course, to letters pertaining to language. Other letters, dealing with other concerns, are also headed with two-word nominal groupings that represent typified ways of talking about issues: "Student Weakness," "Pro-life Demonstrators," "Monetary Policy," "Stray Cats," "Clean Backyards," and "Unjust Legislation." These heads have a sort of summarizing function, but as 'summaries' of the material in the letter, they tend toward the broadest or most general of information, information that directs readers to yield the most appropriate contextual effects for the least amount of effort. What is noteworthy about these letter heads is that, aside from the head "Pro-life Demonstrators," which requires general but historically sensitive contexts of information for its interpretation, mentions of stray cats, clean backyards, student weakness, and unjust legislation have an ahistorical quality. In spite of the fact that these letters deal with particular incidents and events, their letter heads suggest that these are rather familiar and familiarizing sorts of topics or concerns. For example, the head "Unjust Legislation" could refer to a letter complaining about legislation from any place in the country, at any time in *The Globe*'s history; concerns about the justice or injustice of legislative proposals or acts, one assumes, are always relevant. In this case, the letter was written in 1921 and refers to a Toronto city council's recommendation about property values and taxes, to a specific incident but a 'timeless' concern (The Beacher, "Unjust Legislation").

---

letter, the home is considered a source of linguistic authority and example: "I have to be thankful for a mother who was particular about the way we spoke." (C.W. Francis, "Grammar and Usage"). In later letters, the home is no longer relevant to discussions about language – the fact that the home is never mentioned in later letters suggests that mentions of the home would no longer yield optimal effects in a cultural context that seems not to acknowledge the linguistic authority of parents or that appears to treat their linguistic influence as negligible. In other instances, those groups who were considered exemplars (linguistic and otherwise) in early letters are, in later letters, cited as poor examples of usage. For instance, politicians, in early letters, are sometimes lauded for their use of English: "The speaking of good English applies to all of our political leaders" (H.F. Oram, "Lauds Mr. King's English"). From the 1960s onward, however, such praise of a politician's use of language is rare. More often than not, discussions of politicians' 'corrupt' use of language are relevant in contexts where politicians themselves are often considered corrupt or untrustworthy: "Mr. Mulroney's use of this kind of language only heightened my suspicions" (D. Sharp, "Distrusts Big Words"). However, concerns about American usage and its influence on Canadian usage remain constant during the 90-year period these letters represent. In fact, anxieties about linguistic authority and influence often get expressed with references to examples of 'American' usage in Canadian locales.

The sort of two-word nominal groupings that often head letters pertaining to language have a similar effect: stripped of time, action and agent, these nominal phrases, unlike the combinations of noun and verb phrase that make up letter heads in *The Vancouver Sun*, tend to highlight the always-already relevant nature of abstracted and unitary understandings of language, its uses and its properties. In *The Globe and Mail*, it appears that issues of language are treated as issues of a long-standing and recognizable type; like everyday mentions of cleanliness, legislation and policy, mentions of correct, atrocious, improper and established usage direct readers to consult encyclopaedic or schematic information for the interpretation of letter writers' concerns. However, like the description of hawkish readers patrolling the pages of the newspaper for linguistic errors, some of these letter heads seem detached – a little echoic and a little ironic. In fact, because they often summarize the gist of others' statements about language, these heads are a little like indirect reported speech, attributed speech that encodes both the gist of another's speech and the summarizer's implicit attitude toward it. If one were to flesh out the head "Correct English," it might read something like "Implores *The Globe* to Use Correct English," which encodes both the gist of the letter writer's concerns about correctness and the editorial-page staff's dissociation from, or position in relation to, this concern.

Sperber and Wilson maintain that interpreting the relevance of reported speech involves understanding reported speech as a "second-degree interpretation . . . , an interpretation of one's understanding of [another] person's thought [or speech]" (238). Utterances that achieve their relevance by indicating that someone has said something and that the summarizer has an attitude toward what has been said are what Sperber and Wilson call echoic utterances. They link echoic utterances to verbal irony in that the relevance of both types of utterances is achieved through the interpretation of speaker attitude:

> By representing someone's utterance, or the opinions of a certain type of person, or popular wisdom, in a manifestly sceptical, amused, surprised, triumphant, approving or disapproving way, the speaker can express her own attitude to the thought echoed, and the relevance of her utterance might depend largely on this expression of attitude. . . . We will argue that verbal irony invariably involves the implicit expression of an attitude, and

> that the relevance of an ironical utterance invariable depends, at least in part, on the information it conveys about the speaker's attitude to the opinion echoed. (239)

Interpreting an ironic utterance, recovering its implicatures, relies on (1) a recognition that it is an echoic utterance; (2) on the identification of the opinion being echoed; and (3) on "a recognition that the speaker's attitude to the opinion echoed is one of rejection or disapproval" (240).

> *He*: It's a lovely day for a picnic.
> [They go for a picnic and it rains.]
> *She* (sarcastically): It's a lovely day for a picnic, indeed. (239)

Although Sperber and Wilson's example does demonstrate an attitude of disapproval or rejection, the attitudinal workings of irony, as Burke suggests, are much more complex than this simple example indicates. According to Burke, comic frames (of which irony is one) are better seen as frames of acceptance rather than frames of rejection because, unlike tragedy, with its emphasis on punishment and banishment, comedy offers a way to recognize, correct and reconcile perspectives. In fact, irony, according to Burke, is a "perspective of perspectives," a kind of necessary social distance, but one that "is based on a fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one *needs* him, is *indebted* to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him *within*, being consubstantial with him" (*On Symbols* 257-58; emphasis in original).

While headings of letters to the editor pertaining to language are not easily interpretable in terms of the attitudes they express, some nonetheless encode a degree of ironic distance. This can be seen in other sorts of heads that encode the formal properties of reported speech. For example, "Distrusts Big Words" and "Dislikes Journalese" are characteristic examples of reported speech in that the reporting verbs (distrusts, dislikes) indicate that the letter writer's opinion is being echoed or summarized, not the editorial-page staff's. It is the letter writer who objects to the newspaper's use of "ungrammatical expressions" to save newspaper space (H. Bollingbroke, "Dislikes Journalese"); it is the letter writer who is suspicious of politicians who use 'corrupt' language (D. Sharpe, "Distrusts Big Words"). In the case of letter heads made up of two-word nominal groupings, the attribution and reporting verb are missing, but in the choice of descriptor (atrocious, barbarous, established, correct, improper) there is an echo of an opinion being

expressed, an opinion that is both particular (to the letter writer)[52] and familiar (commonplace). Given the context of utterance, such echoes may also be interpreted as ironic. In fact, many of these descriptors refer to letter writers' opinions of the newspaper's usage or to its reader's (other letter writers') usage, which might explain why these heads seem ironic. In "Improper Usage," for example, the letter writer complains about *The Globe*'s use of "to beg the question," arguing that *The Globe*'s misuse of this phrase "corrupts usage" (J. Parr "Improper Usage"). According to the letter writer, some of *The Globe*'s writers have not maintained the purity of this phrase's meaning. Here the letter writer's concerns about corrupt usage are ironically echoed, in the letter head, as a kind of impropriety; after reading the letter, the reader realizes that it is *The Globe*'s impropriety that the heading refers to.

In other instances, heads can be ironically playful. For example, "Loose Usage" refers to a letter writer's expressed distress about the media's misuse of the word "profile," a word that, according to the letter writer, is "running wild" and therefore needs to be recaptured and corralled (R. P. Graham, "Loose Usage"). "Loose Usage" not only directs readers to construct stereotypical frames for the interpretation of the letter (the 'misuse' of words has often been described as loose, hence, the effectiveness of the letter writer's metaphor), but the head also directs readers to interpret the editorial-page staff's attitude toward this complaint, to recover the implicature that the staff has disassociated itself from this statement about *The Globe*'s use of "profile" and that the staff is mocking, or playfully echoing, the letter writer's distress about this usage, which has, apparently, gotten loose.[53]

Such playful echoes are also evident in letter heads comprised of different grammatical constructions that, like two-word nominal groupings, address the newspaper's space requirements at the same time as they economically and efficiently maximize contextual effects. For example, a letter decrying *The Globe*'s use of "fifth" to

---

[52] In their chapter on writing headlines, Hicks and Holmes make a point of discussing letter heads that incorporate the force of quotation without its form. They point out that the context of a letters page "makes clear" that the unattributed opinions expressed in heads such as "Time to tax the fat cats" are representative of letter writers' opinion, not the newspaper's (78).

[53] Hicks and Holmes indicate that letter heads can be playful if the letters themselves, like lighter feature stories, are considered "funny or offbeat" (77). In other words, it is not uncommon to find letter heads that "show a lighter touch" (78).

refer to a liquor measurement is given the head, "Shame, Shame." While the letter writer himself does not use the word "shame" in his letter, this noun + noun construction ironically echoes a commonplace perspective, one that links assumptions about the 'misuse' of language (in this case the use of an American expression to refer to a Canadian entity) to assumptions about what writers' should feel about their own misuse. In addition, the letter writer's reprimand of *The Globe* includes an admonishment that the paper has violated its role as national arbitrator and exemplar (R. Crichton). The head guides readers to construct a context that not only confirms stereotypical assumptions about the relationship between language and self perception, but that also confirms *The Globe*'s position as loyal defender of Canadian usage. However, readers are also encouraged to recover the implicature that the staff, while mimicking the sentiments of those who believe one should feel guilt, embarrassment or unworthiness in such circumstances, takes a rather aloof view of the letter writer's criticism of its indiscretions.

Another letter is headed with a two-word agentless passive construction, "Phoiled Again," that directs readers to construct a context in which repeated misspellings are associated with schemes and campaigns "against language and tradition" (E. Forte). While the letter writer speaks of the repeated misspelling of "pharaoh" (as "pharoah") in the pages of *The Globe,* likening it to an "evil determination" and a "plot," the letter head, with its good-humoured misspelling, directs readers to recover the implicature that this is a perspective of a perspective about *The Globe*'s "evil aims," its attempts, argues the letter writer, to fool those he represents (E. Forte). The head plays at the foolish, incorporates it, and simultaneously disassociates *The Globe* from the foolishness of such suspicious but common views that see, in misspellings, links between language, character and intention.

On the one hand, these letter heads direct readers to consult commonplace notions about language to construct the best contexts for the interpretation of letters about language, which in turn reproduces and renews these contexts. On the other hand, these contexts of interpretation are sometimes reproduced ironically; the effect of these heads suggests an attitude toward commonplace contexts of interpretation, especially with regards to letters written about *The Globe*'s own usage or its readers'. In fact, in his account of *The Globe and Mail Style Book*'s tone and perspective, William Thorsell hints

at the sort of attitude that may inform *The Globe*'s selection of letter heads. Playing down the seriousness of the text and its precepts, he maintains that *The Style Book* exhibits "wit and sardonic empathy for those who would stray into the wildlands of lazy assumptions, pomposity and cliché" ("Preface"). In these letter heads, there is recognition and rejection, a kind of association and a disassociation, a "sardonic empathy" that, on the surface, appears to contradict the idea that *The Globe*, as perceived arbitrator of English usage in Canada, traffics in commonplace ideas about language.

According to Bourdieu, in *Language and Symbolic Power*, these sorts of attitudinal ambiguities are reflective of a larger "structural disparity between the very unequal *knowledge* of the legitimate language and the much more uniform *recognition* of this language" (62; emphasis in original). He argues that this disparity "generates tension and pretension," a kind of competition that operates in but also reproduces the linguistic marketplace and the profits one accumulates in it (62). In other words, while many recognize the legitimate language (e.g. commonplace acceptance of the existence of Standard English), not everyone understands the workings of this language or knows how to use it. When knowledge of how to use the legitimate language becomes common, it no longer garners distinction; words and pronunciations which have become common or popular "lose their *discriminatory power* and thereby tend to be perceived as intrinsically banal, common, *facile* – or (since diffusion is linked to time) as *worn out*" (63). Thus "new strategies of distinction," strategies that mark one's use as rare, as more distinguished, must be developed:

> Showing tension where the ordinary speaker succumbs to relaxation, facility where he betrays effort, and the ease in tension which differs utterly from petit-bourgeois or popular tension and ease: these are all strategies of distinction (for the most part unconscious) giving rise to endless refinements, with constant reversals of value . . . . (63)

The sorts of echoic, ironic utterances I've discussed in this chapter, in fact, work to maintain or reproduce *The Globe*'s position in a linguistic marketplace where a detached perspective signals one's ability to rise above the commonplace, pedantic concerns that occupy many letter writers. At the same time, however, this perspective contains these concerns within, making letter writers and their perspectives consubstantial. Given *The Globe*'s perceived role as arbiter of language, it can afford to

be playful or mocking, to cultivate a lofty, relaxed distance. Yet, as a genre that depends on others' investments in language, the newspaper actively desires disagreement and criticism (of its own use of language) because it profits from those characteristic tensions and pretensions (including its own) that give rise to debates about language. As arbiter of language, *The Globe* must remain above the fray but must also replicate, and identify with, these tensions and pretensions in ways that encourage mutually manifest desires and interests. Disagreement and criticism, in effect, build up a surplus of desire and interest that in turn secures the distinction of *The Globe*.

Metaphor as Relevance Optimizer

According to Sperber and Wilson, "style arises . . . in the pursuit of relevance" (219). Their assertion about the relation between style and relevance suggests that the ways we talk about language are, to some degree, conditioned by our assessments of others' abilities to make our statements about language relevant. We saw this phenomenon at work in the echoic use of modifiers that are also used in a larger discourse that tends to employ easily accessible frames of acceptance to make statements about language intelligible and authoritative. These modifying elements and the frames of acceptance they encode require little processing effort because they direct readers to access commonsensical understandings of what matters in discussions of language. In turn, these elements not only renew these understandings, they also ensure that the style of talk about language (e.g. typified modifiers) also becomes commonplace. Indeed, in order to ensure that specific contextual effects will be generated from specific contexts, editors and writers of letters to the editor often rely on standardized routines for talking about language, routines that, because they are standardized, are more likely to make manifest shared contexts of interpretation, shared interests and identifications. As I will discuss below, letter writers' uses of metaphor to optimize the relevance of statements about language are another case in point; the use of creative metaphors alongside commonsensical ideas about language or the use of stereotypical metaphors to describe language represents the degree to which the style of talk about language has been

standardized and thus perhaps the degree to which mutually manifest assumptions and the identifications they encourage might also be standardized, or habitually renewed or revitalized.

While efforts to maximize relevance, on the part of writers, often involve constructing direct statements to minimize processing effort, there are many cases where writers will produce indirect entities, such as metaphors, which, while increasing processing effort, result in what Sperber and Wilson call increased "poetic effects," weaker or "less determinate" implicatures that rely more on the reader's ability to interpret than on the writer's ability to constrain interpretation. They argue that the interpretation of metaphors involves the reader more directly in the writer's construction of a context that will yield the most appropriate assumptions, visions, images and attitudes.[54] According to Sperber and Wilson, metaphors can be either standardized ('dead') or they can be creative ('live'). If standardized, they require less processing effort and result in a narrower range of weak implicatures; if creative, they require more processing effort but result in a wider range of weak implicatures. While both kinds of metaphor require readers/listeners to take responsibility for constructing contexts for the interpretation of their relevance, creative metaphors require readers/listeners to take more responsibility for the construction of these contexts. Simply put, because non-standard

[54] Sperber and Wilson's account of metaphor appears to build on research detailing the socio-cognitive functions of metaphor. Neo-classical rhetorical accounts of metaphor, of course, viewed this figure of speech as mostly decorative, as an ornament. However, in more recent accounts, metaphor is viewed as integral to an overall understanding of the relation between language and thought. I.A. Richards, for example, argues that a theory of meaning must account for the contexts whereby words and their meanings are negotiated. For Richards, context can be viewed as "the interinanimation of words." Thus, meaning arises from the interinanimation of words or linguistic contexts: "As the movement of my hand uses nearly the whole skeletal system of the muscles and is supported by them, so a phrase may take its powers from an immense *system* of supporting uses of other words in other contexts" (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric* 1294; emphasis in original). The metaphor itself symbolizes this interinanimation because we understand the metaphor's vehicle in relation to its tenor, which contrains its meaning, or our interpretation of it. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson argue that while metaphor has typically been seen as a "matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language" (3), this use of language is better seen in light of how we structure our thought, experience and action. Metaphor, according to Lakoff and Johnson, is pervasive; it represents and guides our "ordinary conceptual systems" and thus our actions: "Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people" (3). For Sperber and Wilson, metaphor is also a matter of cognition and so also a matter of ordinary language use; metaphors "are simply creative exploitations of a perfectly general dimension of language use" (237). According to Sperber and Wilson, because metaphors direct listeners/readers to consult the most appropriate contexts in order to understand their relevance, metaphors, like more literal expressions, "[require] no special interpretative abilities or procedures: [they are] a natural outcome of some very general abilities and procedures used in verbal communication" (237).

metaphorical utterances produce greater poetic effects, they require more work on the part of the reader/listener.

As suggested above, creative metaphors require that readers "go beyond the immediate context, accessing a wide range of assumptions to obtain a wide range of very weak implicatures" (Blakemore 164). In the case of letters to the editor pertaining to language, these less immediate contexts are often related to current events, issues and concerns not typically associated with language but that end up making long-standing or commonplace matters of language relevant for new contexts. For example, in a letter written in 1978, one letter writer lauds others' complaints that the Ministry of the Environment is complacent, that it has, according to the letter writer, ignored "the insidious pollution of our grammatical surroundings" (A. Small, "Dangling Gerunds"). However, Small dismisses another's suggestion, it seems, that the use of dangling modifiers might be acceptable in some circumstances. In dismissing this suggestion, the letter writer not only employs a set of metaphors that play off the title of the Ministry, but that also link language to late twentieth-century concerns about the environment (about the "insidious pollution of our . . . surroundings") and to particular concerns about Toronto's transit system. For example, Small insists that such a dangerous usage would "exacerbate the 12K Hertz shrieks" coming from the subway cars turning into Union Station and that grammatical improprieties "squatting on the right-of-way" would be dangerous too.

The relevance of the environmental and transportation metaphors in this letter will be established by accessing a context which produces a wide range of contextual or poetic effects. In these cases, there is not one strong implicature derived from these effects, but a series of weaker implicatures derived from assumptions about pollution (e.g. that it is pervasive, poisonous and so a serious health risk); about the noise that subway wheels make (e.g. perhaps something about noise pollution); and about urban squatters (e.g. that, in Toronto, they often cluster along key transportation routes, are immovable, illegal, an eyesore, a bother). This range of implicatures requires readers to take considerable responsibility for constructing a wider context, a much less immediate context, to interpret their relevance to the matter of language being discussed in this letter. Here, the writer directs readers to join him or her in the construction of this

context, to make mutually manifest a rather elaborate vision of language, one associated with current and therefore relevant concerns about environmental damage and urban transportation systems: that the use of dangling gerunds is dangerous in contexts where complacency results in consequences; that such usage is toxic; that it is transgressive, or illegal; and that it is a social nuisance. These implicatures, in turn, may require readers to access an even wider area of knowledge, one that will yield even more poetic effects: that incorrect usage contaminates the language; that usage should be pure or clear, undetectable in the sense that it should not 'shriek' or draw attention to itself; that one's use of language determines one's social status or legal 'residency', and so on. Here we move from a situationally evoked range of weak implicatures having to do with dangling gerunds and their effects on linguistic routes and environments to a non-specific range of weaker but commonplace implicatures generated from stereotypical schema for the entry *language.* In this way, the creative metaphors used in this letter not only make mutually manifest those assumptions related to a current concern about the use of dangling gerunds, assumptions associated with contemporary concerns about modern living, they also direct readers to access encyclopaedic entries about the broader category "language" in order to fully interpret the relevance of these statements. In turn, these metaphors can end up ensuring the always-already relevance or mutual manifestness of commonplace assumptions about language.

In fact, more often than not creative metaphors about language are explicitly anchored alongside commonplace assumptions about language, which indicates the level to which *language,* as an encyclopaedic entry, can be renewed, calibrated or re-constructed for new or contemporary contexts of interpretation.

> Certain phrases . . . linger along the borders. They seem to have taken out their papers, but have not yet received their full citizenship . . . (C. Carson-Talcott, "Grammar and Usage")
>
> [The use of elegant and pure phrasing] is not the stuff of bare communication, a nuts-and-bolts computer word with military overtones; it is the stuff of language . . . (G. O'Neill, "The Stuff of Language")

In these letters, written in 1921 and 1982 respectively, readers are directed to construct contexts that will accommodate both commonplace assumptions about language and less

immediate assumptions about language generated from the use of situational or creative metaphors. In the first letter, longstanding assumptions about the relation between the careful use of language and appropriate demonstrations of taste, propriety and respect occur alongside a metaphor that, on first glance, may not seem relevant to such a discussion of language. Readers will have to construct a context having to do, not just with *language*, but with the concepts *lingering along borders*, *taking out papers* and *full citizenship*. In order to link these concepts to the concept of *language* outlined above (and so maximize the poetic effects of these concepts), they will likely be broadened to include cases that share their attributes, cases that might mark one's legal participation in a broader community or which mark one's status as an illegal loiterer. This will require the construction of a context in which careless or disrespectful uses of language mark one's status as an illegal or limited participant in a linguistic community that shares certain values associated with language, a rather old concept but one that is renewed, made situationally relevant, in a time (1921) when heightened concerns about immigration and national citizenship were widespread.

In the second letter, the writer attempts to make a distinction between the value of language and perceptions of use: Canadians, he writes, treat language in terms of mere communication rather than in terms of its value; in his effort after relevance, he uses a metaphor that likely resonated with readers reading in 1982, likely yielded the poetic effects necessary to make his commonplace assertions about language, its elegance and purity, optimally relevant. The mention of "a nuts-and-bolts computer word with military overtones" to modify the phrase "bare communication" encourages readers to interpret the concept *bare communication* (a commonplace metaphor itself, one that is rooted in what I.A. Richards suggests is fundamental/foundational misunderstanding of language, the notion that words are the dress of thought) in relation to a number of weak inferences derived from a situationally dependent understanding of the military-industrial complex and the technologies developed for its use. Compared to the pure aesthetic or creative value of language, "bare communication" is about practicality and perhaps even suspicious application.[55]

[55] Although this metaphor may be viewed as abstruse (it mixes odd images of machinery, technology and the military), readers, as Richards suggests, are "immeasurably more adroit in handling complicated

In short, the creative metaphors I have examined here index a mutually manifest set of timely assumptions, a set of beliefs, values and identifications that are keyed to particular situations and that attitudinally name these situations. These figurative complaints about language do not typify, as other metaphors might do, generalized attitudes toward speakers (e.g. the sloppy speaker); instead, they index a kind of disposition or perspective on language, one that manifests itself in contemporary assumptions about the workings of political and economic institutions. More often than not, however, letter writers rely on stereotypical metaphors, standardized routines for describing or explaining language. These metaphors are what Burke would call master metaphors, always-already made screens for the articulation and interpretation of phenomena. They are a sort of socio-cultural heuristic that organizes, directs and governs perspective (and that deflects attention away from other ways of seeing and understanding). Because they are more likely to trigger accepted frames for thinking about language without the additional interpretative work of creative metaphors, standardized metaphors can achieve optimal effects with very little processing effort.

In these letters, I found two principal master metaphors or, as Burke would say, stereotypical "frames of acceptance," both of which embody fundamental assumptions about language: one having to do with beliefs about the *growth* or *decay* of language (language is plant/nature) and the other with notions of *struggle* and *protection* (language maintenance is war). The "language is plant/nature" metaphors tend to focus, of course, on the supposed deterioration or negative/positive growth of language.

> . . . the further erosion of our political language . . . (W.R. McKercher, "There is a Difference")
>
> . . . take a stand against the erosion of the language of our fathers. (R. Clifton, "Phonetic Imports")
>
> [French-Canadians] are among our best colonizers and surely understand the task of turning the wilderness into a garden . . . (Waterford, "Canada a Nation")

---

metaphors than [some] will allow" (*Philosophy of Rhetoric* 729). Metaphorical meaning, according to Richards, is the result of the interaction of ideas or attitudes, not the result of "a shifting and displacement of words"; accordingly, meaning (and by extension relevance) is developed in context, is "a transaction of contexts" (726).

. . . more latinisms cropped up in English. (A. Powell, "English Usage")

. . . the mistake keeps cropping up . . . . (E. Forsey, "It Won't Do")

. . . a loose habit takes root. (J. Proctor, "Her Excellency: Her Honor?")

Unlike another master metaphor, the "conduit is language" metaphor with its emphasis on the ways words act as channels for the direct transmission of meaning, this metaphor emphasizes the ways language functions as a natural organism. As I detail in Chapter Two, language is often configured as an organic, living thing that, as these examples suggest, 'crops up,' erodes, or 'takes root'. As a metaphor, though, it not only encodes a perspective, it also encodes a corresponding action or set of actions: language must be organized, classified, tilled, weeded – in short, cultivated. Most readers will have ready access to encyclopaedic entries about erosion, crops, wilderness and gardens that complement or strengthen this immediately accessible or stereotypical assumption about language. Here, of course, language is viewed in terms of a familiar nature/culture dichotomy, in terms that highlight the unplanned/planned growth of language or the uncultivated/cultivated nature of language. Implicatures derived from these images of language, then, will likely be informed by manifest understandings of culture and the natural world and related claims about the nature of language. Thus, although readers are directed to construct a range of weak implicatures having to do with nature/culture and with 'natural' language, the number of contextual implications derived from these metaphors is much smaller than those derived from more creative metaphors. These metaphors, like letter heads, tend to constrain interpretation, to enable or compel a certain image of language that relies less on the reader's ability to create an image for herself than on her ability to recognize, even if only at an unconscious level, commonplace images in an effort to make statements about language relevant, to justify their indirectness.

It appears that, like 'stale' arguments about language, the use of these sorts of metaphors is justified not because they are innovative but because they not. By evoking commonplace images of language, these metaphors direct readers to resurrect the commonsensical assumptions these ('dead') metaphors encode and the stereotypical

perspectives they make mutually manifest.[56] Unlike creative metaphors, which revitalize long-standing ideas about language for new contexts of interpretation, these conventional metaphors seem to authorize long-standing and unexamined ideas about language for commonplace contexts that are as familiar or customary as the ideas they reinforce. This is particularly significant in a print media context where letter writers have showcased their ability to harvest examples of 'incorrect' usage for as long *The Globe and Mail* has existed and where the newspaper, which selects these letters on the basis of their relevance, sees itself as an assiduous overseer, one that cultivates good usage and assumptions about good usage.

The relevance of these metaphors, in fact, seems to lie in their ability to make mutually manifest those identifications associated with the expression of commonplace concerns about the use of language. While these metaphors can certainly be found in other domains, they have a particular resonance, a special life, in a domain where editors and readers typically imagine themselves as harvesters and cultivators of English or, as some of the examples below suggest, defenders of English. In the "language maintenance is war" metaphors below, language maintenance is configured not in terms of communicative agreement or accord, but in terms of conflict and division, making this attitude's corresponding actions (defence and preservation) appear commonsensical.

> . . . a time-consuming, all-out campaign . . . . (K. Smith, "English Usage")
>
> . . . the cause [may not be helped] by continuing the fight. (G. Hendry, "English Usage")
>
> . . . tacit campaign against language and tradition . . . (E. Forte, "Phoiled Again")
>
> The CBC . . . should set standards . . . in the battle . . . to preserve our language. (D. S. House, "Phonetics")

---

[56] According to Lakoff and Johnson, many 'dead' metaphors are better seen as 'live' in the sense that they are conceptual frameworks; they "structure our actions and thoughts" (55). Moreover, as Janet Giltrow points out, metaphors that appear to be 'dead' (e.g. war metaphors encoded in such phrases as "attacked his opponent's point") can change meaning in their travel; as they are used in different contexts to name different situations, they pick up different collates, a reflection of the ways these entities can be lexicalized socially and, after a certain point, cognitively, that is, as more stable conceptual collocations (Personal Communication, 10 Dec. 2005). For example, the "war on poverty," with its humanitarian and bureaucratic collates, suggests a different attitude, names a different situation than the "war on Christmas," a recent coinage that collocates terms of secularism and progressivism with terms for war.

> . . . the defenceless public . . . (M. Polimeni, "A Wig was a Wig")
>
> . . . [misguided] defense of ungrammatical expression. (C. Carson-Talcott, "Grammar and Usage)

Here, the vehicles "campaign," "battle," "fight" and "defence/defenceless" direct readers to activate a range of densely connected ideas or images, including but not limited to ideas or images of soldiers, invasions, attack plans, physical dangers, prolonged struggles, opponents, protection or fortification against attack, feelings of fear or vulnerability, feelings of brotherhood, righteous causes, territorial disputes, and so on.

Readers, of course, do not activate all of these ideas and images; master metaphors, as I indicate above, constrain interpretative contexts in ways creative metaphors might not. As David Ritchie points out, in "Metaphors in Conversational Context: Toward a Connectivity Theory of Metaphor Interpretation," during conversation images or "associations will resonate with ideas that are already activated in working memory, either by the preceding conversational context or as a result of the reader's work in supplying a context, and will be reinforced" (275). In other words, interpreting or optimizing the relevance of these sorts of metaphors is especially dependent "on what has gone before" (275). In discourse contexts where concerns about usage have long been figured as a campaign, battle, defence and fight, where there are already activated ideas about attacks against and struggles to preserve an ideal of language, the associations readers make between the concepts *correct English* or *language* and the concepts *campaign, battle, fight*, and *defence* will generally be reinforced. More importantly, in a discourse context where easily activated ideas about where such attacks and struggles occur (i.e. in the pages of *The Globe and Mail*), such stock metaphors have "high news value." That is, they trigger and confirm unexamined assumptions not only about language events, but also about those mutually defining distinctions (cultivator, defender, and guardian) that guarantee the relevance of these metaphors. It makes sense, therefore, that stereotypical metaphors of growth and battle, of gardening and guarding, are the most common metaphors used in these letters. Indeed, the language as conduit metaphor (based on the language/thought dichotomy) or the language as tool metaphor (and the implicatures of utility, practicality and construction it might effect) would not be as

relevant in this context, would not realize the mutually manifest desires, values and beliefs most likely to renew this particular exigency and the distinctions it confers.

In this chapter, I have attempted to offer another explanation, an explanation different from Wahl-Jorgensen's, for how criteria of relevance and authority might construct a public, one mediated by the practices and interests of the newsroom. I suggested that this mediation is better seen, not in terms of expressed principles of newsworthiness (topicality, interestingness, and informativeness), but in terms of the construction of mutually manifest desire, value and belief. This chapter's relevance-theoretical account of how commonplace statements about language are made relevant in media contexts suggests that the reproduction of the news values that inform *how* language can be discussed and the reproduction of a public that shares these values and *ways* of talking about language have more to do with reproducing an exigency that obliges a particular kind of public, one that reflects the disagreements and agreements, tastes and judgements, the tensions and pretensions that confirm *The Globe*'s position in the linguistic marketplace. My analysis of letter heads and letter writers' use of metaphor indicates that the acts of directing the reception of talk about language and describing usage are indemnifying acts; they are a means of naming and figuring, of securing uncommon positions via commonsense perspectives. The actual relevance of statements about language, then, lies not in their ability to fascinate, inform, please or speak to current affairs, but in their ability to direct readers to construct contexts – assumptions, beliefs, values and desires – which in turn make manifest a surplus of interest and identification, an excess of shared attitudes and actions that encourages renewed strategies of distinction and so new routes for the traffic in ideologies of language to take.

Conclusion

As this study has suggested, commonplace talk about language is not a neutral kind of talk. Questions about, for example, the 'fine points of usage' or debates about 'the living language' are nearly always linked, on some level, to the extra-linguistic, to attempts to fashion institutional and national identities, to concerns about the socio-economic order or anxieties about its re-ordering, and to a host of other issues, some of which, as my study indicates, have little to do with language, but which can be appended to it if talk about language might, in any way, express these issues. In fact, talk about language is a particularly porous kind of talk; it attracts and absorbs personal, social, economic and cultural concerns rather easily, and it can be wrung out to make room for the absorption of further concerns of an extra-linguistic nature. As researchers in the field of language ideologies have argued, there is a politics involved in this talk, one that reveals language's connection to power and desire, to the modalities of self and others. Indeed, much of the research that investigates the politics of language details the privileges, inequalities, oppressions and discriminations produced by this politics. Moreover, these investigations, in one way or another, link the workings of this politics to the operation of linguistic authority – to authority in language, variously conceived as a misrecognition (e.g. of the legitimate language) or a mystification (e.g. of the expertise of those who make pronouncements about usage).

While this research has provided important insights into the operation of linguistic authority and the effects this authority produces, my research has asked readers to take a step back, to look, not so much at what it produces, but at how authority in language is actually configured, sustained and renewed in the very talk people use when they engage in discourses on language. Linguistic authority may well be a kind of misrecognition of the value of the legitimate language or the result of a mystification of expert pronouncements, but these explanations do not tell the whole story of authority in language or the ideologies of language that sustain this authority. I began this study with a set of general questions meant to bring this relation between authority and ideology into focus. I wished, first and foremost, to understand why, in spite of the efforts of those who have attempted to explain and problematize their ideological character, certain

beliefs about language persist, are rather tenacious, downright stubborn. In other words, I wanted to understand why commonplaces about language appear to trump everything else to be said about it. There is a kind of mystery here that needed investigation and this study has attempted to unravel some of this mystery, to understand how certain ways of talking about language could make particular modes of thought and action appear so authoritative.

In fact, the findings of this study indicate that the terms we use to name language and the ways we structure our talk about it are central components of its saliency. As my examination of linguistic authority demonstrates, the construction of and appeal to a common sense of language, configured as an indistinct atmospheric pressure, secures the confidence with which such statements about language are expressed. Familiar and familiarizing terms, politely worded configurations, and the always-already relevance of idiomatic statements tie 'public' attitudes and actions to 'private' perspectives and positions, making these appear consensual and commonsensical. Indeed, to be authoritative, it seems these ideas about language must be articulated in characteristic terms or structures that speak to at the same time as they perform a unified linguistic consciousness. They must also enact a practical consciousness. That is, the rhetorical moves and grammatical properties of this talk not only construct a collective sense of language, as common perspective and position, but a practical sense of language as well, one that construes what we do to/with language (accept, tolerate, permit, deny, debate, guard) as social practicalities and thus optimally sensible. In the contexts I've examined, attitudes and their corresponding actions are fashioned in terms of public interest and sentiment, not the exigencies, or practicalities, of those who delineate national languages or who calibrate language for its use in the national press.

The most obvious implication of my findings is that the circulation of commonplaces about language will continue as long as they remain socially sensible and practical, as long as they are able to adequately assemble, as common, the perspectives and positions of those who garner distinction from traffic in these commodities. For those of us who teach in the fields of writing, rhetoric and discourse analysis, this implication raises an important issue related to our own practices and positions. Expert statements about language that are not attuned to a commonsense frequency are rarely taken up, or

authorized, in the same way as those that are attuned to this frequency. Indeed, uncommon talk (e.g. "language is symbolic action," "language is heteroglossic") is often treated as static while commonplaces, such as "concise and logical writing" or "clear and precise language," are more easily heard. Moreover, such commonplaces, or more precisely commonplace complaints about students' inability to write logically and clearly, have often provided *the* rationale for the labour we do. For example, research in the history of North American writing instruction indicates that first year English courses in the United States and many writing and rhetoric programmes in North America owe their continued existence to these sorts of complaints,[57] in spite of the fact that these courses and programmes can not solve the 'problems' these complaints identify (Greenbaum 187). Thus attempts to provide other rationales for our labour and to challenge these commonplaces about language and the positions they afford, can make our own practices and positions appear unintelligible and impractical. I do not mean, with this observation, to suggest that because their circulation makes our work difficult that we abandon critical analyses of these commonplaces and their pedagogical effects. Instead, I mean to suggest that, in the very least, those of us who teach language-related subjects be sensitive to the ways these commonplaces might serve institutional imperatives, including our own, especially if they are keyed to 'public' sentiment and interest.

The construction of public sentiment and interest in media reports of Simon Fraser University's recent writing initiative provides a noteworthy example of the ways commonplaces about language might serve such institutional imperatives. Since the spring of 2001, the university has been involved in a number of activities meant to develop students' abilities in writing and quantitative reasoning. In the fall of 2002, for example, a centre was established (known then as the Centre for Writing Intensive Learning, or CWIL) to develop and support "writing-intensive" courses in all disciplines across the university. This curriculum change, some administrators believed, would address concerns that students entering the university did not have the writing skills they

[57] See for example Susan Miller's account of the relation between English Studies and Composition in *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition* and Henry Hubert's "Babel after the Fall: The Place of Writing in English," an account of writing instruction in Canada.

needed in their courses and that students graduating from the university were not adequately prepared for workplace literacy requirements. On November 25, 2002, *The Vancouver Sun* printed a report detailing the university's new curriculum. In "SFU to revamp curriculum to improve students' writing skills," reporter Janet Steffenhagen heralds these changes as "bold attempts" to raise levels of literacy and numeracy among university students (A1). On November 27, 2002, the Victoria *Times-Colonist* printed a similar item, "SFU is heading back to the basics," an editorial lauding SFU's intention to 'fix' student writing and thinking skills.

This story, of course, is not a new one: perceived literacy crises in post-secondary education and various attempts to address these crises are, as the work of Tony Crowley, Susan Miller, Richard Coe and others indicates, historical commonplaces. While there is much to say about the ways these attempts may or may not re-accentuate historical commonplaces for new contexts of utterance, the telling of Simon Fraser University's story in *The Vancouver Sun* and the *Times-Colonist* has particular relevance for the sorts of issues I have addressed in my thesis. Indeed, in their accounts of the development and implementation of writing-intensive courses, these authors frame the issues this initiative is meant to address in familiar terms, in terms that treat writing as a set of 'basic skills', or tools, that students lack. In these accounts, there is only a hint of the complex nature of writing. For example, Steffenhagen quotes Wendy Strachan, then the director of CWIL, who insists that although high school graduates have yet to learn to write for university contexts, they can nonetheless write ("SFU to Revamp Curriculum" A1). However, Strachan's point about students' abilities in different contexts of writing is subsumed beneath other comments that configure academic writing, a "sophisticated means of writing," as "a bit more" than grammar (qtd. in Steffenhagen A1). Moreover, academic writing is often explained in terms of "critical thinking" and "the effective presentation of arguments" (Steffenhagen A1) and in terms of "clear writing" ("Back to the Basics" A12), commonplaces that do little to explain the kinds of writing students actually do in university.

But these commonplaces, like others I have detailed elsewhere in this thesis, simultaneously construct and speak to commonsense concerns about and public interest

in 'institutional' matters of language and literacy. In the *Times-Colonist*, we are told that parents and students pay too much money to see their tuition costs and taxes "frittered away" on basic writing instruction ("Back to the Basics" A12). Therefore, it should be of public interest, the editorial implies, that SFU will reconsider its entrance requirements, which in turn will force curricular reforms in the secondary school system ("Back to the Basics" A12). In amongst details about entrance requirements, costs and time lines, Steffenhagen quotes an SFU administrator, who also offers a commonsense public rationale for this institutional change. Reporting on employers' and the public's "realistic" expectation that students, upon graduating, should be able to write well, the SFU administrator says, "We had some feeling, although not a whole lot of evidence, that writing skills in particular were not at the level they should be" (A1). The articulation of this public report and expectation, alongside authoritative feelings rather than expert findings, makes this account newsworthy, worth telling readers who may share similar feelings. However, as Stephen Hume suggests, in a recent *Vancouver Sun* article, the newsworthiness of such accounts may have more to do with the fact that they can stir up public feeling, generating in turn letters to the editor that ratify the shared nature of this sentiment and media reports of it. For example, Hume observes a tendency among some journalists, needing something to write about on a "slow day," to "resurrect" stale ideas about declining standards (A12). According to Hume, these journalists often exemplify their point by painting a picture of grammatically challenged high school students and ineffective high school teachers who force university professors to 'pick up the slack' as it were (A12). These stories are then "followed by a flurry of letters to the editor bemoaning inattention to standards" (A12).

Moreover, as Hume suggests, the construction of public expectation and sentiment involve commonsense attitudes and familiar actions ('fixing' illiteracy, returning to basics, attending to standards) in a managerial politics that patrols movement in and across secondary and post-secondary contexts at the same time as it deflects attention away from the concerns of those, in the university, who may feel pressure to administer these actions in a way that speaks to 'the public' or 'taxpayer'. In fact, what is most remarkable about these media accounts is the ways in which commonplaces

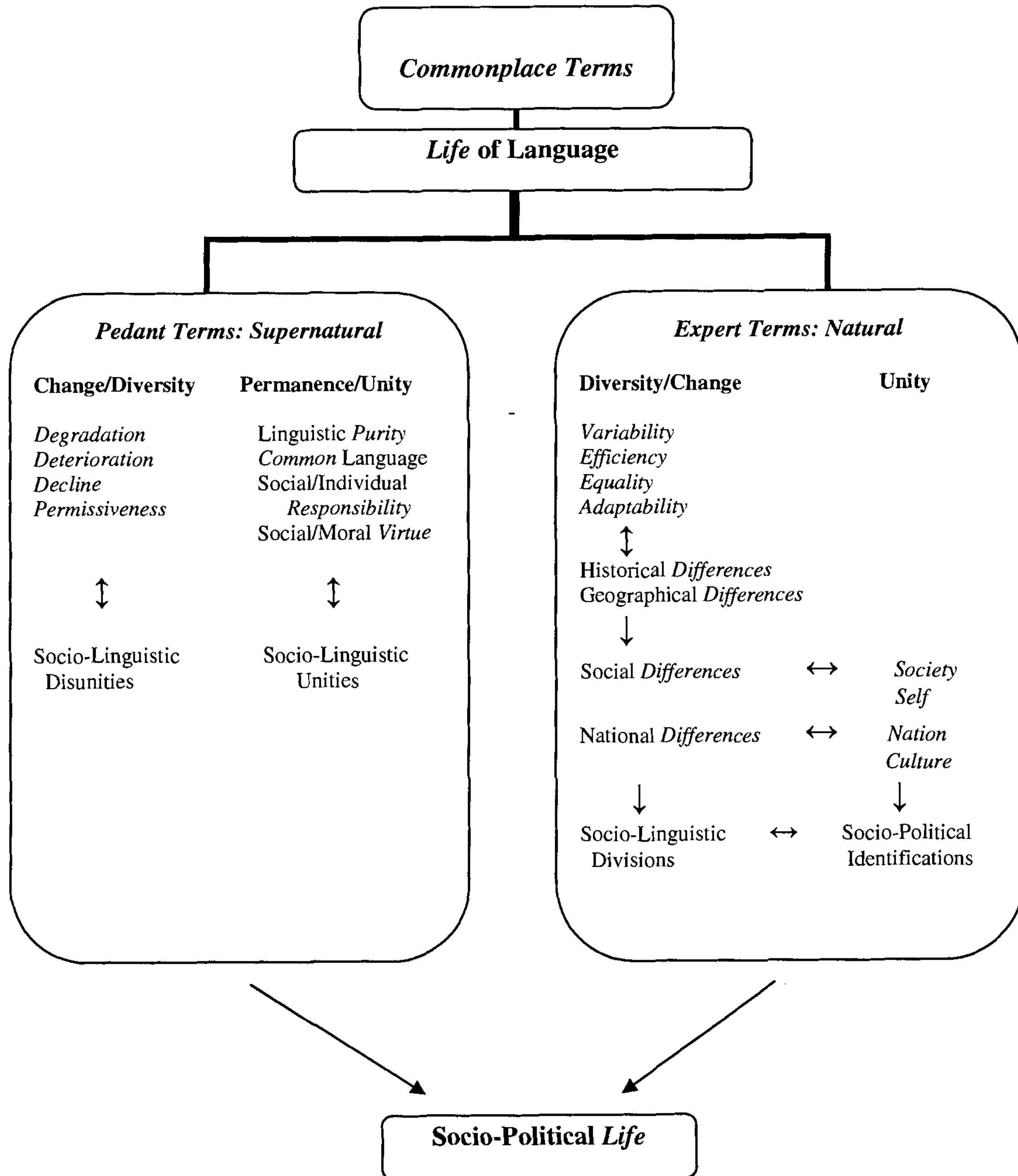
effortlessly travel while expert accounts are halted, made to speak to a policing public concern. For example, in spite of the fact that Strachan, a researcher and teacher in the field of writing, offers an explanation of student writing that echoes the view that writing is a situated practice, a *Vancouver Sun* editorial printed two days after Steffenhagen's article uses the report of CWIL's initiative as an opportunity to chastise secondary schools for not preparing students for university level writing: the fact that the university believes it must teach basic skills is "a shocking comment on our elementary and high school system" ("SFU's Sage Teaching Decision" A22). In his account of the 1970s writing instruction in British Columbia, Coe suggests that these sorts of complaints about high-school students' lack of preparation for university have, historically, managed the work of those who teach writing. For example, the expression of similar sentiments in the 1970s were used to pressure both high school teachers and University of British Columbia professors to change their curricula, to answer calls for a return to the basics, a return to grammatical correctness and standardized testing ("Teaching Writing" 277).

While I have only briefly, here in my conclusion, discussed the circulation of commonplace ideas in and around university settings, further research on the intersections between commonsense ideologies and post-secondary schooling is needed in order to better understand the pedagogical and cultural implications of the 'public' ways we talk about language and the actions and positions this talk permits. Furthermore, while future research that analyzes the style of statements about language may confirm my findings, it may also reveal that constructions of linguistic consciousness will take different forms when keyed to different exigencies – different publics, interests, desires and motives. For example, an analysis of corporate talk about language, of the ways in which managers and technical writers configure ideas about language for their reception in corporate domains, might indicate that statements about language are dispersed into cooperative atmospheres via economic, rather than genteel-scientific, constructions of linguistic consciousness. Such analyses may even tell us more about the ways in which linguistic authority and the ideologies of language that support it encourage different strategies of distinction, or indistinction.

Indeed, my examination of the style of talk about language indicates that the strategies of distinction I analyze in this thesis are really strategies of indistinction.

That is, the distinction of those who work in the language trade or who report on language matters in the press requires the construction of a rather indistinct but nonetheless excited linguistic consciousness, which in turn guarantees a desire for and interest in commonplace language ideologies. This excited traffic, this 'public' interest and sentiment, produces a surplus, an added-value or profit that comes, not from the initial production of ideas about language, but from their circulation as second-hand goods. The authority and tenacity of commonplace language ideologies, then, has less to do with direct appeals to pre-existing beliefs, values and interests than with the ways we construct these as marketable entities that can be refurbished, dusted off and polished for resale in a number of pawn shops.

Appendix: Key Terms



Works Cited

Alford, Henry. *A Plea for the Queen's English.* Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co., 1866.

Algeo, John. "The Mirror and the Template: Cloning Public Opinion." *The English Language Today*. Ed. Sidney Greenbaum. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. 57-64.

Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. London: NLB, 1971.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* 2nd ed. London and New York: Verso, 1991.

Aristotle. "From *Rhetoric*." *The Rhetorical Tradition*. 2nd ed. Ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 179-240.

Avis, Walter S., et al, eds. *Gage Canadian Dictionary*. Toronto: Gage Educational, 1983.

Avis, Walter S. "Canadian English." *Gage Canadian Dictionary*. Ed. Walter S. Avis, et al. Toronto: Gage Educational, 1983. xi-xii.

---. Introduction. *A Concise Dictionary of Canadianisms*. Ed. Walter S. Avis, et al. Toronto: Gage Educational, 1973. viii-x.

---. "Canadian English." *Dictionary of Canadian English: The Senior Dictionary.* Toronto: Gage, 1967. vi-ix.

---. Introduction. *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles*. Ed. Walter S. Avis, et al. Toronto: Gage, 1967. xii-xv.

---. *Essays and Articles Selected from a Quarter Century of Scholarship*. Kingston: Royal Military College of Canada, 1978.

Bakhtin, M.M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1986.

---. *Dialogic Imagination*. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.

Barber, Katherine, ed. Preface. *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary.* Toronto: Oxford UP, 1998.

Billig, Michael. *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

Blakemore, Diane. *Understanding Utterances*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1992.

Bloomfield, Morton W. "Canadian English and its Relation to Eighteenth Century American Speech." *Canadian English: Origins and Structures*. Ed. J.K. Chambers. Toronto: Methuen, 1975. 3-11.

The Beacher. "Unjust Legislation." Letter. *Globe*. 7 Mar. 1921: A4.

Blommaert, Jan, and Jef Verschueren. "The Role of Language in European Nationalist Ideologies." *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*. Ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 189-210.

Bollingbroke, H. Letter. "Dislikes Journalese." *Globe and Mail*. 23 May 1947: A6.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Ed. John B. Thompson. Cambridge, England: Polity, 1991.

---. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. London: Routledge, 1984.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. 2nd ed. Trans. Richard Nice. London: Sage, 1990.

Brandon, Victoria. *In Defence of Plain English: The Decline and Fall of Literacy in Canada*. Willowdale, Ontario: Hounslow, 1992.

Brinton, Laurel J., and Margery Fee. "Canadian English." *The Cambridge History of the English Language*. Vol. 6. Ed. John Algeo. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 422-40.

Brodkey, Linda. *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996.

Brown, Gillian, and George Yule. *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983.

Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

Burke, Kenneth. *On Symbols and Society*. Ed. Joseph R. Gusfield. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989.

---. *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. 3rd ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973.

---. *A Grammar of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.

---. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1969.

---. *Language as Symbolic Action: Studies in Life, Literature, and Method*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1966.

---. "Counter-Gridlock: An Interview with Kenneth Burke." *All Area* 2 (1983): 6-33.

---. *Attitudes Toward History*. 2nd ed. Los Altos, California: Hermes, 1959.

Cameron, Deborah. *Verbal Hygiene*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

---. "Demythologizing Sociolinguistics: Why Language Does Not Reflect Society." *Ideologies of Language*. Ed. John E. Joseph and Talbot J. Taylor. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. 79-96.

Chambers, J.K. "Canadian English: 250 Years in the Making." *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1998.

---. "'Lawless and Vulgar Innovations': Victorian Views of Canadian English." *Varieties of English Around the World: Focus on Canada*. Ed. Sandra Clarke. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins B.V., 1993. 1-26.

---. "Three Kinds of Standard in Canadian English." *In Search of the Standard in Canadian English*. Occasional Papers 1. Ed. W.C. Lougheed. Kingston, Ontario: Strathy Language Unit, Queen's University, 1986. 1-15.

Clifton, R. Letter. "Phonetic Imports." *Globe and Mail*. 15 Apr. 1978: A6.

Clark, Herbert H., and Catherine R. Marshall. "Definite Reference and Mutual Knowledge." *Arenas of Language Use*. By Herbert H. Clark. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992. 9-59.

Coates, Jennifer. *The Semantics of Modal Auxiliaries*. London: Croom Hill, 1983.

Coe, Richard M. "Beyond Diction: Using Burke to Empower Words – and Wordlings." *Rhetoric Review* 11 (1993): 368-77.

---. "'An Arousing and Fulfillment of Desires': The Rhetoric of Genre in the Process Era and Beyond." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Ed. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. London: Taylor & Francis, 1994. 181-90.

---. *Toward a Better Life; or, Why and How to Read Kenneth Burke*. Unpublished book, 1995/2000.

---. "Teaching Writing: The Process Approach, Humanism, and the Context of 'Crisis'." *Literacy, Society and Schooling*. Ed. S. deCastell, A. Luke and K. Egan. New York: Cambridge, UP, 1986. 270-312.

"Copy with Colour: Papers Canadianize their Spellings, Now that They Know How." *British Columbia Report*. 9.50 (1998): 41.

Crichton, R. Letter. "Shame, Shame." *Globe and Mail*. 21 Dec. 1991: D7.

Crowley, Tony. *Standard English and the Politics of Language*. 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave, 2003.

---. *Language in History: Theories and Texts*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Denis, Wilfrid. "Language in Saskatchewan: Anglo-Hegemony Maintained." *Language in Canada*. Ed. John Edwards. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. 425-42.

de Wolf, Gaelan Dodds, et al, eds. *Gage Canadian Dictionary*. Toronto: Gage Educational, 1997.

Dor, Daniel. "On Newspaper Headlines as Relevance Optimizers." *Journal of Pragmatics* 35.5 (2005): 695-721.

Eagleton, Terry. *The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism.* London: Verso, 1984.

---. *Ideology: An Introduction.* London: Verso, 1991.

Eley, Geoff. "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century." *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: MIT, 1992. 289-339.

Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power.* 2nd ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education, 2001.

Fee, Margery. Introduction. *Oxford Guide to Canadian English Usage.* By Margery Fee and Janice McAlpine. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1997.

Finegan, Edward. "Usage." *The Cambridge History of the English Language.* Vol. 6. Ed. John Algeo. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 358-421.

---. *Attitudes Toward English Usage: The History of a War of Words.* New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1980.

Fitzmaurice, Susan. "*The Spectator*, the Politics of Social Networks, and Language Standardization in Eighteenth-Century England." *The Development of Standard English, 1300-1800.* Ed. L. Wright. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000: 195-218.

Floyd, Doug. "Ask the Editor." Spokesmanreview.com. 2004. 23 Mar. 2006. <http://www.spokesmanreview.com/blogs/editors/archives>.

Forsey, E. Letter. "It Won't Do." *Globe and Mail.* 8 Sept. 1982: A6.

Forte, E. Letter. "Phoiled Again." *Globe and Mail.* 27 Oct. 1975: A6.

Foucault, M. *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* Trans. Sheridan Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

---. *The History of Sexuality.* Vol.1. New York: Vintage, 1990.

Francis, C.W. Letter. "Grammar and Usage." *Globe.* 25 Feb. 1921: A4.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy." *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: MIT, 1992. 109-42.

Gal, Susan. "Multiplicity and Contention among Language Ideologies: A Commentary." *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory.* Ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 317-31.

Garnett, Gale. "You Say 'Nucular,' I Say 'Nuclear.'" Rev. of *Oxford Guide to Canadian English Usage* by Margery Fee and Janice McAlpine. *Globe and Mail.* 23 Aug. 1997: D14.

Germain, Russ. "The C-B-C of Language." *Words: Woe & Wonder.* 2000. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. 26 February 2005 <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indepth/words/c_b_c.html>.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.

Giltrow, Janet. "Modern Conscience: Modalities of Obligation in Research Genres." *Text* 25.2 (2005): 171-199.

---. "Meta-Genre." *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre: Strategies for Stability and Change.* Ed. Richard Coe, Lorelei Lingard, and Tatiana Teslenko. Cresskill, New Jersey: Hampton, 2002. 187-206.

---. *Academic Writing: Writing & Reading in the Disciplines.* 3rd ed. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2002.

---. "Modernizing Authority: Management Studies and the Grammaticalization of Controlling Interests." *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* 28.3 (1998): 265-86.

---. "Ironies of Politeness in Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac.*" *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology and British Women Writers.* Ed. Kathy Mezei. Chapel Hill: U of Northern Carolina P, 1996. 215-237.

---. "Genre and the Pragmatic Concept of Background Knowledge." *Genre and the New Rhetoric.* Ed. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. London, England: Taylor & Francis, 1994. 155-78.

Glenny, J. Letter. "The Queen's English." *Globe and Mail.* 1 Oct. 1970: A6.

Gough, Val, and Mary Talbot. "'Guilt over Games Boys Play': Coherence as a Focus for examining the constitution of Heterosexual Subjectivity on a Problem Page." *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis.* Ed. Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcom Coulthard. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. 214-30.

Graham, R.P. Letter. "Loose Usage." *Globe and Mail.* 17 Oct. 1975: A6.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks.* Trans. and Ed. Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International, 1971.

---. *Selections from Cultural Writings.* Trans. William Boelhowe. Ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1991.

Greenbaum, Leonard. "The Tradition of Complaint." *College English* 31.2 (1969): 174-87.

Gregg, Robert J. "Canadian English Lexicography." *Varieties of English Around the World: Focus on Canada*. Ed. Sandra Clarke. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1993. 27-44.

Gregory, Luke, and Brett Hutchins. "Everyday Editorial Practices and The Public Sphere: Analysing the Letters to the Editor Page of a Regional Newspaper." *Media International Australia* 112 (2004): 186-200.

Gusfield, Joseph R. Introduction. *On Symbols and Society*. By Kenneth Burke. Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1989. 1-49.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT, 1991.

Halliday, M.A.K., and Ruqaiya Hasan. *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman, 1976.

Harris, Susan. "Politeness and Power: Making and Responding to 'Requests' in Institutional Settings." *Text* 23.1 (2003): 27-52.

Hendry, G. Letter. "English Usage." *Globe and Mail*. 2 June 1972: A6.

Hessing, Melody. "Green Mail: The Social Construction of Environmental Issues Through Letters to the Editor." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 28.1 (2003): 25-42.

Hicks, Wynford, and Tim Holmes. *Subediting for Journalists*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Honey, John. *Language is Power: The Story of Standard English and its Enemies*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1997.

House, D.S. Letter. "Phonetics." *Globe and Mail*. 26 Aug. 1978: A6.

Hubert, Henry. "Babel after the Fall: The Place of Writing in English." University of *Toronto Quarterly* 64.3 (1995): 381-97.

Hume, Stephen. "Oh, Goodness Gracious! Let's All Get in a Flap about Grammar." *Vancouver Sun*. 12 May 2006: A19.

Hunter, Ian. *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education*. London: Macmillan, 1988.

Hyland, Ken. "Writing without Conviction? Hedging in Science Research Articles." *Applied Linguistics* 17.4 (1996): 433-54.

---. "Academic Attribution: Citation and the Construction of Disciplinary Knowledge." *Applied Linguistics* 20.3 (1999): 341-67.

Hynds, Earnest. "Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters." *Newspaper Research Journal* (Fall 1991): 124-36.

Introduction. *Dictionary of Canadian English: The Senior Dictionary*. Toronto: Gage, 1976.

Jordan, Michael P. "A Pragmatic/Structural Approach to Relevance." *Technostyle* 16.2 (2000): 47-67.

Joseph, John E., and Talbot J. Taylor, eds. "Introduction: Ideology, Science and Language." *Ideologies of Language*. Ed. John E. Joseph and Talbot J. Taylor. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. 1-8.

Kövecses, Zoltán. *American English: An Introduction*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2000.

Krapp, George Phillip. *Modern English: Its Growth and Present Use*. Ed. Albert H. Marckwardt. New York: Scribner, 1969.

Kroskrity, Paul, ed. "Regimenting Languages: Language Ideological Perspectives." *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research, 2000. 1-34.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980.

"Letter Zed." Marmalade.ca. 2005. 26 February 2005 <http://www.marmalade.ca/archives/002207.html>.

Lilles, Jaan. "The Myth of Canadian English." *English Today* 16.2 (2000): 3-10.

Lippi-Green, Rosina. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Magnusson, Lynne. *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.

Marckwardt, Albert Henry. *American English*. New York: Oxford UP, 1958.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *The German Ideology: Parts I and II*. Ed. R. Pascal. New York: International, 1960.

Matthews, Brander. *Parts of Speech: Essays on English*. 1901. Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries, 1968.

McArthur, Tom. *Oxford Guide to World English*. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2003.

McFarlane, J.A., and Warren Clements, eds. *The Globe and Mail Style Book: A Guide to Language and Usage*. Toronto: McClelland, 1998.

McIntosh, Carey. *The Evolution of English Prose, 1700-1800: Style, Politeness, and Print Culture*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1998.

McLean, Lorna. "'To Become Part of Us': Ethnicity, Race, Literacy and the Canadian Immigration Act of 1919." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 36.2 (2004): 1-28.

McKercher, W.R. Letter. "There is a Difference." *Globe and Mail*. 22 Feb. 1986: A7.

"'Me' and 'Don't'." Editorial. *Globe*. 22 Feb. 1921: A4.

Miller, Carolyn R. "Genre as Social Action." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Ed. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. London: Taylor & Francis, 1994. 23-42.

---. "Rhetorical Community: The Cultural Basis of Genre." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Ed. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. London: Taylor & Francis, 1994. 67-78.

Miller, Susan. *Textual Carnivals: The Politics of Composition*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1991.

Miller, Thomas P. *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: U of Pittsburgh P, 1997.

Milroy, James. "The Legitimate Language: Giving a History to English." *Alternative Histories of English*. Ed. Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 7-26.

---. "The Consequences of Standardisation in Descriptive Linguistics." *Standard English: The Widening Debate*. Ed. Tony Bex and Richard J. Watts. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 16-39.

Milroy, James, and Leslie Milroy. *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English*. 3rd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

Milroy, Leslie. "Standard English and Language Ideology in Britain and the United States." *Standard English: The Widening Debate*. Ed. Tony Bex and Richard J. Watts. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 173-206.

Moore, Tim. "Knowledge and Agency: A Study of 'Metaphenomenal Discourse' in Textbooks from Three Disciplines." *English for Specific Purposes* 21.4: 347-66.

Morash, Gordon. "Celebrate Canuck Tongue, Eh?" Rev. of *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* Ed. by Katherine Barber. *Edmonton Journal* 1 July 1998: C1.

Mummery, Jane, and Debbie Rodan. "Discourses of Democracy in the Aftermath of 9/11 and Other Events: Protectivism versus Humanitarianism." *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 17.4 (2003): 433-43.

Myers, Greg. "The Pragmatics of Politeness in Scientific Articles." *Applied Linguistics* 10.1 (1989): 1-35.

Neufeldt, Victoria. Introductory Remarks. "Canadian English." By Walter S. Avis. *Gage Canadian Dictionary*. Ed. Walter S. Avis et al. Toronto: Gage Educational, 1983. xi.

Neuman, J.H. "American Newspaper Interest in English Language Problems." *American Speech* 20.2 (1945): 99-105.

Nguyen, Lily. "Canadian Dictionary a Runaway Best-Seller." Rev. of *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* Ed. By Katherine Barber. *Edmonton Journal* 28 July 1998: B1.

Nuyts, Jan. "Subjectivity as an Evidential Dimension of Epistemic Modal Expressions." *Journal of Pragmatics* 33 (2001): 383-400.

---. Epistemic Modality: *Language and Conceptualization: A Cognitive-Pragmatic Perspective.* Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001.

The Observer. Rev. of *Appeal to the Men of Great Britain on Behalf of Women*, by Mary Hays. *Critical Review*. Vol. 8 (1785): 297-99.

O'Brien, Gerald. "Indigestible Food, Conquering Hordes and Waste Materials: Metaphors of Immigrants and the Early Immigration Debate in the United States." *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* by Sonja K. Foss. 3rd ed. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland, 2004. 307-319.

O'Neill, G. Letter. "The Stuff of Language." *Globe and Mail*. 18 Sept. 1982: A6.

Oram, H.F. Letter. "Lauds Mr. King's English." *Globe*. 6 Aug. 1935: A4.

Orkin, Mark. *Speaking Canadian English: An Information Account of the English Language in Canada.* Toronto: General, 1970.

Orrell, John. Introduction. *Western Canadian Dictionary and Phrase Book.* By John Sandilands. 1913. Facsimile. Edmonton, Alberta: U of Alberta P, 1977.

Oster, C.E. Letter. "Correct Spelling." *Globe*. 9 May 1935: A4.

Palmer, F.R. *Modality and the English Modals.* 2nd ed. London and New York: Longman, 1990.

Parr, J. Letter. "Improper Usage." *Globe and Mail.* 5 Oct. 1996: D9.

Phelan, E.C., ed. *The Globe and Mail Style Book.* Toronto: Globe and Mail, 1981.

---., ed. *The Globe and Mail Style Book.* 4th ed. Toronto: Globe and Mail, 1969.

---., ed. *The Globe and Mail Style Book.* 3rd ed. Toronto: Globe and Mail, 1963.

Polimeni, M. Letter. "A Wig was a Wig." *Globe and Mail.* 6 Apr. 1965: A6.

Pooley, Robert C. *Grammar and Usage in Textbooks on English.* Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1933.

Powell, A. Letter. "English Usage." *Globe and Mail.* 13 Oct. 1975: A6.

Pratt, T.K. "The Hobgoblin of Canadian English Spelling." *Varieties of English Around the World: Focus on Canada.* Ed. Sandra Clarke. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1993. 45-64.

Pringle, Ian. "The Complexity of the Concept of Standard." *In Search of the Standard in Canadian English.* Occasional Papers 1. Ed. W.C. Lougheed. Kingston, Ontario: Strathy Language Unit, Queen's University, 1986. 20-38.

---. "Attitudes to Canadian English." *The English Language Today.* Ed. Sidney Greenbaum. Oxford: Pergamon, 1985. 183-206.

Proctor, J. Letter. "Her Excellency: Her Honor?" *Globe.* 21 Mar. 1921: A4.

Progress. Letter. "Canada a Nation." *Globe.* 10 Feb. 1925: A4.

Preston, Dennis. "The Story of Good and Bad English in the United States." *Alternative Histories of English.* Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill Ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 134-52.

Reader, Bill, et al. "Age, Wealth, Education Predict Letters to the Editor." *Newspaper Research Journal* 25.4 (2004): 55-66.

Reisenauer, Eric. "'The Battle of the Standards': Great Pyramid Metrology and British Identity, 1859-1890." *The Historian* 65.4 (2003): 931-78.

Renzetti, Elizabeth. "So, Like, Now You Can Look it Up, Eh?" Rev. of *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary* Ed. by Katherine Barber. *Globe and Mail* 30 May 1998: C10.

Richards, I.A. "The Philosophy of Rhetoric." *The Rhetorical Tradition.* Ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 1281-1294.

Richardson, John E. "'Now is the Time to Put an End to All This': Argumentative Discourse Theory and 'Letters to the Editor'." *Discourse & Society* 12.2 (2001): 143-68.

Richler, Howard. "Canada Gets its Own Oxford." Rev. of *The Oxford Canadian Dictionary* Ed. by Katherine Barber. *Montreal Gazette* 27 June 1998: J2.

Ritchie, David. "Metaphors in Conversational Context: Toward a Connectivity Theory of Metaphor Interpretation." *Metaphor and Symbol* 19.4 (2004): 245-64.

Scargill, M.H. Preface. *A Concise Dictionary of Canadianisms.* Ed. Walter S. Avis, et al. Toronto: Gage Educational, 1973. vii.

---. Preface. *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles.* Ed. Walter S. Avis, et al. Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1967. vii.

---. *A Short History of Canadian English.* Victoria, B.C.: Sono Nis, 1977.

---. "The Sources of Canadian English." *Canadian English: Origins and Structures.* Ed. J.K. Chambers. Toronto: Methuen, 1975. 12-15.

Schieffelin, Bambi B., and Rachelle Charlier Doucet. "The 'Real' Haitian Creole: Ideology, Metalinguistics, and Orthographic Choice." *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory.* Ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 285-316.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1990.

"SFU is Heading Back to the Basics." Editorial. *Times-Colonist* [Victoria] 27 Nov. 2002: A12.

"SFU's Sage Teaching Decision Shocking Commentary on Schools." Editorial. *Vancouver Sun* 27 Nov. 2002: A22.

Sharpe, D. "Distrusts Big Words." *Globe and Mail.* 23 Apr. 1996: A14.

Silverstein, Michael. "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology." *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels.* Ed. Paul R. Clyne, William F. Hanks, Carol L. Hofbauer. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1979. 193-247.

Simon, John. *Paradigms Lost: Reflections on Literacy and its Decline.* New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1976.

Singer, Brian. "Cultural versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking Their Opposition." *History and Theory* 35.3 (1996): 309-337.

Small, A. Letter. "Dangling Gerunds." *Globe and Mail.* 8 Aug. 1978: A6.

Smith, K. Letter. "English Usage." *Globe and Mail.* 14 Nov. 1974: A6.

Smith, Olivia. *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819.* Oxford and New York: Clarendon, 1984.

Sperber, Dan and Deidre Wilson. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1986.

---. "Mood and the Analysis of Non-Declarative Sentences." *Pragmatics: Critical Concepts.* Vol. 2. Ed. A. Kasher. London: Routledge, 1998: 262-289.

Stephenhaggen, Janet. "SFU to Revamp Curriculum to Improve Students' Writing Skills." *Vancouver Sun* 25 Nov. 2002: A1.

Stevenson, A. Letter. "'Me' and 'Don't'." *Globe.* 28 Feb. 1921: A4

Strunk, William. *The Elements of Style* by W. Strunk and E.B. White. New York: Longman, 2000.

Sullivan, J.A. Letter. "Verbatim." *Globe and Mail.* 14 May 1999: A16.

Sutherland, D. Letter. "The Generic Term." *Globe and Mail.* 3 Sept. 1997: A20.

Sweetser, Eve. *From Etymology to Pragmatics: Metaphorical and Cultural Aspects of Semantic Structure.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

"Talking Canadian." *The Canadian Experience.* 2005. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. 26 February 2005 <http://www.cbc.ca/canadianexperience/ talkingcanadian/c_b_c.html>.

Taylor, Talbot J. "Which is to be Master? The Institutionalization of Authority in the Science of Language." *Ideologies of Language.* Ed. John E. Joseph and Talbot J. Taylor. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. 9-26.

Thornton, William. *Cadmus: or A Treatise on the Elements of Written Language.* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: R. Aitken & Son, 1793. The American Antiquarian Society and NewsBank, 2002. 23 April 2005 <http://infoweb. newsbank.com>.

Thorsell, William. Preface. *The Globe and Mail Style Book: A Guide to Language and Usage.* Toronto: McClelland, 1998.

Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory.* Ed. John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill. New York: Guilford, 1999. 226-31.

van Dijk, Teun A. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach.* London: Sage, 1998.

Vihla, Minna. *Medical Writing: Modality in Focus.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999.

Voloshinov, V.N. "Marxism and the Philosophy of Language." *The Rhetorical Tradition.* Ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 1210-226.

Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin. "Understanding the Conditions for Public Discourse: Four Rules for Selecting Letters to the Editor." *Journalism Studies* 3.1 (2002): 69-81.

---. "The Construction of the Public in Letters to the Editor: Deliberative Democracy and the Idiom of Insanity." *Journalism* 3.2 (2002): 183-204.

Warkentyne, H.J. "A Response to R.J. Gregg." *In Search of the Standard in Canadian English.* Occasional Papers 1. Ed. W.C. Lougheed. Kingston, Ontario: Strathy Language Unit, Queen's University, 1986. 169-77.

Warner, Michael. "The Mass Public and the Mass Subject." *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Ed. Craig Calhoun. Cambridge: MIT, 1992. 377-401.

Watts, Richard J. "From Polite Language to Educated Language: The Re-Emergence of an Ideology." *Alternative Histories of English.* Ed. Richard Watts and Peter Trudgill. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. 155-172.

---. "The Social Construction of Standard English: Grammar Writers as a 'Discourse Community'." *Standard English: The Widening Debate.* Ed. Tony Bex and Richard J. Watts. London and New York: Routledge, 1999. 40-68.

Webster, Noah. *An American Dictionary of the English Language.* 1828 Vol. 1. New York and London: Johnson Reprint, 1970.

---. *Dissertations on The English Language.* 1789. Menston, England: Scolar, 1967.

Wees, W.R. Foreword. *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles.* Ed. Walter S. Avis, et al. Toronto: Gage, 1967.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.

Woolard, Kathryn A. "Introduction: Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry." *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory.* Ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998. 3-47.