

Lectal variation in party positions: Ideological affordances of time and space frames in political discourse

Bertie Kaal
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

This cognitive-discourse approach concerns text analysis for time and space frames. Theory on the primacy of spatial cognition as an organising principle in thought and language (Levinson 2003) forms the basis for a constructionist approach to worldview analysis. The aim is to find epistemic and deontic evidence of attitude in worldviews (Aerts et al. 2007). In human perception, static space gives a sense of certainty about where we are, whereas time provides a relative sense of motion and duration in that space (Evans, Forthcoming). Together they form an abstract coordinate system for subjective sense making, and for communicating such thoughts in language. The goal is to identify these basic cognitive frames of reference and their coordinates to account for variation in ideologically motivated rationales, such as in political texts. The notion of lectal variation (Geeraerts 2006) contributes a basic paradigm to differentiate the construction of political rationales. Politics is about the space and the time in which a government has a mandate to exert its power. It extends this social reality to a cultural space: an epistemic and deontic community

At the linguistic level, the texts do not appear to be about ideological principles and content centres around the prevalent issues of the election year (Topoi) with very similar sets of labels. Consequently, ideological differences are wrapped up in the discursive architecture of the documents. Text worlds (Werth 1999) afford a cohesive basis for meaning making that cognitively guides the inference of linguistic and content phenomena in that text. Such basic frames outline a space that is observed from a *relatum* in that space and 'sets the scene' from which policies and goals unfold (Heywood 2007) in logical "directions of fit" (Searle 2010). In effect, the frames form a discourse world that warrants political action by positing scenarios that are likely in that subjective frame (Hermann 2003).

A Discourse Space Model was developed (after Chilton 2004, 2007) to extract time-space frames from Dutch election manifestos (2006, 2010). The corpus of very 'like' texts was analysed for differentiating party positions and for tracking party shifts over time. Results show variation in the scope, direction-of-fit, and position of the *relatum* of worldviews that relate to the political progressive-conservative dimension. The model addresses a primary principle of thought and language use that gives social meaning to variation by way of discursive variation in the ground on which meaning is generated.

References

- Aerts, D., L. Apostel, et al. 2007 [1994]. World views. From fragmentation to integration. Translation of Apostel and Van der Veken (1991) with some additions. Brussels: VUB Press. [Internet edition]
- Chilton, Paul. 2004. *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Chilton, Paul. 2007. Geometrical concepts at the interface of formal and cognitive models. *Pragmatics & Cognition* 15: 91-114.
- Evans, V. Forthcoming. *On Time: Temporal reference, access semantics and metaphor*. www.vyvevans.net (accessed April 2012)
- Geeraerts, D. 2005. Lectal variation and empirical data in Cognitive Linguistics. In F.J. Ruiz de Mendoza Ibanez and M. Sandra Pena Cervel (Eds), *Cognitive Linguistics: Internal dynamics and interdisciplinary interaction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 163-190.
- Hermann, D. (Ed.). 2003. *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences*. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.
- Heywood, Andrew. 2007. *Political Ideologies* (4th ed.). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Levinson, S.C. 2003. *Space in Language and Cognition: Explorations in cognitive diversity*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Searle, J. R. 2010. *Making the Social World: The structure of human civilization*. Oxford. OUP.
- Werth, Paul. 1999. *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*. London: Longman.