

Nation, Folk and People: How to transport ideologies in language use

Natascha Koch

Abstract:

In this book-length discussion, James Underhill aims at exploring the connection between metaphors, ideologies, and language. He provides both a profound discussion of a number of major contributions to the field of metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics from Aristotle to George Lakoff and Paul Ricœur and, in the second part, an analysis of the significant impact metaphor has on the creation of worldviews. For exemplification, Underhill surveys the manner of speaking of the Czech communist regime during the Cold War, German rhetoric in Nazi Germany and, finally, the relationship of English as a global language to other languages, especially French.

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Underhill, James: *Creating Worldviews. Metaphor, Ideology and Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 301 S., paperback, 32.00 Euro. ISBN: 978-0-7486-7909-6

James Underhill's monograph *Creating Worldviews – Metaphor, Ideology and Language*, published by Edinburgh University Press in 2011, is divided into three major parts. In the first part, Underhill lays out the theoretical and philosophical framework for his work, while part two is concerned with three substantial case studies in which the author covers three main aspects: first, the influence of propaganda (exemplified by the language used by the Czech communist party during the Cold War); second, the set-up and transportation of ideology through language (demonstrated by the rhetoric of Nazi-Germany elites); and third, the perception of language and the attitudes linked with this language (argued with the examples of French and English). Part three consists of an extensive glossary of all relevant terms used by the author. Apparently, Underhill's main intention for this publication is to offer perspectives from non-English-speaking scholars to add to the cognitive linguistic community.

In chapter one, Underhill provides his basic understandings of the concepts 'language' and 'worldview,' which he considers central when trying to understand and analyse politics, ideologies, and societies. According to the author, these concepts can only be adequately accessed when embracing holistic approaches in the tradition of language philosophers like Humboldt, Sapir, and Whorf. He argues that neither 'language' nor 'worldview' can be one-dimensional concepts and continues to subdivide 'worldview' into five categories: 1. world-perceiving, 2. world-conceiving, 3. cultural mindset, 4. personal world, and 5. perspective (7). This subdivision will be continually used throughout his argumentations.

Underhill enters the realm of cognitive linguistics in chapter two. Lakoff and Johnson's once-groundbreaking monograph, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980; Chicago University Press) included, amongst other things, the argument that the concepts and categories with which people think reveal something about the human mind. By investigating these mental concepts, they proposed, we should be able to learn more about the way the human mind functions. Underhill argues that this idea paved the way to a misleading dualistic paradigm in which language is inferior to the much more objective and purer thought. In line with modern language theory, Underhill rejects this evaluation and proposes that mental concepts rather resemble links to reality than clear images of distinct objects or ideas in the outside world. Although Underhill

demystifies some of their notions, proving them to be less revolutionary than commonly understood, e.g. that the embodiment concept is already found in the works of Ernst Cassirer, Lakoff and Johnson's work must not be underestimated: the introduction of the grounding of metaphor in experience or the discovery of systematic networks of metaphors in thought have certainly been far-reaching ideas in cognitive linguistics.

Chapters five and six are a rather eclectic selection of contributions that have been made to the cognitive enterprise in the wake of Lakoff and Johnson's abovementioned publication. While in chapter five, Underhill follows up on what George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, Mark Turner and other influential researchers have been working on after 1980, in chapter six he, apparently randomly, picks a few articles published in the quite well-known online journal *metaphorik.de*. The reasons behind his choices remain unclear to the reader as he also neglects a number of other, potentially more important, contributions, e.g. Zoltán Kövecses's work on emotion metaphors or metaphor and culture or Jonathan Charteris-Black's study on critical metaphor analysis, which would probably have enhanced Underhill's later conclusions in part two of the book.

Chapters seven to nine comprise three case studies, undertaken by the author to exemplify the book's original theme of researching the connection of language, metaphor, and ideology. However, while empirically sound case studies are promised early in chapter one (13), readers might find those presented in this second part of the book lacking in several respects: it remains obscure which methodology Underhill is following in general or why he is choosing one concept (e.g. nation, folk, or people) over the other for analysis – a circumstance that makes it at points hard for the reader to follow the author's line of argumentation. Furthermore, frequent repetitions of points already made combined with piecemeal additions of new information make for rather tiresome reading. The author continues to base his discussions and assessments on single authors and their approaches, which does not make for a well-rounded evaluation. All in all, the case studies presented appear more like exploratory essays than methodologically and empirically sound studies. This becomes most obvious during his discussion of the evolution of English into a global language. Besides, he not only provides very subjective and frequently sarcastic evaluations of other authors' theories and arguments (passim 226, 229), but even confronts them on a personal level (217) – a fact that is irritating and unnecessary at best.

An important aspect of James Underhill's work is the call for more studies of languages other than English, a call he immediately answers by including languages like Czech in his case studies. Nevertheless, the case studies and thus his results would have benefitted from including a more balanced selection of methodological approaches such as the consideration of corpus linguistic tools as a means to analyse language patterns like collocations or semantic prosody. He seems to mostly focus on the writings of the grand names in the field, and thereby misses the opportunity to consider other important and possibly more relevant contributions. In spite of these shortcomings, the range of topics covered in Underhill's publication, the extensive

glossary as well as the thorough discussion of the worldview concept can still make this book a useful read.