

Ideological
Battlegrounds –
Constructions
of Us and Them
Before and After 9/11

Volume 2:
Perspectives
in Language

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Edited by

Anna Gonerko-Frej
and Małgorzata Sokół

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Anna Gonerko-Frej, Małgorzata Sokół	
Chapter Two: Construing Distance and Proximity in the Post-9/11 Discourse of the Bush Administration	7
Piotr Cap	
Chapter Three: <i>Para Bellum</i> , or, the U.S. Department of State (DoS) “ <i>Pre-emptive Narrative</i> ” in the 1997-2001 Daily Press Briefings: A Multidisciplinary Corpus Approach	19
Michelangelo Conoscenti	
Chapter Four: Discourse of the Other as a Foundational and Continuing Element of Legal Norms in Anti-Terrorism Measures	53
Maureen T. Duffy	
Chapter Five: “The Future is One of Rising Stakes”: Representing Self and Other in Post-Cold War National Security Discourse	75
Patricia L. Dunmire	
Chapter Six: Defining Us and Them through the Words of the Enemy: The Use of Reported Speech in the Bush “War on Terror” Narrative	93
Adam Hodges	
Chapter Seven: The Image of 9/11 and Terrorists in Translation - An Analysis of the Documentary <i>George W. Bush: The 9/11 Interview</i> and its Polish Voice-over Version . . .	111
Monika Linke-Ratuszny	
Chapter Eight: Portraying the Inexplicable – A Social Semiotic Analysis of Polish Newspaper Front Pages in the Aftermath of the 9/11 Attacks	139
Anna Łazuka	
Chapter Nine: From the Discourse of American Exceptionalism to Anti-American Sentiment: A Critical Analysis of Neoconservative Rhetoric	169
Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska	

Chapter Ten: Nine Eleven, the Apocalyptic Political Rhetoric of George W. Bush and the Legacy of American Millennialism	185
Kurt Müller	
Chapter Eleven: <i>Fahrenheit 9/11</i> . Communicating a More Tolerant Picture of the Other in Professional and Amateur Audiovisual Translations	201
Tomasz Obiała	
Chapter Twelve: Mosque Madness at Ground Zero: A Critical Study	221
Douglas Mark Ponton	
Chapter Thirteen: The Values of the Other in the US State of the Union Addresses (2001–2008)	239
Agnieszka Sowińska	
Chapter Fourteen: Neologisms of the War on Terror and How They Translate into Everyday Language	257
Alina Szwajczuk, Arkadiusz Kaczorowski	
Chapter Fifteen: “Dumb Flag Scum” vs. “Love Built around the Sandy Beaches” – Engagé Lyrics by the <i>Manic Street Preachers</i> before and after 9/11	279
Magdalena Zyga	
Notes on contributors	295
Index	301

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION¹

ANNA GONERKO-FREJ, MALGORZATA SOKÓŁ

They jumped from the burning floors—
one, two, a few more,
higher, lower.
The photograph halted them in life,
and now keeps them
above the earth toward the earth.

Each is still complete,
with a particular face
and blood well hidden.

There's enough time
for hair to come loose,
for keys and coins
to fall from pockets.

They're still within the air's reach,
within the compass of places
that have just now opened.

¹ We would like to thank the reviewers, Dr Laura Filardo Llamas from the University of Valladolid and Dr Tomasz Płudowski from the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University and Collegium Civitas, for the insightful comments and useful suggestions that helped improve the manuscript. Our thanks also go to Dr Douglas Mark Ponton from the University of Catania for his editorial assistance. We are grateful to all the authors who contributed to the volume with the variety of approaches and engaging analyses of the topic.

I can do only two things for them—
describe this flight
and not add a last line.

“Photograph from September 11” by Wisława Szymborska
(translated by Clare Cavanagh and Stanisław Barańczak)

The second volume of *Ideological Battlegrounds – Constructions of Us and Them before and after 9/11* continues the discussion of the topic, moving from the literary world to the field of linguistic studies. A poem by the Polish Nobel prize winner (1996), Wisława Szymborska, helps us to cross smoothly from one world to another. Or are literary studies and linguistics two worlds? The boundaries between academic disciplines, carefully drawn by scholars, are constantly crossed; like many borders in our global world they become blurred, in an answer to the complexity of real life events. Crossing the boundaries allows for a multiplicity of perspectives, richer analysis and deeper understanding – the aim of the chapters in this collection.

Like many previous publications on the topic, the present volume can only “describe this flight”, keep the 9/11 tragedy in focus, “and not add the last line”, opening rather than closing many debates. Adding new perspectives on the event, from a variety of positions and angles, with different foci, scholarly discussions help us see more from the pre- and post-9/11 world, with frequent clashes of cultures.

Cross-cultural journeys are usually combined with the transfer of meaning from one language system to another. Translation studies require navigation between cultures, enhanced by cultural understanding. Volume 2 includes chapters that refer to translation, either as their main topic or in relation to other issues. The remaining chapters apply discourse analysis approaches to explore the construction of 9/11 in a variety of contexts, using diverse methodological frameworks. On the whole, the book shows how language in use reflects and retells the tragic event and how it (re-)constructs its actors. Investigations of the discourses of 9/11 allow us to explore the complexity of the event, and bring us closer to understanding its roots and long-term consequences.

In Chapter 2, **Piotr Cap** uses the example of the US rhetoric of war-on-terror following the 9/11 attacks to argue that some of the best legitimization effects in political discourse are accomplished through the use of so-called ‘proximization’. Proximization is a rhetorical strategy of forced construals of symbolic distance and proximity depicting events on the discourse stage as directly affecting the addressee, usually in a negative or a threatening

way. The tripartite model of proximization demonstrates the complexity of the interplay of its three dimensions: the spatial, the temporal and the axiological. Its starting assumption, though, is rather basic: the (political) discourse addressee is more likely to legitimize the ‘pre-emptive’ actions aimed at neutralizing the proximate ‘threat’ if he/she construes it as personally consequential.

In Chapter 3, **Michelangelo Conoscenti** presents the 9/11 narrative of the Bush administration as a pre-emptive one, and explains how it is grounded, linguistically and cognitively, in the pre-9/11 narratives. Conoscenti’s motivation is to search for the mechanisms that conditioned the 9/11 pre-emptive narrative and the mechanisms which managed to persuade public opinion that a global war on terror was necessary. The study is based on the analysis of the U.S. Department of State Daily Press Briefings (1997–2001). The methodological basis of Conoscenti’s detailed, corpus-based analysis is an integration of the ideas of memetics, sprinkled metonymy and the Axiological Proximization Framework.

In Chapter 4, **Maureen Duffy** undertakes the topic of 9/11 in relation to law. How and why the emergency measures turn into fixed legal provisions, not only in the US but on a global scale, is the question linked to the growing dominance of the discourse of non-citizen terrorist Other. The validity of the changes to articles of law in countries such as the US, Canada and the UK is challenged through the exposition of the underlying discursive anchoring. Duffy refers to security certificates in Canada, detention centers and the immigration system as permeated by the terrorist-other ideology, bypassing earlier constitutional protections. The acceptance or ‘normalization’ of largely unjustified legal measures evokes concerns about their undesirable consequences.

Patricia L. Dunmire in Chapter 5 investigates how Self and Other are represented within post-Cold War national security discourse on the basis of documents of The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century. The particular portrayals of Self and Other as antagonistic derive from the conception of global society into oppositional zones (those of peace, and those of war), a conception that was brought into focus as a result of the 9/11 attacks. Dunmire argues that this conception allows us to better understand and explain global events and phenomena. She searches for the origins of such a depiction of the world system in the “Open Door” approach to international relations and considers an alternative solution.

In Chapter 6, **Adam Hodges** addresses the Us and Them division in relation to the global war on terror that followed the 9/11 events. The focus

is put on how President Bush, skillfully and intricately, constructs the enemy (Them) in his war on terror narrative through reported speech. The use of reported speech in presidential speeches is presented as a powerful rhetorical tool that allows Bush to remain backgrounded, objective and credible, while at the same time building a complex image of the enemy, with diverse actors and figures. In this way, reported speech enables the construction of multiple voices in discourse, where both key characteristics of Them, but also of Us, are emphasised.

Monika Linke-Ratuszny explores how terrorists and the 9/11 events are presented in a documentary titled *George W. Bush: The 9/11 Interview* and its Polish voice-over version. The film is generally described as Bush's intimate account concerning dilemmas, emotions and motivations accompanying him during the first hours and days after the attack and while taking consequential decisions. The analysis of the audiovisual material focuses on the expressive value of vocabulary, preconceptions and stereotypes present in the speaker's account, binary oppositions, and a personalised perspective on the national tragedy. Linke-Ratuszny's chapter also attempts at assessing to what extent the Polish translation succeeds in rendering the attitudes, visions and judgments expressed by George W. Bush more than a decade after the attack.

In her social semiotic study of the front pages of two Polish newspapers on the day of the attack, the following days, one year and ten years later, **Anna Łazuka** compares the resources employed to inform the reader but also shape particular attitudes to the event and its protagonists. Łazuka's choice of newspapers is interesting; both the nationalist mid-market daily and the popular tabloid of wide circulation address specific readers, who are quick to form strong political views. The multimodal construction of meaning in the selected combination of images and text adds an interesting perspective to the analysis of the interpretation of 9/11.

Katarzyna Molek-Kozakowska's chapter reviews how the notion of American exceptionalism has been reproduced discursively in contemporary neoconservative rhetoric. Drawing on the methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, Chapter 9 offers a close critical analysis of rhetorical devices and argumentative moves identified in a sample of statements and open letters issued by the neoconservative think tank Project for New American Century (PNAC). The analysis demonstrates how PNAC's rhetoric, with its stereotypical representations of Self as civilized and Other as barbaric, aims to legitimize American interventionism pre- and, particularly, post-9/11

by arguing for policies that perpetuate American political, economic and military dominance.

The problem of political rhetoric is undertaken in Chapter 10 by **Kurt Müller**, focusing on the religious connotations of President Bush's post 9/11 speeches. Their 'apocalyptic turn' is set against the general religiosity of the US (Müller sees it contrasted with the secular rhetoric of Europe, though Poland might constitute a different example here), the religious undertones of Bush's earlier messages and in the tradition of Christian millennialism. Drawing numerous analogies between biblical lines and the content of president's talks, Müller demonstrates the power of religious underpinning of the 9/11 political discourse.

An interesting attempt at disclosing the apparently neutral rendering of the text in another language is undertaken by **Tomasz Obiała** in his comparison of two translations of the subtitles for the controversial production of Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Chapter 11). To illustrate the claim that the 'secret' power of different audiovisual translation modes is often underappreciated, Obiała selects for examination two translations of the film into Polish. Juxtaposing an official translation with an amateur work of a subtitle producer, he demonstrates the use of different registers, choice of omissions and some clear language errors in both. Additionally, the two translations convey conflicting attitudes to facts or figures, e.g. to President Bush.

Douglas Mark Ponton in Chapter 12 is concerned with the intolerant attitudes to immigrant communities in the US that intensified in the years following the 9/11 events, and which are increasingly expressed on the Internet. Ponton's discussion of the topic centres around the public debate that was provoked by the support that President Obama apparently gave for the construction of a mosque on Ground Zero. On a deeper level, however, the problem of the 'Ground Zero Mosque', is used by the author to consider important methodological questions about the objectivity of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach and about the impact of the ideological positions of the discourse analyst on text interpretation. The conclusion is drawn that the tools of CDA can be effectively applied despite the analyst's engaged stance.

In Chapter 13, **Agnieszka Sowińska** focuses on the values of the Other, most notably terrorism and tyranny in President George W. Bush's State of the Union Addresses delivered during his two terms of office. She draws on Critical Discourse Studies to demonstrate how certain pragmalinguistic resources, such as metaphor, proximization, or source-tagging are employed in the construction of the values in question. Her findings reveal that the Bush

administration fell back mainly on depersonification and dark metaphors, while depicting terrorism as evil, and later strategically extended the axiological scope by linking terrorism to extremism and radicalism. Finally, Sowińska claims that assertion-based sequences in the service of proximization and source-tagging were not only part of scare tactics, but could also boost the administration's credibility and authority.

Alina Szwajczuk and **Arkadiusz Kaczorowski** in Chapter 14 investigate the terms frequently used in the context of 9/11, either newly-coined or re-circulated, and their translation into Polish. From the interpreter's perspective, the lexis of 9/11 reveals much more than the often twisted relation between the signified and the signifier. Again, the linguistic re-working of the events actually contributes to the creation of political attitudes. A number of terms evoke associations with the noble justification of the US actions, covering the cruelty and violence with fancy-sounding abbreviations and neologisms. Some of the Polish translations, out of a practical need for clarity, uncover the reality behind apparently innocent terms.

In Chapter 15, **Magdalena Zyga** traces the influence of 9/11 in the world of pop culture with her analysis of the engagé song lyrics of a Welsh band, *Manic Street Preachers*. DIMEAN discourse analysis applied to the texts of twelve songs from the period between 1992-2011 reveals interesting contrasts. At the intratextual level, the author analyses the choice of words, propositions and rhetorical figures. The level of discursive actions allows us to observe how the explicit Us and Them division becomes obscure in post-2001 songs. With transtextual level analysis, the 9/11 terrorist attack is shown as dividing the band's lyrical discourse. The post 9/11 reality in the songs under investigation seems more muddled and confused, lacking the clear contrasts of the earlier lyrics. The chapter also interestingly juxtaposes British and American political references.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRUING DISTANCE AND PROXIMITY IN THE POST-9/11 DISCOURSE OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

PIOTR CAP

1. Introduction¹

More than a decade after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, memories of these petrifying events keep prompting questions about how America, the American public and the American government have been changing ever since, how and what new social attitudes have been evolving and what policies, both home and abroad, have been put in place to handle the post-9/11 reality. One obvious issue that emerges involves the US government's response to the attacks. What form(s) did it take? Was it legitimate? What steps, political and non-political, military including, were taken to make it appear legitimate? Finally, what strategies were pursued to *communicate* this legitimacy to the American and the world audience?

It is primarily the last question that lies at the core of this chapter and defines its goals. Before we turn to a specific description of these goals, let us note that when President George W. Bush declared the worldwide War on Terrorism on the evening of 9/11, the American people were hardly filled with a spirit of vengeance; rather, they would have expected the government to seek a balanced solution to the terrorism problem as a whole (cf. Silberstein 2004; Hodges 2011; Hodges and Nilep 2007). This was echoed in one of the first

¹ Parts of this chapter have originally appeared in Chapter One of Cap (2006).

eyewitness accounts of the day which was broadcast on Aaron Brown's CNN night edition:

[...] Americans will persevere. And you know what? I don't think we'll stoop to the level of these zealot, terrorist pigs. And we won't kill children and mothers. But you know what? I just hope Bush will do whatever is necessary to get rid of this terrorist vermin [...]

These words do not seem to give license to wage a war, at least not of the kind that broke out almost immediately in Afghanistan and eighteen months later in Iraq. In fact, the social picture of the late 2001 America shows multiple attitudes of reluctance to engage in a retaliatory combat operation, even if the 9/11 perpetrators were to constitute the primary target (cf. Hendrickson 2002; Bacevich 2010). But, as we know now, two foreign wars did follow. And while the prompt bombing of Afghanistan was an operation that, given the logic of an attempt to destroy the Al-Qaeda network, could be (and indeed was) perceived as justifiable by both the American people and the majority of the world community, the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 needed a much stronger rationale. The lack of a clear enemy of the Osama-like kind, the wobbly evidence of the possession of WMD² by the Iraqi regime, the apparently unsubstantiated claims of the relationship between Saddam Hussein and the Al-Qaeda group, the conceivable human and financial costs of going to war, as well as the anti-war attitudes in the academic elites – all these were serious adverse factors to be surmounted by the Bush administration in order to make the military involvement in Iraq legitimate. My primary objective in this chapter will thus be (a methodologically oriented) analysis of the rhetorical legitimization of the Iraqi intervention.

2. Assumptions, goals and methods

Arguably, the Bush administration did everything that they possibly could in order to communicate to the American and the world audience that the military operation in Iraq (only recently concluded by the Obama government) was justified, and that it was pursued in the vital interest of all the peoples abhorring the vision of 9/11 ever being repeated. A consistent pattern of rhetoric was developed in the aftermath of the WTC attacks, aiming to justify military retaliation on account of the apparent imminence of danger facing American citizens. Clearly, the most salient premise of the White House rhetoric was the construal of the terrorist threat as existing within the US borders. Unlike in the

² Weapons of Mass Destruction.

past, when America was *going to foreign wars* in Korea, Vietnam or, recently, Kosovo, that time, the war itself *came home*.

One cannot possibly underestimate the role of the evidence brought by the 9/11 attacks in such an argument. Although following the Second World War the legitimization of each consecutive military involvement has drawn on the simplistic dichotomy of Us and Them, the latter usually symbolizing some kind of adversarial or plainly evil ideology that could potentially jeopardize the American system of beliefs and values or, in the long run, threaten the lives of the American people, it was not until after 2001 that the ideologies of evil and terror could be claimed, by analogy, to have already been operating within the American territory. Consider the following excerpt from President Bush's 9/11 prime-time speech:

[...] Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts, right here, on the American soil. [...] Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. [...] Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's response plans. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. America has stood down enemies before, and will do so this time and in the future [...]

And now let us turn to a necessarily longer quotation which comes from the president's address at the American Enterprise Institute, delivered on February 26, 2003, the mere three weeks before the first US troops entered Iraq on March 19:

[...] We are facing a crucial period in the history of our nation, and of the civilized world. On a September morning, threats that had gathered for years, in secret and far away, led to murder in our country on a massive scale. As a result, we must look at security in a new way, because our country is a battlefield in the first war of the 21st century. [...] We learned a lesson: the dangers of our time must be confronted actively and forcefully, before we see them again in our skies and our cities. And we will not allow the flames of hatred and violence in the affairs of men. The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder. [...] Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction are a direct threat to our people and to all free people. [...] My job is to protect the American people. When it comes to our security and freedom, we really

don't need anybody's permission. [...] We've tried diplomacy for 12 years. It hasn't worked. Saddam Hussein hasn't disarmed, he's armed. Today the goal is to remove the Iraqi regime and to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. [...] The liberation of millions is the fulfillment of America's founding promise. The objectives we've set in this war are worthy of America, worthy of all the acts of heroism and generosity that have come before [...]

At a glance, one can see a functional, goal-oriented continuum underlying the two performances. It is almost as if the AEI speech fulfils the promise made at the end of the 9/11 address, to trace the perpetrators and thus prevent any future threats. Importantly, by referring to "our skies and our cities", as well as to the country being "a battlefield", Bush invokes an analogy between the tragic events of 9/11 and the possibility of such events (or even more tragic, given the nuclear element at stake) occurring again should there be no action from the government on the Iraqi issue. The justification for going to war in Iraq is thus built on the recurring closeness and imminence of danger facing the American people, which this time stems from the alleged possession of WMD by the Iraqi regime and, consequently, by easy access to these weapons for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda.

In this chapter, I give a brief overview of an analytic model to serve as a viable handle on the post-9/11 war-on-terror rhetoric, taking selected instances of the language of the Iraq war as a case in point.³ Approaching the concept of legitimization in a broad theoretical sense of a combined enactment of the political speaker's right to be obeyed and of the linguistic justification of actions following this obedience, I will be particularly interested in *the model's capacity to explain*,

- i) how the described '9/11 analogy' and the concept of a 'direct threat' have been used to *force construals of distance and proximity* in discourse and, thereby, legitimize the intervention in Iraq,
- and,
- ii) what steps have been taken to maintain the stance of the legitimization after it became clear that the intelligence reports on the Iraqi possession of WMD had failed.

Since, as can be seen from the two excerpts above, the White House pro-war rhetoric has been relying heavily on conceptualization of the terrorist (nuclear) threat in terms of a physically close phenomenon, I employ

³ See Cap (2008, 2010) and, especially, Cap (2013), for a comprehensive account of the model.

Chilton's original (2004) and Cap's revisited (2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2013) notion of *proximization* to serve as a controlling concept for defining the internal structure of the model, encapsulating all the legitimization related techniques. In short, therefore, the advocated model recognizes legitimization (of the post-9/11 foreign military involvement) as a macro function of all the war-on-terror rhetoric. The function of legitimization is enacted by utilizing the persuasive power of proximization, a concept which assumes "putting the discourse addressee in the center of events narrated to him/her" (cf. Chilton 2004) and which will be described as such in more detail below. Finally, there are language constructs whose strategic combination triggers proximization. All the three levels, involving the constancy of the legitimizing function, the ongoing presence of a proximization pattern serving legitimization, and the consistent use of language making up a given proximization aspect or strategy, must be seen to interrelate in their collective contribution to the aura of justification, in order for the proposed analytic model to prove theoretically sound.

3. Proximization

The concept of proximization was originally (cf. Chilton 2004) developed to account for situations in which the speaker (political actor) seeks legitimization of his actions by alerting the addressee to the proximity or imminence of phenomena which can be a "threat" to the addressee (and the speaker, too) and thus require an immediate reaction. In other words, the speaker solicits approval of his actions by placing the addressee close to the source of the threat or, alternatively, by picturing the threat as close to the addressee. In Chilton's view, proximization has an intrinsically spatial character; the addressee is located in the "deictic center" of the event stage, from which setting he conceptualizes external phenomena in terms of physical distance holding between their source and his own location. If we apply the spatial aspect of proximization to account for the geopolitical context of the early stages of the Iraqi conflict, we observe that the Bush administration was utilizing the notion of "direct threat", in order, first, to alert the addressee to the proximity of nuclear danger stemming from the alleged possession of WMD by the Iraqi regime, and second, to enhance the perception of this threat by building the analogy between the current situation and the events of 9/11 when the previously underestimated danger indeed materialized and physically affected the addressee.

The excerpt from the AEI speech features a large number of lexical realizations, or "triggers", of spatial proximization. They include such items

and phrases as “secret and far away”, “all free people”, “stable and free nations”, “Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction”, “direct threat” and “flames”. Some of them define the elements/members of the deictic center as such (“all free people”), while some others define entities which can potentially enter the deictic center and threaten or destroy its members (“Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction”, “flames”). As the gap between the former and the latter is seemingly closing due to the presence of the 9/11 analogy, the spatial proximization appears successful in its role of soliciting legitimization for the government’s reaction to the evolving threat.

However, in addition to Chilton’s (2004) findings on the spatial character of proximization, I argue (cf. also Cap 2005, 2006, and later works) that a fully-fledged proximization theory, equipped with enough explanatory power to account for a variety of legitimization phenomena, must necessarily involve two other dimensions, i.e. temporal and axiological. Temporal proximization involves construing the events which take place in the spatial dimension as momentous and historic and hence of central significance to the discourse addressee, as well as to the speaker. It needs to be made clear that, under the proposed triadic approach, the speaker belongs to the deictic center (the anchor point for all conceptualizations) no less than the addressee does; otherwise, it would be reasonably difficult to have both parties unanimously subscribe to the course of action which the speaker attempts to legitimize. This observation holds true for all three aspects of proximization: spatial, temporal and axiological. Returning to the temporal aspect, I shall claim that its contribution to the integrated proximization model lies in its capacity to provide the analysis of actions or events bringing about physical consequences (in other words, space-dynamic events like the projected use of WMD by Saddam Hussein or the US intervention in Iraq seen as a preventative measure) with a retrospective insight which allows generation of inferences or analogies such as the 9/11 analogy mentioned before. Additionally, a combined spatial-temporal analysis possesses a heuristic value; for instance, the study of the speaker’s description and the addressee’s construal of current events (viz. the American military involvement in Iraq) which happen as a result of previous events (viz. the 9/11 “lesson”) may lead to anticipation of recurrence of a similar cause-and-effect pattern in the future, with the same or a different adversary involved. Finally, in my approach there is also an axiological aspect of proximization. It consists in the addressee’s interpretation of alien ideological beliefs and values relative to the axiological background of the self, or the dominant ideology of the State, in our case the US. Here, the proximization of “threat” is neither a physical phenomenon (viz. the conceivably destructive consequences of the

use of nuclear weapons by the Iraqi government) nor a temporal one (viz. the unfolding of the state of affairs which makes the above scenario possible); rather, it involves the narrowing of the distance between two different and opposing ideologies whose clash could lead to the events defined within the other dimensions.

All in all, such a model of proximization, a much-revised version of Chilton's (2004) theory, consists in the speaker's continual endeavor to impose upon the addressee the conceptualization of the suggested adversary in terms of an entity which gradually enters, along the spatial, temporal and axiological lines, the addressee's "territory" in the deictic center. For an overview of the functioning of this integrated proximization strategy, let us consider the concept of the "ideologies of murder" invoked in the AEI address:

The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder. [...]

The mention of the "ideologies of murder" serves to establish an axiological frame defining the essence of the dictatorship-based functioning of the states opposing the US ideology of "freedom", "democracy", etc. The components of this frame are the implicitly communicated antithetical concepts of "regime", "dictatorship" and "oppression" which, presumably, give rise to violence and terror as the natural outlets for the anger and frustration of the oppressed. The assumption behind the composition of the frame is that the ideologies of anger and hatred have a tendency to grow and expand (cf. the use of the word "breed") if nothing is done to prevent them from being enacted by authoritarian figures such as Saddam Hussein in Iraq. This is how the proximity of threat to free states like the US is communicated within the axiological dimension. In addition, it is implied, by the use of "the" [ideologies of murder] that places like world terrorism harbors where the anger and hatred turn into concrete plans to destroy the "enemy" (most of the countries of the "civilized" West and the US in particular) have indeed evolved worldwide, and that it is their existence that constitutes the very physical threat (cf. the spatial aspect of proximization). Let us remember that immediately following the 9/11 attacks, Bush's explanation of the terrorists' "rationale" to strike was envy of the American way of life, the freedoms guaranteed to citizens living in a state ruled by law:

[...] Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts, right here, on the American soil. [...] America was targeted for attack because we're

the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. [...] The world now knows the full evil and capability of international terrorism which menaces the whole of the democratic world. Blind in their hate and envy of our freedoms, the terrorists responsible have no sense of humanity, of mercy, of justice. [...]

Finally, the axiological and spatial proximization strategies salient in the application of the “ideologies of murder” catch-phrase are complemented within the temporal domain. One of the implicit messages in “the world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values, because stable and free nations do not breed the ideologies of murder” is that the growth of the ideology of destruction in terrorist groups can be traced back to the period of inaction following the initial recognition of the evolving threat. From the 9/11 viewpoint, the roots of international terrorism spreading from the Middle East region can be attributed to the US being previously too soft on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan or the UN being unable to properly execute its 1991 resolution on the disarmament of Iraq. As usual in a time of national catastrophe, the leader of the state involved is expected to admit at least *some* degree of blame on the part of his own government (or on behalf of the preceding governments) and this is exactly what can be found in Bush’s tacit assumption of a temporal perspective on the evolution of antagonistic beliefs and values.

4. Conditions for operation of the Spatial-Temporal-Axiological model of ‘legitimization via proximization’

Let us recap the findings so far. Under the proposed model, legitimization is seen as the principal goal of the political speaker seeking justification and support of actions which the speaker manifestly intends to perform in the vital interest of the addressee (cf. pursuit of the “war-on-terror”). While not detracting from the importance of factors related directly to the persona of the speaker such as charismatic leadership projection or positive self-presentation, the major factor affecting the success or failure of legitimization is the speaker’s ability to follow a consistent, tripartite proximization strategy, involving space-, time- and axiology-based conceptual shift of an alien and normally antagonistic entity into the addressee’s own mental and physical territory in the deictic center, from which both the addressee and the speaker view the external events. As has been seen from the brief overviews of the concepts of “9/11 analogy” and “ideologies of murder”, the STA proximization *always* involves functional interaction within or between its bottom-level

language constructs. In other words, a phrase such as “ideologies of murder”, carrying primarily a heavy axiological load, will *never* be conceptualized in isolation from the spatial and/or temporal aspect of the notion it addresses. The latter aspects may be seen to exist within the “anchor” phrase itself,⁴ but they can also be found operating in the adjacent phrases, whether overtly or by implication (consider “free nations”, explicit reading vs “oppressed nations”, implicit or “follow-up” reading; “do not breed”, explicit reading vs “do breed”, implicit or “follow-up” reading).

The existence of functional interaction between the language realizations of the three aspects of proximization is the first of the two necessary conditions for the operation of the STA-based model of legitimization, which, given the crucial role of the integrated proximization strategy in producing legitimization, can simply be referred to as *the STA model*, capturing thus both the global legitimization effect and the very internal structure of proximization triggering this effect. The second condition is more complex and can be summarized as follows:

If, over a period of time, a text involving proximization is followed by another proximization-driven text, produced by the same political speaker, in relation to the same issue and with the same overall goal but against so different a contextual background that it has affected the selection of bottom-level lexical items to the extent that the new text displays a considerable lexical divergence from the old or “previous” one, then any ensuing decrease/increase in manifestation of one type of proximization must mean, respectively, an increased/decreased salience of another type.

This means that, if we take the WMD threat, aggravated by the operation of the “9/11 analogy”, to constitute a major premise in the US pro-war stance in the early stages of the Iraqi intervention, the loss of this premise in the later phase manifestly produces a need for rhetorical compensation from another type of proximization. Since the spatial aspect of proximization lost its salience after the intelligence failure became evident, the ensuing legitimization pattern had to draw much more heavily on another aspect, in fact, the axiological one. Consider the following excerpt from President Bush’s speech given at the Whitehall Palace in London on November 19, 2003:

[...] By advancing freedom in the greater Middle East, we help end a cycle of dictatorship and radicalism that brings millions of people to

⁴ That is, a phrase from which analysis of a given, most salient aspect of proximization (here: axiological) starts.

misery and brings danger to our own people. By struggling for justice in Iraq, Burma, in Sudan, and in Zimbabwe, we give hope to suffering people and improve the chances for stability and progress. [...] Had we failed to act, the dictator's programs for weapons of mass destruction would continue to this day. Had we failed to act, Iraq's torture chambers would still be filled with victims, terrified and innocent. The killing fields of Iraq – where hundreds of thousands of men and women and children vanished into the sands – would still be known only to the killers. For all who love freedom and peace, the world without Saddam Hussein's regime is a better and safer place. [...]

Apparently, with the cornerstone of the spatial proximization strategy missing, Bush extends the scope of the pro-war rhetoric to cover a broader geopolitical spectrum. There is an extended representation of countries to be construed collectively as harbors of values endangering the axiological backbone of the US audience and the majority of the world audience. The language used draws on the increasingly drastic imagery (“torture chambers”, “killing fields”), seeking a natural common ground for rejection of the alien ideologies. Legitimization of the ongoing military presence in Iraq is thus claimed in the following way: alien ideological concepts (“dictatorship and radicalism”) are shown to inspire actions which come in *increasingly direct* conflict with the basic axiological principles shared by the members of the “deictic center”. The construction of the symbolic proximity of the external threat becomes thus the matter of an antagonistic ideology and, most of all, its possible materialization.

As is the case with the AEI speech, the analysis of the text of the Whitehall address finely illustrates the dynamic character of the STA model. The “S”, “T” and “A” parameters of analysis are designed to complement one another in accounting for the global legitimization effect; furthermore, their complementary capacity is a factor in keeping up with the macro function of the political performance in case there is underrepresentation of one of the three proximization aspects.

5. Extensions of operation of the STA model of proximization.

What kind of analytic awareness do the construction and implementation of the STA model require?

Evidently enough, I have so far been reluctant to state definitively that the STA model will or will not operate beyond the field of the war-on-terror rhetoric, which in this chapter has constituted its primary scope of application. However, since the intrinsic structure of the STA model involves accounting for

sociopsychological variables, which, by their very nature, define larger social and political audiences, the chances are that the model could indeed be utilized in analysis of the phenomenon of (political) legitimization as a whole. Moreover, since construals of distance and proximity seem to occur in any public space discourse that presupposes the existence of an external entity “invading” home entities (viz. for instance discourses of climate change, discourses of disease prevention or the anti-tobacco discourse), the scope of application extends further. For such studies, consideration of the currently downplayed factors like charismatic leadership projection or positive self-presentation on the part of the political/public speaker might be useful (cf. Dunmire 2011).

The current proposal for the STA model draws not merely on linguistic variables, but also on those involving the domains of related disciplines, such as politology, psychology, and social sciences. Such a cross-disciplinary approach to the study of political language entails questions about the mutual relations between the particular layers of analysis. In particular, it prompts considerations of which of the analytic parameters are methodologically superordinate and which have a merely auxiliary value. The apparent problem with a cross-disciplinary analysis of political language is that there is hardly any visible one-to-one correspondence between the analytic components derived from the different disciplines (cf. Hart 2010). For instance, the general strategy of proximization, where the latter can be described as a cognitive and sociopsychological concept, is not to be equated with any particular linguistic form. It is rather a combination of specific language forms that can contribute to proximization, but even in this case, it cannot be guaranteed that the language forms involved will address simultaneously all three aspects of proximization, i.e. spatial, temporal and axiological.

Mindful of these limitations, I shall argue that although resolution of most methodological difficulties such as the above can possibly be sought in adopting a hierarchical model of analysis where, as in the STA model, the upper-level, controlling parameters of analysis (viz. legitimization, proximization in general) break down into a set of mediating variables (viz. the three aspects of proximization) and, finally, into multiple sets of bottom-level variables (language items), there may still occur problems with a possible overdetermination of analysis by the upper-level parameters (cf. e.g. Beaugrande 1997). In view of this, due attention must be paid to the consistency of balance between utilizing the upper-level parameters (such as, again, the overall strategy of proximization) as entities which signpost the direction of analysis *a priori*, and their controlling potential, i.e. the capacity to verify, in an *a posteriori* manner (and against the global function, i.e. legitimization), the critical findings from

the study of specific language forms at the very bottom level. It seems the chief task of the prospective research to keep the described balance in place for the successful operation of the STA model. A feasible working assumption might be that the essence of the macro functions of legitimization and proximization identified in particular instances of the investigated discourse can unfold as a result of “updates”: for instance, the empirical checking of the data involving spatial proximization will result in a hypothesis about the proximization pattern characterizing the given chunk of text as a whole, but the hypothesis will be open to subsequent redefinition upon the study of these parts of the text’s data which possess a primarily temporal and axiological load.

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CHAPTER THREE

PARA BELLUM, OR, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (DoS) “*PRE-EMPTIVE NARRATIVE*” IN THE 1997–2001 DAILY PRESS BRIEFINGS: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY CORPUS APPROACH

MICHELANGELO CONOSCENTI

Introduction

In Conoscenti (2004) I discussed the rise and development of *language engineering* techniques, combined with media management strategies, as an important element for consensus generation in crisis communication, especially in the aftermath of epochal events or during wars. In that study I also addressed the case of 9/11 and the communicative steps that the Bush Administration took to establish a narrative of terror (Woodward 2002; Westen 2007: 349–376; Lakoff 2008: 125–132) that since then has generated plenty of literature.

Figure 1 shows the macro-communicative moves that the White House and the Department of Defense enacted in the aftermath of 9/11. At the time of that research I was surprised by how quickly – 24 hours – the U.S. were able to design and deliver such a compelling emotional narrative (Monahan 2010: 95–116), coherent with the U.S. country’s foreign policy agenda. At the same time I was also interested to understand why public opinion so easily “bought”¹ these self-explanatory, but also contradictory, “stories” that

¹ Spin doctoring is a branch of marketing. This is why professionals frequently associate spinning techniques with the idea of *selling points* – i.e. the truth. In the following quotation the parallel between information processes and the marketing of goods can be observed, namely, in the use of *packaging* and *distribution*, two elements of the marketing mix: “I do not call ‘em spin doctors. They were people who

implied the necessity for a “global war”. In this way, rationality and a critical approach to the linguistic categories used to describe those and the following events, i.e. the Afghan war in 2001 and the Second Gulf War in 2003 (Høyer 2008), were suspended. This study is an attempt to establish the connections, from a linguistic and cognitive point of view, between the pre and post 9/11 narratives to understand the conditions that made the latter a *pre-emptive* one.

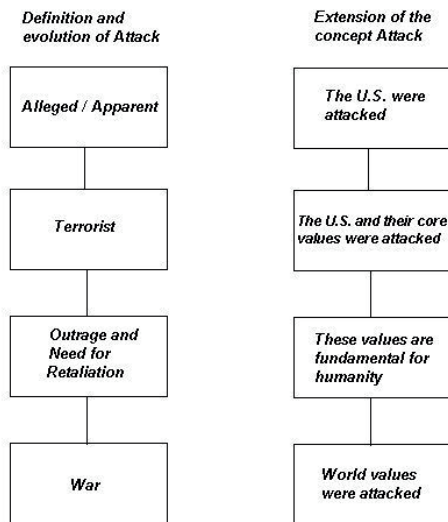


Figure 1. White House and Department of Defense Communicative Moves in the Initial 24 Hours after the 9/11 Attacks (Conoscenti 2004: 107).

Selling the truth and shaping public opinion perceptions: Towards pre-emptive narratives

The last decade of the 20th century testified to an increasing interest in public opinion in the area of international relations and war. At the same time, because of the extended media coverage and the so called “CNN Effect” (Livingston 1997; Belknap 2001) the latter was becoming a more

understood which pieces of information were important to provide the truth to the public...you need some smart people who can tell you what piece of truth you are looking for... those are really specialists in, if they are saying this here is the information is required to answer that question and can know the information packaging, and know how to distribute it.” Gen. Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during the Kosovo War as quoted in Conoscenti (2004: 83–84).

familiar framework of our daily lives. As a consequence, because of language engineering, war was transformed into something more palatable for the masses because of its sanitized version (Conoscenti 2004). *Casualties, collateral damage and legitimate target* instead of *killed people and bombing civilian convoys/compounds*, soon became part of our everyday expressions that mixed with other keywords: *atrocities, barbarians, evil, civilization, freedom, terror and weapons of mass destruction*. All these terms spread and networked in society as well as in our brains with the discouraging effect of oversimplifying complex concepts. Using, and abusing, in a self-assured manner, old historical-political themes – and we will see why later on – governments, political elites and opinion makers re-established old consensus practices (Fowler 1991) with techniques suitable for the new communication technologies (Machin and Van Leeuwen 2007). The goal was simple: defining new global differences and feeding new fears and hatred. The Afghan war, as Appadurai (2005: 76) suggests, can be interpreted as a *diagnostic conflict*, suitable for the American Administration to “test” its foreign policy and how reliable its internal and external supporters in such an *undefined* situation were. This conceptual and strategic spiral generated, in the nineties, a narrative that, through the concepts of *terrorism* and *asymmetrical war*, made void the differences between civil and military representational space, determining a perceptual shift from the concept of *war as exceptional event* to that of a *perpetual routine* (Oliver 2007: 67–108) comparable to a video game (Machin and Van Leeuwen 2007: 74–104). The strategic goal was to enforce a new general tenet: a daily life outside the temporal and spatial dimension of war cannot exist. This translates, at sociological, psychological and linguistic levels, into a shift from the old *us vs. them* dichotomy of the cold war into a post-communist collective stereotyping of danger, promoted by public diplomacy² that can be summarised as an omni comprehensive *us vs. threat*. This new concept is extremely powerful because it is generic and impalpable, thus functional to the psychological operations carried out in time of crisis by the establishment (Steele 2006: 28–32). Suffice it to say that in the post 9/11 events, in a short time, the White House and the Department of Defense were able to introduce three consecutive pre-modifications of the noun *war*: new, different and unconventional (Conoscenti 2004: 110–118). This sounds even more strident if we consider that war had never been declared.

² Thus, it is not a coincidence that one of the first acts of President Obama’s Administration, “to distance itself from past practices that some military officers called propaganda”, was the closure of the Defense Department’s Office for Support to Public Diplomacy. The position of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Support to Public Diplomacy was also eliminated. For a detailed discussion on this topic cf. Conoscenti 2011: 96.

Since the end of the Cold War, there's been a relaxation of tension, and the – it's had a lot of effects. It's led to proliferation. It's led to the movement towards asymmetrical threats, as opposed to more conventional threats. (DoD News Briefing – Secretary Rumsfeld, 12 September 2001)

In this brief statement, Rumsfeld already addresses themes that will be of vital importance to the world in the next months and years. He mentions arms proliferation, indirectly referring to Iraq and thus reinforcing Cooley's (1999) and other scholars' opinions that U.S. interests in oil would be crucial for the American attitude towards certain nations, Islamic (terrorist) groups and, more important, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. The concept is reinforced by an indirect reference to chemical weapons. This is how I interpret: "It's led to proliferation. It's led to the movement towards asymmetrical threats, as opposed to more conventional threats". Traditionally, chemical weapons are not considered "conventional threats". Unfortunately, this is a sign of another impending theme: the *anthrax scare* that was to hit the U.S. in October 2001. Fowler (1991: 146–202) carefully analyses how the media can generate "press hysteria" and this event is a typical case where spin doctors shift public perception from the concept of risk to that of fear (Monahan 2010: 117–132). Unfortunately, uncertainty is not news and as "hysteria requires an expressive system, a mode of discourse, and, once established, exists within that mode of discourse independent of empirical reality" (Fowler 1991: 148), spin doctors take advantage of this mechanism. My point, as already stated, is that this suspension of critical thinking was obtained by a previous strategic (Steele 2006) *pre-emptive narrative* that grounds its fundamental articulation on a compressed perception of time, generating a cognitive and informative vacuum. In this study I intend to investigate the mechanisms that made this possible.³

Memes, sprinkled metonymies and the Axiological Proximity Framework: Exploring time and space in the DoS narrative

A possible way to explain this use of terminologies and narratives can be obtained by mixing different conceptual frameworks, as discussed in Conoscenti (2011: 19–55) and integrating the ideas of memetics⁴ with that of

³ The fact that this mechanism exists is confirmed by Ingham (2003: 239) who also refers to this effect of spin doctoring activities describing it as "a state of front-page hysteria".

⁴ I have already addressed the idea of introducing memetics in corpus linguistics studies in Conoscenti (2008) and this study can be considered a revised extension of that work.

sprinkled metonymy (Conoscenti 2011: 27) and the Axiological Proximity Framework – APF – by Cap (2010a, 2010b, and 2008).

The term *meme* was introduced by Dawkins (1976), who elaborated Semon’s (1904) and Maeterlinck’s (1927) studies. A meme is the cultural counterpart of a gene, representing a cultural unit – an idea, value, or behavioural pattern – that is passed from one person to another by non-genetic means such as imitation or repetition.⁵

Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots, or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. (Dawkins 1976: 192)

From a spin-doctoring point of view, when your message/idea becomes a cultural unit passed between humans, you have the opportunity to generate an “awareness campaign” to drive actions, or to generate attitudes towards an issue – i.e., consensus.

According to the so-called “internalists”, memes are manifested in the cognitive brain. The meme thus becomes “an information pattern, held in an individual’s memory, which is capable of being copied to another individual’s memory” (Heylighen 1998; Lynch 1998). On the other hand, “externalists” maintain that memes are observable cultural artifacts and behaviours. Thus, “memes are out there in the physical ‘pool’ of the environment” (Benzon 1996). The core issues of memetics are still highly controversial (Edmonds 2000; Chielens and Heylighen 2005). Gil-White (2001 and 2008) maintains that memetics suffers from “not enough empirical work”. My point is that the idea of meme is useful to articulate a number of complex processes, such as the generation and spread of consensual values, that a single theory or discipline has problems to “map” properly. A possible way of bypassing this problem is by combining the best intuitions memetics has offered so far and integrating them within a linguistic research framework that has already proven effective. My proposal is to offer a partially revised definition of meme and include it within the concept of noosphere, sprinkled metonymies and the APF.

In brief, it is important to understand how meme-complexes move into the noosphere, i.e. the sphere of human thought, that parallels the concept of biosphere, and which is inhabited by memes. Martin and White (2005: 16–17),

⁵ My rendering of Dawkins’ (1976) key concepts.

claim the necessity, in the analysis of language, to shift from a typological to a topological perspective. The latter would enable a better focus on the *regions of meaning* and on the ways the latter establishes relationships with other statements, in a proxemic way, along a semantic “slope”. This idea fits Vada’s proposed modified definition of meme: “Mememes are sustainable information units that influence and form individual and collective systems and spread successfully within them” (Vada 2008⁶). Whereas Martin and White (2005: 16–17) place *subjectivity* ↔ *objectivity* on the horizontal axis of their linguistic taxonomy to account for *value* and *orientation*, we can add to this framework the ability of memes to generate aggregations around themselves – i.e. *memeplexes*.

Figure 2 shows that *large memeplexes* will correspond to a subjective evaluation (quarter I and IV) and *small* ones to the other end of the axis. This classification helps to confirm a tendency I already observed in Conoscenti (2004: 38), i.e. the “cognitive complexity” of speeches that attempt to establish consensus on a topic that is not perceived as “shared” or “given” by the audience. The less a topic is shared, the greater is the amount of discursive work to be done by spin-doctors.⁷ Thus, they will tend to generate a number of ideological concepts by means of modalised statements that shift perception towards the objective end of the axis. At the same time, *memeplexes* will move from the *heterogeneous* towards the *homogeneous noosphere* end of the axis, from the realm of conflicting ideas where consensus must be established⁸ to the *status quo*. This is why subjective *memeplexes* tend to be more complex and difficult to identify, gaining a noticeable resilience. Although their structure is simple from a syntactical point of view, to hint at objectivity, they enjoy a lot of discursive attention and tend to “congeal” complex semantic networks around the consensual values and attitudes generated, in a subjective way, by means of cognitive interaction between the sender and receiver of the message.

⁶ <http://www.slideshare.net/oyvindvada/making-memetics-a-science-10249035>.

⁷ If it is sunny, it is easy to convince you of this self-evident condition. But if it is raining and I want to convince you that it is sunny, I will have to work hard to make you accept this “new” evidence.

⁸ Ideally, spin doctors try to shift the whole perception to quarter II.