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Partington, Alan (2025). The Language of Persuasion in Politics and the Media: An Introduction. Routledge, 386 pp. ISBN 978-1-032-64824-8

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This second edition of Alan Partington's *The Lan-guage of Persuasion in Politics and the Media* expands and updates the 2018 version, incorporating contemporary phenomena such as social media, disinformation campaigns, the rise of populist communication, and the role of artificial intelligence in political mediation. From its very first page, the work starts from a compelling premise: politics is inseparable from language, and all political action—whether democratic or authoritarian—is carried out through acts of persuasion.

The volume, conceived with a clear educational purpose, is organised into sixteen units that combine theoretical exposition, analysis of real examples, and practical exercises. Each chapter is accompanied by a final section of 'Keys and Commentaries,' reinforcing its educational nature. The book progresses from the fundamentals of classical rhetoric to the challenges of contemporary digital communication: the mechanisms of linguistic evaluation and manipulation, the creation of narrative frameworks, the rhetorical devices of repetition and contrast, political metaphor, argumentative fallacies, humour and satire, institutional interviews, and discursive strategies in recent referendums and election campaigns.

Among his greatest achievements is the use of corpus analysis as a tool for studying linguistic patterns in large databases (Sketch Engine, COCA, SiBol). This empirical approach allows Partington to demonstrate how political power is manifested in word choice, tone modulation, and the argumentative organisation of discourse. Throughout the chapters, the author shows how concepts such as evaluative cohesion, importance marking, and association models help to unravel the semantic architecture of modern persuasion.

Partington makes it very clear that politicians, journalists, and the media use language to influence the public's opinions, emotions, and decisions. His central claim in the book is that persuasion depends not only on facts, but also on the way those facts are linguistically presented. To demonstrate this, the author analyses political speeches, interviews, press conferences, newspaper headlines, social media, election campaigns, and satirical texts. Key topics that are dealt with in considerable depth include the following: linguistic evaluation, that is, how certain words can convey positive or negative judgments; the so-called "spin," that is, the strategic manipulation of information in order to promote a specific political image; the main rhetorical strategies of persuasion, such as contrast, appeal to authority, association of ideas, and the problem-solution structure; fallacious arguments and the phenomenon of "post-truth," which demonstrate how seemingly convincing discourses can be constructed even when they lack a solid logical foundation; the role of metaphors as effective tools for shaping our understanding of political reality and last, but not least, the use of humor, irony, and satire as mechanisms for criticism and influence.

This new edition also offers chapters on disinformation, fake news, conspiracy theories, censorship, and social media. Partington analyses how these phenomena have significantly transformed contemporary political communication.

The Preface, which is extensive and conceptually dense, functions as a short monograph on the historical relationship between language and power. Partington eruditely traces the transition from the prestigious languages of the ancient world (Greek, Latin, Arabic) to contemporary English as the global language of economics (and capitalism, it should be added), science, and diplomacy. This linguistic genealogy serves to contextualise the centrality of English as a vehicle of political and media influence in the present, but also to introduce an explicit critique of the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA). The author accuses this school of thought — represented by Fairclough, van Dijk and Wodak — of being 'paradoxically uncritical' because, in his view, it has become trapped or locked into a post-Marxist framework that conceives of power solely as an instrument of oppression and not as a capacity for communication or a form of social cooperation.

This mistrust in CDA reveals an objectivist intention: Partington aspires to place discourse analysis on empirical ground, supported by linguistic corpora and an analysis of verifiable communicative effects rather than ideological interpretations. He therefore advocates a "de-deologised" approach, based on quantitative ob-

servation of lexical and grammatical patterns, which allows persuasion strategies to be identified without resorting to predetermined critical categories. However, this methodological position runs the risk of falling into what Charles Wright Mills called abstract empiricism: the illusion of objectivity that arises when empirical observation is detached from the historical, social and moral structures that give meaning to communicative phenomena. In the name of supposed neutrality, the analysis of power could be reduced to a simple description of its linguistic mechanisms, omitting the social conditions of its production and reception.

At this point, the critical reader might point out that the value of CDA lies not only in denouncing oppression, but also in revealing how language produces hegemony, consensus and legitimacy. By focusing on the communicative effectiveness of persuasion, Partington runs the risk of overshadowing the fundamental question of the purposes of that effectiveness: who persuades, whom, and for what purpose? Nevertheless, his commitment to an empirical-pragmatic approach has undoubted merit: it restores to political linguistics the possibility of engaging with data and not just theories, of studying discourse as a living practice rather than as an abstract system of domination.

Nevertheless, at the didactic level, the book is extremely useful for university teaching in applied linguistics, political communication, translation and even in helping professions such as social work or social education. The structure of tasks, questions and case studies encourages critical reading of media and political texts and offers concrete strategies for identifying fallacies, euphemisms, emotional appeals and evaluative biases. The prose is clear, accessible and peppered with irony, making for a stimulating rather than dry reading experience.

Notwithstanding, as we have already discussed with regard to CDA, the work has some limitations. In my opinion, in his attempt to maintain ideological neutrality, the author sometimes makes unbalanced value judgements: he criticises the bias of CDA, but at the same time adopts an explicitly political position when referring to populism, censorship or propaganda. In addition, the focus is almost exclusively anchored in the English-speaking world, with little attention being paid to other discursive traditions or non-Western contexts, something which tends to be rather common in the Anglosphere as well as in what we may refer to as the Anglo-Saxon Eurocentrism.

On the other hand, Partington's emphasis on linguistic analysis seems to overshadow the emotional and psychological dimension of persuasion, which is so relevant in contemporary political communication. In this respect, I think it might have been useful to have taken a more psycho-social view of language in politics and media messages.

Despite these observations, *The Language of Persuasion in Politics and the Media* stands out for its methodological rigour, clarity of exposition and current relevance. It combines the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition with corpus linguistics and the study of digital media, offering a bridge between the classical and the contemporary. In times of "fake news", persuasive algorithms and polarised discourse, Partington's book provides a valuable tool for understanding how language not only describes politics, but really constructs and disputes it.

In short, this second edition constitutes essential reading for those who wish to analyse current political and media communication "critically". With his didactic tone, accessible erudition and watchful eye on the power of words, the author achieves what he had proposed to do in the preface: to equip the reader with the 'linguistic antibodies' necessary to resist manipulation and exercise critical thinking in the public sphere. This is a highly recommended book for students and researchers in Discourse Analysis, Linguistics, Communication, Translation, Political Science, and Media Studies. Its main strength is that it combines theory with numerous real-world examples and offers exercises that help develop a critical reading of political and media discourse.