

Globalization, literacy and ideology

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ABSTRACT: Globalization has aroused mixed reactions: some regard it as a blessing while others are convinced that it is simply the old game of domination under a new name. There is an urgent need to understand the nature of the semantic processes that support this contradictory reading. It is important to realize that the resolution of this contradiction does not lie in a simplistic choice between truth and falsehood. Rather what we are witnessing is the deployment of language in a struggle to control the very picture of reality. Whatever the outcome, one thing seems certain: to understand how globalization might affect our lives, we will need a form of literacy that goes beyond simple interpretation to reflection on the social significance of acts of meaning: literacy must enable one to decide whose meanings are voiced in which acts of semiosis and for whose benefit.

My theme is global, but to me the primary attraction of this occasion is very personal: this celebration to honour Braj Kachru offers me an opportunity to express my affection and admiration for him. I met Braj all those years ago in the Edinburgh of the sixties. He was engaged in his PhD; I was a mere novice; but with the characteristic Kachru urbanity, I was made welcome in his circle. To be with Braj then was to be at home while abroad; for me at that time there could have been no better gift. My admiration for Braj's intellectual achievements grew with a better understanding of his chosen field. Early in the Edinburgh days, my disdain for the assumptions underlying the discourses of the ESL/EFL industry was perhaps equal to Braj's own: in fact, the intensity of my feelings moved me completely out of that discipline. Braj Kachru, with his vision and his deeper analysis, redefined the very meaning of what it is to learn English as it gets transplanted in foreign lands by some historical accident; he deconstructed the notion of English itself, finding a pantheon of Englishes where there had been a single Queen's English. With the same intellectual integrity with which he maintained his convictions about the functional nature of language – a perspective foreign to the American scene of mid-sixties linguistics – he bent his energies to securing recognition for the many Englishes in their own right. Perhaps, in what I am about to say, there might be heard an echo of Braj's idea of the *re-semanticization* of a language, though in my case the context for the re-semanticization is not so much national as it is international, for it is fired by the processes of globalization and driven by an ideology that has polarized the imaginary unity of our *global village*. A word then on globalization itself.

Much has been written on globalization by way of tracing its history (Hopkins, 2002), describing its essential character (Ong, 1999), revealing its insidious penetration of cultures (Tomlinson, 2002), its relation to human exploitation from early colonization right through to the 'free trade' of today (Ellwood, 2002), and by way of extolling its power to generate wealth and to help the poor of the world. The view prevails that the intense interconnections of today's globalization represent the coming of age of MacLuhan's

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'global village'. In this view, the successful spanning of material and semiotic distances by air-ways and ether-waves has simply multiplied the linkages which had begun almost invisibly several decades ago. All that is different today from those early days of globalization is, in this view, the intensification of these long existing interconnections and dependencies across the globe, which now tie distant destinies together even more closely than ever before. As to what has been globalized, McGrew's list (cf Tomlinson, 1999) offers a typical answer: 'nowadays, goods, capital, people, knowledge, images, crime, pollutants, drugs, fashions and beliefs all readily flow across territorial boundaries.' The haphazardness of McGrew's list is iconic of the absence of any evident principle for selection: the implicit message is that today anything and everything is globalized.

I do not outright reject the relevance of these perspectives, but the narrative as it stands appears incomplete. It is reasonable to demand that an adequate 'globalization theory' should be able to explain the specific thrust of globalization as experienced today, the hostile reactions it is arousing in certain sections of the world community, the control on the initiation and the direction of its flow, and the underlying principle for selecting what will be globalized, for it is simply not the case that everything is open to globalization: as advertisements offering discount goods often warn, *conditions apply*. Strange as it may seem, I suggest that this underlying principle is implicit in the history of the word *globalization*. In view of the wide acceptance of what Emmer (2003) calls 'the myth of early globalization', it comes as a surprise that the word *globalization* is a relatively recent entry in the reputed English dictionaries of the world: it appears as if hardly anyone used the word much before the 1990s. Take, for example, *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of the English Language*, since it is based on a huge 'flow through' corpus of contemporary English in daily use. Its first edition, appearing as late as 1987, makes no mention of the words *globalize/globalization*. Of course the long established word *global* is there, and here is part of what *COBUILD Dictionary* (1987: 167) had to say about it:

global /gloʊbəl/ means **1** concerning or including the whole world . . . **2** involving or relating to all the aspects of a situation . . .

Following the logic of English grammar, we may derive the verb *globalize* from the adjective to refer to *the process(es) of making global*. The next derivational step would yield the noun *globalization*, which by the same logic would mean *the processes of globalizing; the state or condition achieved by process(es) of globalizing*. In other words, thanks to the logic of English form, a place had already been staked out for *globalize/globalization* in the lexical potential of English, but this potential was not actualized right up to the end of the last century: the lexical items had no entry even in the second edition of *Collins COBUILD* published in 1995; they first appear in the third edition dated 2001, as if heralding a new age. If *globalize/globalization* first appear as dictionary entries in the year 2001, it is safe to assume that they were already in use in the early to mid-nineties, though as yet too much of a new arrival to gain sufficient weight for inclusion in the 1995 second edition. It seems reasonable to ask: what exactly happened post-1987 to bring the words *globalize/globalization* increasingly into use? Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) postulates that the secret of the activation of a linguistic meaning-wording conjunction is best sought in the context of culture. And a look into the cultural contexts of the western nations in the late 1980s and the early 1990s reveals events significant enough to exercise the kind of semantic pressure which would activate new meanings: major cultural changes, nothing short of dramatic, were crystallized in the year 1989. A year of memorable

happenings, it brought us Tiananmen Square in Beijing; hard upon which followed the dissolution of the communist regime in Soviet Russia; and finally there was the fall of the Berlin Wall.

These events were widely seen as heralding the final vindication of capitalism, whose success over communism was widely taken to 'prove' that it deserved to win. Coming at a decisive moment, the supremacy of capitalism has, without doubt, deeply affected the material and semiotic basis of our culture, bringing new markets, and new and cheap resources for production, as well as a new moral basis for interpersonal relations. It was only logical to wish to globalize the capitalist ways which had proved successful in managing the production and distribution of goods and services. The greater spread of free trade is simply indicative of the principle underlying today's globalization; the need for expansion inheres in the system itself, as Collini (2000) remarked: 'capitalism requires global expansion; anything less is just a pause for breath.' In the political climate of the world symbolized by the year 1989, what could be more natural than the wish to carry the fruits of our victory to every corner of the world? These features of contemporary globalization are duly acknowledged in *Collins COBUILD English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2001: 665):

globalize /gləʊbəlaɪz/ (**globalizes**, **globalizing**, **globalized**)

V-ERG when industry **globalizes** or **is globalized**, companies from one country link with companies from another country in order to do business with them *one way to lower costs will be to forge alliances with foreign companies or to expand internationally through appropriate takeovers 'in short, 'to globalise'.*

V- n **globalization** /gləʊbəlaɪzɪʃn/ *Trends toward the globalization of industry*

UNCOUNT *have dramatically affected food production in California.*

Lower costs of production, international expansion of companies, appropriate takeovers, these are the things that 'in short' mean 'to globalise'; and they are rather different from establishing the silk route along mountains and valleys or sailing the ocean in the *Cutty Sark* with sacks of tea and spice. Speaking from the point of view of cultural context and of the usage of the Inner Circle English, the phenomenon we refer to as *globalization* is a post-1989 happening, which is not to claim that global trade, global media, global fashion, global pollution did not exist before. They did, but there was an important difference: before the 1990s, they were not guided by quite so strident a faith in the virtues of 'free market fundamentalism' (Hobsbawm, 1999: 69) as they are today. Of course, history had been slowly leading up to this climax; but then history always does that for every 'new' development, and in this sense there is nothing new under the sun. As Hobsbawm (1999: 61) observes 'Globalization is not the product of a single action, like switching on a light or starting a car engine. It is a historical process that has undoubtedly speeded up enormously in the last ten years . . .' What I am claiming here is that the speeding up of the historical process in this case has been accelerated by a large scale acceptance of the staying power of capitalism. One may, therefore, justifiably paraphrase globalization as *the worldwide promulgation of principles and practices governed by an ideology of capitalism*, an interpretation which captures its specific nature today. We will globalize anything and everything, be it the Givenchy see-through tops or the demure harem trousers, music or mustard gas, fashion or GM food, our self-serving compassion or our dramatic devotion to democracy: the only condition is that, in the final analysis, the private monopoly of profit should remain protected in its incremental march. This is the

underlying logic of McGrew's haphazard list. The history of the emergence of the words *globalize/globalization*, thus, offers a remarkable insight into the fundamental principle which governs the various forms of globalizing practices, as well as the patterns of protest, and of contestation. In fact, what first drew my attention to globalization was how the English language was being (mis)used in this confrontation.

Since the first active protest against the underlying principle of globalization in Seattle during the WTO's Millennium Round of Trade Talks in December 1999, there have been protests at every gathering of active globalizing agencies. But it was in the early protests, especially the one in Seattle, that the 'tower of babel' effect was most striking. A fascinating quality of this discourse was that the meaning of apparently familiar expressions seemed to take on a protean quality, as if the semiotic currency had been deregulated to float to its true value by the forces of free market in speech. The protesters were protesting against the WTO as heartless exploiters of poor nations. However, WTO's publicity materials claimed that its policy was governed by a deep commitment to help underdeveloped countries, and by an unequivocal concern for the poor. International trade liberalization, non-discrimination, and sustainable development were presented as the professed policies of this organization. These claims were corroborated by responsible citizens of the world. Mike Moore, the then Secretary General of WTO, declared with serious conviction: 'to those who argue that we should stop our work, I say: tell it to the poor, to the marginalized around the world, who are looking to us to help them' (*The Australian*, December 2, 1999). Clare Short, as Britain's International Development Secretary, hailed globalization in a turn of the century policy document as a means of improving living standards in poor countries and hoped fervently that the protesters would not 'derail' this process. Kofi Annan counted 'faster growth, higher living standards, new opportunities' (*The News*, December 15, 1999) amongst the benefits of globalization, especially for countries in need of help. Interpreting these statements in the 'ordinary' way, one would agree with the WTO spokesmen – and usually they are men! – that the protesters were either misinformed, or mischievous trouble-makers, if not both. But the sympathizers of the protesters told a different story: John Madeley (2000), author of *Big Business, Poor People* (1999), pointed out:

The principle of non-discrimination is embodied in the 1993 Uruguay round agreement on trade related investment measures. It means that developing countries cannot give special treatment to their domestic companies. Neither can they insist that foreign companies use local labour . . . To many civil society groups *the principle of non-discrimination is unjust* – anti-democratic, because it threatens laws drawn up by democratically elected governments, and anti-economic development, because it ties the hands of poor countries, making development policy subservient to trade policy. The *WTO's 'free trade' philosophy effectively reduces the freedom* of governments to buy locally produced materials or to use local labour. (My italics.)

Reflecting on the free, liberal and non-discriminatory practices of the WTO, Eduardo Galeano, the Uruguayan historian, commented that 'The problem with the specialised division of labour between nations is that some nations specialise in winning and others in losing.' Other sympathizers, such as Kevin Watkins, a policy adviser at Oxfam, explained that this happened so regularly because 'the winners specialise in fixing the rules to ensure that the losers stay where they are.' Listening to the sympathizers, one begins to appreciate why the protesters oppose the brand of egalitarian and liberal offers made by agents of globalization as harmful to poor countries: it is their view that the locutions and actions of

organizations such as the WTO and the IMF are irreconcilable with each other. Their critique is further supported by reports of huge rises in corporate profits, while the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. For example, according to a report from the *Financial Times*, also cited by Hertz (2001), General Motors' annual revenue in the year 2000 was almost equal to the combined GDP of eight countries, namely, Chad, Nicaragua, Namibia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Uruguay, New Zealand and Ireland – significantly, none of these countries has any real power to take decisions which might alter the rules governing globalization practices; they must all participate in the process but on terms fixed by others with an eye to their own profit, as is logical in a capitalist world!

The contradictory reading of intentions and actions by the contesting parties might tempt one to treat the matter as a simple choice between truth and falsehood. This, however, cannot be the case, if for no other reasons than that the 'falsehoods' appear so transparent they could hardly be attempts at a consciously and carefully crafted lie. What is happening is not so much the distortion of reality, but very probably a semiotic struggle to control the very definition of reality. Whatever the case, when the claims of the two sides in this confrontation are examined, then at least from the perspective of a conventional reading of English, what emerges is simply a series of oxymorons:

non-discrimination	is	discriminatory
free trade philosophy	reduces	freedom
liberalization of trade	imposes	constraints
non-discrimination	is	anti-democratic

Each of the above assertions is self-contradictory, and self-contradiction typically indicates some kind of pathological condition. The situation is reminiscent of the one described by Mallik (1972) in reporting on the variety of language spoken in the underworld of West Bengal by prisoners and the criminal community. Halliday (1976) discussing this underworld sociolect, coined the term *anti-language*, which construes a parallel reality, turning the wider community's usage upside down. One strategy for achieving this end is the device of re-lexification, i.e., using new words for old concepts. Thus the outer world's *dokan*, meaning 'shop' becomes *kodan* in the parallel world of the prison; the Arabic word *xəlas* meaning 'end' replaces the word *xun*, meaning 'blood/murder'; the English word '*qebəl qekər*' (double-decker), borrowed in many Indian languages, is metaphorically turned into 'a plump woman'. Something of a similar kind seems to be going on in our case too, where we have the language of the executive cadre of corporate concerns, whose benign organizations produce what, from the point of view of the disadvantaged countries, is a contradiction in terms at the level of meaning. Words such as *equality*, *freedom*, *liberalization*, *non-discrimination* acquire a meaning that turns the semantics of ordinary English upside down: for words long familiar to the ordinary speakers of English, the globalizing variety of English is offering new concepts, which are friendly to the ideology of capitalism. The conflict is, in the end, ideological, as also in Mallik's West Bengal anti-language: language is simply pressed into service to do what it always does, i.e., to act as a resource for speakers' acts of meaning.

But there are important differences as well between the two types of varieties: the variety of English used by the chieftains of globalized industry and trade – let me call it *glib-speak* for ease of reference – is not spoken by members of the underworld as is Mallik's: in fact, the speakers of this variety are 'on top of the world' in more than one sense. Secondly, modification of meaning is being attempted in both, but in *glib-speak*, the method goes

beyond re-lexification by phonological reversal, or by the introduction of borrowings; even straight lexical metaphors do not seem to be employed in this variety. There is, however, clear evidence of a liberal use of re-semanticization. It is my understanding that in different world Englishes the specific patterns of re-semanticization are activated by elements in the designs of the host cultures; by contrast, in glib-speak re-semanticization only respects boundaries set by power and control on wealth. If the meanings of long-established linguistic patterns are being 'hijacked' in order to disarm objections by those to whom the locution is addressed, the interesting question is: how is this achieved? Equally important, what properties of language allow the systematic production of such devices? Naturally, for any pattern of language to be voiced, we need a sentient speaker with percepts, beliefs, intentions and what-not, but whatever these beliefs or intentions might be, language itself has to have the potentiality of being used in ways that permit the possibility of 're-writing' large segments of its own semantics, not through a slow process of change but through an intensity of use within a short period of time by those who can enforce their will. Let me attempt an answer by first examining certain properties and patterns found in most languages known to us.

One such pattern has been widely recognized by linguists, albeit under different names; this is the contrast between 'purr' and 'snarl' words as illustrated in a two-member clause complex, such as '(a) *my children are lively*; (b) *yours are unruly*'. The lexical item highlighted in (a) is a 'purr' word, conveying a positive evaluation of the state of affairs to which the clause refers; that in (b) is a 'snarl' word; it creates a negative evaluation of pretty much the same state of affairs. In terms of SFL's notion of *metafunctional resonance* across the strata of context, semantics and lexicogrammar, we would describe the two clauses as same/similar *experientially*, but differing markedly *interpersonally*: at the level of context, the field of discourse is pretty much the same; the tenor is different. What the purr and snarl words are doing is to characterize the goings on interpersonally in a way that is friendly to the speaker's own orientations. The reason for starting with the well-known device, I call **inherent evaluation**,¹ is to point to an important resource of language: languages are not simply a mechanism for referring to things, events, etc. Along with their potential for the construal of experiential meanings, they are at the same time also a resource for the creation of human relations, whereby we establish, maintain and alter our relations to others, we express our likes, dislikes, estimates of possibility, probability, obligation, and so on. Inherent evaluation is just one of the linguistic patterns pertaining to the interpersonal metafunction; its effectiveness clearly depends on the multifunctional nature of language, and the possibility of encoding both functions within one and the same utterance.

Turn now to a second pattern of language – this time at the semantic level. Consider an ordinary clause such as *Mona's husband is not a man*. Interpreted literally, it would be self-contradictory, so either pathological or nonsensical. However, when such a sentence is used in the living of life, listeners do not treat the speaker as in some way a-normal. They know she/he is not denying Mona's husband the properties of being *animate*, *homo sapiens*, *adult*, *male*; but simply those properties which are conventionally associated with being a member of the species 'homo sapiens', such as *humanity*, *bravery*, *fairness*, *civility*, *good judgement*, and so on. Generalizing, we may claim that the lexical item *man* realizes a two-part configuration of semantic features: (1) *animate*, *homo sapiens*, *adult*, *male*, and (2) the set of features that are inferentially related to each of the preceding features. Thus from the feature *animate* we infer, among other things, *mobility*, and *mutability*, – i.e., the quality of

being subject to change as in the processes of birth, growth, death, from which derives the 'logical' inevitability of Socrates' mortality! From *homo sapiens* can be inferred *intelligence*, *humanity*, *non-brutishness*, i.e., *civility*, *fairness* among other qualities; and so on for the remaining semantic features of group (1). Traditional linguistics has recognized these two groups of semantic features, (1) as *denotative* and (2) *connotative* meaning, respectively. With its bias towards the experiential, it has treated denotative meaning as the 'real stuff' of linguistic meaning; by comparison, connotative meanings have received far less attention. They are said to be based in an individual's experience, and so less stable across the community. I would reject this view as lacking logical/empirical foundation, even though hallowed by tradition. Be that as it may, the point to be emphasized here is that languages possess a property I would refer to as **inherent elasticity of meaning**. Thus, underlying a lexical item such as *man* is a configuration of meanings some of which (typically group (1)) lie on the surface of our awareness; others (typically group (2)) remain relatively submerged, which does not mean that they are, therefore, irrelevant, simply that when it comes to recording their meaning in dictionaries, it is the former that are given pride of place; the others, sometimes but not always, get a mention. They float into users' conscious awareness only when they become critical for making sense of some utterance as, for example, in *Mona's husband is not a man*. They thus have the status of 'cryptotype' (Whorf, 1956), whose significance is brought to consciousness through their reactance with some other pattern. The apparent fluidity of meanings brought to consciousness in actual acts of saying is a resource which offers the speaker the choice of truncating or extending the meaning of (some part of) an utterance. Naturally, the choice between which semantic features will be offered to the hearers' consciousness is not accidental: it too serves the interests of the speaker, governed by their 'natural' ways of thinking, i.e., by their ideology.

A third, equally familiar feature of human language, also pertaining to the semantic level, is the sense relation called **hyponymy**, whereby members of a less general class (*subordinate/hyponym*) are related to a more general class (*superordinate*), functioning as its sub-class, for example *son* or *daughter* as hyponyms of *offspring* as superordinate. The set of semantic features underlying a hyponym is more extensive than, and includes, those of its superordinate. This gives the hyponym greater specificity of meaning relative to its superordinate. A good deal has been written (Kress and Hodge, 1979) on the ideologically sensitive potentiality of the passive voice to withhold information when it suits the speaker. It is clear that with their relatively more general meanings, the superordinate items too are a good device for 'withholding' information. I will not be able to return to this pattern in detail, but a quick example was provided by the Australian Chief Superintendent of Police who, prior to a contentious meeting of the globalizers, announced that 'normal measures for crowd control will be employed' if the protesting crowd refused to disperse on advice. This formulation does away with such repugnant facts as the use of tear-gas, batons, rubber bullets and arrests, while creating a spurious sense of comfortable normality. Here, then, is another means by which the speaker can control the listener's access to information to suit his/her own purposes. The three patterns I have brought to attention are clearly not the only ones which can serve speakers' ideological purposes. If language is viewed as a system of systems of choices, then, in a manner of speaking, all its use has to be seen as ideological: in the final analysis, the actual choice, albeit unconscious, lies with speakers, who in the nature of things are socially positioned, and thus ideology-specific; their inclination towards this choice or that is a matter of their *habitus*, their mode of orientation

to experience. I limit myself to these three patterns because they seem particularly revealing in the analysis of the variety of globalizing English I am calling glib-speak.

I turn first to inherent evaluation: it clearly concerns a grading on the continuum of desirability. Treating desirability as scalar, I have already identified its two endpoints: (1) positive, e.g., *celebration, victory, applause*, and so on; (2) negative, e.g., *murder, deception, loss*, and so on. Between these endpoints is the median position, call it (3) neutral, e.g., *activity, organization, group*, and so on, which are relatively free of affective reaction. I have deliberately used nouns as examples, since it has been often taken for granted that only certain kinds of adjectives can function evaluatively. In fact, evaluative gradability is a feature of all lexical items; they after all refer to things, events, circumstances, which, in their turn, are commonly seen as either good, bad or neither by members of a speech community. Now, the neutrality of reaction to the median items is compromised/modified when they are in close collocation with items attracting decidedly positive or negative evaluation, as illustrated by the following examples:

<i>Positive</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Negative</i>
helper	group	terrorist
charity	organization	incendiary
supportive	activities	obstructive
free	trade	restrictive

Most members of the community would welcome a *helper group* (or a *group willing to help*); hardly any would be delighted at the prospect of being visited by a *terrorist group* (or a *group engaged in terrorism*); let me refer to this as the device of **affective alloyage**, whereby the referent of the neutral item acquires a desirable or undesirable face. Items from the two endpoints of the continuum of desirability are typically not placed in close colligation (Firth, 1957), e.g., in a modifier-head structure, though after Iraq *benevolent bombing* should, perhaps, be conceded as a distinct possibility. The liberal interpretation that *liberal/liberalize* have received in glib-speak illustrates the usefulness of affective alloyage. The reason it has aroused feelings of bitter disillusionment have to do with the reversal of meaning which ends up appearing to give with one hand while taking away with the other. To appreciate this claim, we must first examine the meanings of *liberal* that lie at the level of conscious awareness, and are enshrined in dictionaries, e.g., in the *Collins COBUILD* entries (p. 833):

liberal /lɪbəərəl/, **liberals**. **1 liberal** is used to describe **1.1** a person or institution that is tolerant of different kinds of behaviour or opinions. . . . **1.2** a person who is moderate in their political beliefs, favouring gradual social progress by the changing of laws, rather than by revolution. . . . **1.3** a person who is in favour of people having a lot of political freedom or a system which allows a lot of it. . . .

. . . .
liberalize /lɪbəərəlaɪz/, . . . When a country or government **liberalizes** its laws or its attitudes, it makes them less strict and allows people more freedom in their actions. EG . . . *a move to liberalize the state abortion laws* . . .

The elements that seem to be important to the meaning of *liberal* are *freedom, tolerance, and moderation*. The adjective *liberal* definitely expresses a positive evaluation, and so, logically, the semantic features realized by the item (and its derivatives) would also be commonly perceived as positive by most speakers. A cryptotypic element of the meaning

of *liberalization* is the inference of generosity, sensitivity to the need of the other; instead of being focused on the speaker, to be liberal is to be other-oriented. This is why it would be odd to say *I made a liberal demand*: a demand by its nature is for the benefit of the demander, not for that of the demandee! Thus, at a deeper level of consciousness, I would take the semantic feature *other-oriented* as relevant to the meaning of *liberal* (and its derivatives). In glib-speak, and so in reports on it, the item *liberalization* typically collocates most often with *trade* (about 33%) or trade-related items such as *market*, *economic*, *business* (about 40%). Now the meaning of *trade* is markedly different from *liberalization* etc., as the delicate grammar of typical trading activities such as buying, selling, lending and borrowing shows (Hasan, 1985). In the reciprocal processes of trade, each participant must guard his/her own interests – an age-old principle recognized in the act of bargaining; in other words, trade is precisely the converse of *liberal* so far as its cryptotypic semantic feature *other-oriented* is concerned. From the point of view of the addressee, the colligation of *liberal* and *trade* through its affective alloyage makes *trade* appear more desirable, precisely because *liberal trade* promises to be other-oriented: the ordinary use of the English language does not prepare the listener to interpret this as trade for the benefit of the speaker. But the inventors of this expression are corporate commercial bodies: in their ideology, trade is worth engaging in only if it is to one's advantage. Naturally then there has to be a semantic reversal whereby the cryptotypic feature *other-oriented* comes to be replaced by its converse, i.e., *ego-oriented*: liberal trade effectively becomes trade for the benefit of the initiators of globalization. As Watkins said 'the winners specialise in fixing the rules to ensure that the losers stay where they are.' Through bitter experience, disadvantaged countries, who have experienced the 'liberalization of trade', know that when WTO talks of *liberal trade*, what this means is 'trade organized for the benefit of the successful capitalist countries'; any advantage that comes to the disadvantaged workers of poorer countries is incidental. Klemperer (2000: 16) in his discussion of the changes to the German language during the Nazi period thoughtfully observes that 'if someone replaces the words "heroic" and "virtuous" by the word "fanatical" for long enough, he (*sic!*) will come to believe that a fanatic really is a virtuous hero.' True enough, but people such as Klemperer who actually suffered from this semantic reversal could hardly have subscribed to that belief, even if they had no means of protesting, even if they had a sense that language was being used as an instrument of oppression! This powerful effect is achieved through a subtle exploitation of the potential offered by inherent evaluation and by inherent elasticity of meaning. A decade ago, following the views of dominant linguistics, Bourdieu (1992: 39) remarked that whereas denotation, enshrined in the dictionary, represents the 'official meaning' of a word, 'connotation refers to the singularity of the individual experiences . . .'. However, I suggest that what makes semantic reversal so powerful a strategy is the *communal* agreement about a word's connotation: it is the reversal of a connotative (cryptotypic) meaning in the use of *liberal* that aroused the angry sense of betrayal in the community of the poorer countries.

The anti-language of Mallik's underworld speakers does not appear to use the strategy of semantic reversal; what is used is phonological reversal, and a skilful melange of borrowing and metaphorical signification. The cultural context in which this variety is embedded helps to explain the pressures for the production of such patterns: as Halliday (1976) suggests, the language of the wider community and that of the one which inhabited the underworld formed two parallel orders of reality. Dialogue between the two is certainly

not sought by the underworld; the devices of phonological reversal, borrowing with a special sense and metaphorical reference all render the language relatively 'opaque' to the outside community, which is how the speakers like it. The cultural context of glib-speak is remarkably different. Far from the exclusion of others, what is essential to the users of glib-speak is to use other members of the community as a resource for their profit-making activities by invoking the familiar to create an impression of normality while at the same time playing on wordings and meanings in a manner that offers the opportunity for profit-making. Unlike Mallik's subjects, the speakers of glib-speak do not seek to protect/create an alternative reality; far from it, they seek to have reality defined on their own terms by playing/preying on familiar words, in ways that help secure their economic goals. In this sense, if an anti-language is a variety for the exclusion of the other, glib-speak is a variety for creating false consciousness in the other, which should remind one of Karl Marx's (1985) views on ideology.

It is not simply the connotative/cryptotypic meaning that can be exploited for defining reality in ways that are friendly to the speaker's ideological stance. Denotative meanings too can be subverted in similar ways. To illustrate this let us take the word *democracy*, and its derivatives, since the liberalizers of trade and commerce are also dedicated to the cause of democracy, and a significant first order collocate of *democracy* is *free trade/market/commerce*, not to speak of *freedom*, which is appreciably different from freedom in the context of global trade. While the mention of the word might remind some of us of its famous description as 'the government of the people, by the people, for the people', a reliable dictionary, e.g., *Collins COBUILD*, bases its judgement on what are perceived as the views prevalent in the community, from which an extract below from the entries for *democracy/democratic* (p. 375):

- democracy** /dɪmɒkrəsi/, **democracies**. **1. democracy** is **1.1** a system of government in which people choose their rulers by voting for them in election . . .
1.2 a system of running organizations, businesses, groups etc., in which each member is entitled to vote and participate in management decision. . . .
2 A **democracy** is a country in which the people choose their government by voting for it . . .
democrat /deməkræt/, **democrats**. **1** A **democrat** is . . .
democratic /deməkrætɪk/. **1** A country, government, or political system that is **democratic** has representatives who are elected by the people. . . .
2 Something that is **democratic** is based on the idea that everyone should have equal rights and should be involved in making important decisions. . . .

Since *choicelchoose*, *voteelect* occur more than half a dozen times in this short extract, the implication is that *democracy* is primarily taken to mean 'people's right to choose'. Elections and voting are orderly ways of effecting choice, and in our daily experience a 'democratic' government is one that has been voted in by the people. However, we are also told by the dictionary that 'something that is *democratic* is based on the idea that everyone should have equal rights and should be involved in making important decisions'. There are, thus, several elements to the meaning of this word: the right to elect a representative governing body; to participate in decision making; equal rights for justice, education, health care, and systems of belief; freedom from coercion; right to personal dignity; right to property and no doubt many other such things. Given the confusion that surrounds the use of the terms *denotation* and *connotation* (Lyons, 1977), it is not easy to say which of these elements of the meaning of democracy are to be treated as denotative, which

connotative. But what is very clear is that due to the inherent elasticity of meaning, speakers have the ability to choose as they wish. In the hands of the powerful, this is a powerful strategy for the classification and re-classification of common categories of experience; even a communally recognized primary meaning such as the right to elect a representative government can be, and has been, subverted. To give an actual example of how, in glib-speak, democracy changes its semantic colour like a chameleon, let us go back to October 1999, when the ruling Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, was toppled by his own Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf. The democracies of the world, from the west to the east, were outraged, because a democracy had been replaced by a military regime. But was Nawaz Sharif's government democratic? The answer depends on how much of the meaning of democracy one might treat as relevant. Here is what those who had a direct experience of Nawaz Sharif's democratic regime, had to say about him and his government:

This is the face of a man who betrayed his own people
[caption under Sharif's photo pinned to a tree in Bani Gala, Pakistan]

He (ie Sharif) destroyed our house; now God has destroyed him. We're happy he's gone!
[a Pakistani in Saidpur whose house was demolished because it appeared to be an eyesore on Sharif's route to the capital: reported *New York Times*, October 1999].

You bribe people, it works: you don't, it doesn't.

For the people there is no democracy: who comes, who goes makes no difference to us
[anonymous Pakistanis commenting on how Sharif's government worked]

For its breach of democracy, Pakistan was promptly punished by sanctions from many countries of the world, who still find it morally sound to go on trading with Burma. Perhaps, one should concede that even a semblance of democracy is better than a military coup d'état, or occupation by force. But Sharif's democracy was strictly speaking a democracy in an entirely attenuated sense of the word: certainly there had been elections; votes had been cast, but the majority of voters had very little idea of the significance of their votes, and it is by no means certain that the voting was by free choice: threats and bribes were certainly used if media reports from the country are to be credited. As the comments on Sharif's political demise show, there had been no general people participation in decision making, no right to equality, no right to personal dignity, not even safety. It is worth noting that amongst the outraged nations, the US, which claims to be the first democracy of the world, was equally, if not more, incensed. But this was in late 1999; things were to change dramatically in a short span of two years after 9/11. In late 2001, the sanctions were lifted and Musharraf became an important part of the Alliance against Terrorism; so far as democracy is concerned, the internal political situation of Pakistan was practically the same as it was in October 1999. What should we say democracy meant at the moment of forging this alliance? Recent regime change to bring democracy and freedom to Iraq through continued military presence and violence shows quite clearly that the term democracy is used in the context of Iraq's freedom simply because of the term's positive evaluation; if at this moment Iraq is conceded to be a 'democracy', then certainly the element of free choice can no longer be thought crucial to the meaning of democracy, at least by those who approve of this formulation.

So far we have discussed the primary element of the meaning of democracy, namely people's right to free choice of a representative governing body. Let us turn briefly now to

consider who it is that the chosen representatives serve and who has the privilege of participation in decision making. The dictionary talks blithely about ‘people choosing’, ‘being entitled to vote and participate in . . . decision [making]’ and states that ‘everyone should have equal rights and should be involved in making important decisions.’ What happens in reality? We turn for an example this time to the first democracy of the world, the United States of America. Here is an extract from the *Washington Diary* by the well-known journalist Martin Kettle (2001) reporting:

‘Conservation may be a sign of personal virtue, but it is not a sufficient basis for a sound, comprehensive energy policy,’ Cheney said in Toronto. ‘The aim here is efficiency, not austerity.’ . . .

Environmental groups claim that they have been shut out of the energy review. Cheney quite simply refuses to discuss his ideas with them. By contrast, the views of industry moguls and insiders are given long and lavish attention . . .

Cheney’s report will not only advocate drilling in Alaska [National Wild Life Refuge]. It is also being pressed to loosen restrictions in parts of the Montana Rockies, as well as to extend offshore drilling. The coal industry will get a boost too, and the report will endorse the building of the first new nuclear power plants in the US since the Three Mile Island accident in 1979.

A closer examination of the brief quote from Cheney reveals the powerful exploitation of ‘connotative’ meaning and communal evaluation in glib-speak. Note the contrasts: *conservation* clearly cannot be reviled; but if there is a contest between it and *sound comprehensive energy policy*, then the latter wins hands down in a world dominated by capitalist modes of production and distribution. Energy is the lifeline of everything that the capitalist enterprise stands for; a ‘sound policy’ to manage its continued flow is anytime much more important than any *personal virtue*. A personal virtue stands no chance whatever in comparison with ‘national interest’, for which read ‘the corporate sector’s interest’. From the experiential point of view, *austerity* is not an antonym of *efficiency*; but, interpersonally, the two terms are located at opposite ends of the desirability continuum. Austerity is undesirable: hardly anyone is likely to welcome it. Similarly, anyone who knows the English language – no matter which variety of world Englishes it is – would welcome efficiency: it is a desirable thing to have. Thus the two terms are directly opposed; or, speaking technically, they are **interpersonal antonyms**. Brief as the quoted Cheney utterance is, thanks to the property of inherent evaluation, it says in no unclear terms: ‘listener! if you are a rational being, you will side with me.’ But this view of rational behaviour is not as unquestionable as Cheney makes it out, and this becomes clear as we move further into Kettle’s report. Here we learn that *austerity* has something to do with placing restraint on practices that contribute to environmental degradation; what it means in this context is the adoption of measures that would safeguard the long-term survival of the world, rather than the short-term profiteering, which is the life-blood of capitalist systems.

But there is more to the report: we are told of environmental groups’ claim that ‘they have been shut out of the energy review; Cheney . . . refuses to discuss his ideas with them. By contrast, the views of industry moguls and insiders are given long and lavish attention.’ So we gather that in the first democracy of the world there is certainly consultation and participation in decision making, but not by ‘people’. A shift has occurred in the reference of the word ‘people’. The common expectation is that this word will refer to any member of the community in question: but the reality is different. There is certainly participation in

decision making but there is also exclusion as the report points out: thus, for 'people' read 'sub-section of people'. Why should this be so? What determines which sub-section will be consulted and who will have the privilege of participating in decision making? Perhaps the following snippet from the World section of *South China Morning Post* reported on May 19, 2001 (p. 15) is relevant:

US energy companies lavishly financed Republican political campaigns last year, according to watchdog groups.

Oil and gas companies gave Republican politicians US\$25.5 million . . . almost four times as much as they gave Democrats, according to figures obtained by the Centre for Responsive Politics. The electricity industry gave almost US\$450,000 to President George W. Bush, seven times what they gave his Democrat opponent, Al Gore. The coal industry gave Mr Bush over US\$100,000 and the nuclear power industry over US\$290,000.

Common Cause, another watchdog group, revealed electric utilities contributed US\$10.1 million to the two major parties.

This reminds us of the protestors' complaint that the words of the powerful authorities active in globalization are irreconcilable with their actions. The way the word *people* is interpreted in action is quite different from the general understanding of the word: only those qualify as people with the right to participate in decision making who hold their purse strings open for the candidates during election time. So, what does it mean to say 'people's right to choose'? Are all the people really choosing by voting in election or is a certain choice being thrust on them by the machination of those who favour that particular choice, because it is in their interest? The manipulation of meaning, which seems to be the hallmark of glib-speak, provides its own silent answer. MacIntyre (1999: 122) sums up the cultural milieu of today's globalized world:

Ours is a political culture deeply fractured by fundamental moral disagreements. It is also a political culture whose public rhetoric is well designed to disguise and to conceal the extent of that disagreement by invoking an idiom of consensus with regard to values. In order to function effectively that rhetoric must be able to make use of sentences that both command widespread assent and yet which are at the same time available for the expression of sets of very different and incompatible moral judgements. Thereby an illusion is created of agreement in valuing such virtues as courage, generosity and justice, while at the same time disguising the range of alternative and conflicting conceptions of such virtues . . .

In recent years there has been much debate about the relations of globalization and culture. It is suggested that the complexity of the culture and of globalization cannot be understood simply by examining 'production, circulation and consumption' important though they may be (Tomlinson, 1999). However, the analysis of the characteristics of glib-speak shows how deeply and widely the principles of capitalist management penetrate the many aspects of our social existence, which at first glance appear to be quite independent of economic considerations. There is little reason to doubt that as time goes on, 'the blind mole that is capitalism' will, in the words of Collini (2000) 'burrow deeper into the texture of life. It knows no other way.' From fashion to education, from freedom to modes of self-assessment, the capitalist philosophy regulating the march of globalization will continue to shape our existence. In fact higher education has already received an ultimatum (Oblinger, 1999), as the extract from Becket's (1999) review indicates:

It is high time, says Oblinger, that academic communities started to concentrate on teaching the skills, attitudes and personal attributes that business requires. Students should be taught 'to

understand the unwritten rules of the corporate culture'. The Regius Professor of Lithuanian Mythology must make way for the Bill Gates Professor of Massive Profits . . .

But what if academics refuse to allow business to dictate the curriculum? Then, opines Oblinger grimly, they face a bleak future. 'To get a sympathetic ear from legislators, higher education will need strong advocacy from the business community, an ally it is unlikely to win unless it has put itself through the same sort of streamlining and re-engineering that the business community has.'

This prophesy has partly come true: corporate business, as symbolized by Nike, has already shown that it will exercise control on how educational institutions conduct themselves, when Nike withdrew its huge grants to universities whose student groups had participated in protests against work conditions for off-shore labour. 'We are not going to give a blank check to dictate our business', its chief executive declared. If students are committed to fight for workers' rights in ways that impinge adversely on the production policy of corporate businesses, damaging their profit margin, they would have to be politically very naive to go on expecting generous grants from them. In the ethos of 'compassionate capitalism', this stands to reason: it is a demonstration of non-discrimination and fair business practice; no one should expect something for nothing!

This brings me to the final movement of my paper, namely the role of literacy education in the 'brave new world' fashioned by globalization. There are, of course, different understandings of the word *literacy*, inspired by ideas about what constitutes education. Thus, literacy education may be simply seen as teaching students how the sounds and letters of a language calibrate; how to convert a message (fragment) from the visual modality to the aural one, and vice versa. This is the oldest interpretation in official pedagogic sites all over the world, and elsewhere (Hasan, 1996) I have called it **recognition literacy**: persons with this expertise might 'read out' an instruction; the degree of comprehension might leave much to be desired. It is a form of literacy that flourishes where, as Bernstein (1975) put it, curriculum is governed by 'collection code': language is simply an item in the list of disciplines. A (historically) second interpretation of the term became popular in the second half of the last century, particularly in the more affluent industrialized countries, call it **action literacy**. It is a form favoured in educational systems governed by Bernstein's 'integration code': the boundaries between subjects are seen here as permeable. 'Language across the curriculum' is an expression of this approach. This form of literacy aims to enable pupils to 'write to mean'. It includes such impressive goals as 'self-expression', and display of sensibility, as well as the ability to produce texts in genres that are educationally valued, so as to maximize chances of educational success (Martin, 1986). Whether it is the former, vaguer self-expression or the latter highly explicit genre based pedagogy, in both cases, the goal is conformity to an already established pattern. Following the dictates of action literacy, business education must, in this era of globalization, teach its pupils to become fluent in glib-speak, to package their ideas in the preferred mode so as to maximize the chances of success in profits. Action literacy is certainly a considerable advance on recognition literacy, but we do need to go beyond it, to what for want of a better term I have called **reflection literacy**. This form presupposes the expertise of both forms of literacy discussed above, but at the same time it aims to create in the pupil an understanding of reading and writing as bearers of deep social significance, not simply as a vehicle for information but as a potent instrument of social formation: it is a form of literacy that would go beyond simple interpretation to reflection on how the 'same' words can be made to construe different meanings and what is the social

significance of such semantic construals. This implies that reflection literacy moves from comprehension into enquiry: the literate person should be able to interrogate the wording and the meaning of any utterance – why these words, what might they achieve, to whose loss and to whose benefit? It is only literacy of this kind that will enable the listeners of varieties such as glib-speak to understand where the elected democracy of one's country might be taking one, how much comfort our so-called progress has brought to humanity, and what the underlying principles of our admirable civilization happen to be. From the point of view of reflection literacy, education is not simply a system for the transmission of a certain quota of information packaged within named disciplines; it should aim at enabling one to live as a human being deserving of the term *homo sapiens*.

Much has been written about the power of language from the point of view of world Englishes, e.g. Kachru (1986), Thumboo (1986), Kandiah (2001), Rahim (1986), to mention but a few. Throughout this paper, I too have emphasized the power of language, but perhaps by this phrase I mean something slightly different. For me, this power resides simply in the flexible design of language as system whereby it meets most if not each and every demand of the speaker. However, one thing it is essential to remember: in itself the power of language is simply a potential; its semiotic energy requires the ideological spur of the speaker to be activated; the active principle is always the socially positioned speaker. When in the context of its worldwide expansion, we talk of English as a *killer language*, we put the blame where it does not belong. It is not English that is the killer, it is the ideology of the dominant speakers of English, their ways of being, thinking, doing and saying that knowingly or unknowingly kill. 'Language as power', in the words of Edwin Thumboo (1986), may be 'a truism, topic, slogan, bone of contention, premise, proposition, irritation and much else'; but one thing that language as power is not is 'wilful'. To say that the power of language is in its potential is to say that it is capable of being used as an infinite resource (Halliday, 2001); but this potential is ideologically neutral,² which follows logically from the fact that it has to satisfy the needs of diverse ideologies: it itself neither exploits, nor supports, nor does it deceive. However the situation is different when it comes to the *use* of language, where the language's potential is actualized in the living of life: this is *always* ideological, because both the production and reception of discourse are performed by socially positioned subjects (Bernstein, 1990). From this point of view, the wilfulness is entirely ours: we alone are responsible for harnessing the language's semiotic energy in our own chosen ways. And it is my belief that ignorance of intention or effect is no excuse; if there is guilt or blame, it does not attach to language as potential; it attaches to some section of some speakers somewhere, who are the actualizers of this potential. The trick is to know through careful reflection and analysis exactly how they do it and why.

NOTES

1. See also Martin, 1996, whose work on appraisal lies in a similar area.
2. I am aware that this claim could be taken as a challenge to Whorf's relativity theory. However, nothing could be further from my intentions. I believe Whorf has been seriously misread in several crucial ways. However, the elaboration of this point demands much space and time, and must await another occasion.

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