

"STANDARD ENGLISH" AS A METAPHOR OF LANGUAGE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION DEBATE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aim of this paper

The ways in which language is used reflexively¹ to discuss and analyse the medium of language itself have a profound effect on our perceptions of its nature. Graddol et al. (1987: 3) observe that articulate and useful explanation of the nature of language requires "a special *metalinguistic* skill brought about by an extensive consideration of language as an object of knowledge."

People have various reasons to discuss language "as an object of knowledge" in the course of their daily lives and occupations. Obvious examples are language professionals (linguists, educationalists, teachers, translators), lawyers, broadcasters, writers, politicians, etc. But virtually no one can escape from the universal necessity to engage in discourse about the very language one uses. Indeed, in everyday speech and writing we come across much metalinguistic analysis of common language events, in expressions such as:

She took the words out of my mouth
Reading between the lines, the real message became clear
I've already put my thoughts in writing, read them.

Many users of those expressions would recognise in them a degree of metaphoricity. However, those expressions contribute to our image or perception of what communication involves.

What makes this of interest to linguists is that, despite appearances, much of this common "language about language" can be seriously misleading. According to Reddy (1979), about 70 per cent of the expressions people use to talk in English about English communicate a biased view of communication. Reddy attributes this to the prevalence of what he terms the *conduit metaphor*. This is a metaphorical conception of language that Reddy has identified as widespread across registers and styles of English. It is evident in both written and spoken language: in routine expressions, in concepts underlying discourse, even in the semantic structure of the language.

Reddy also highlights a number of alternative metaphorical metalinguistic expressions. To these, however, he attributes no particular coherent metaphorical orientation. In the English language education debate there is some evidence that, in addition to the pervasive effects of the *conduit* metaphor, there is another metaphorical metalinguistic tendency: this we will refer to as the *negotiative* metaphor.

In this article we will be examining metaphors of language employed in the area of the recent and continuing educational debate on the teaching of English in the United Kingdom. This field is chosen as the site for analysis, because, in spite of the apparent impression that the language of the debate is clear, rational, objective and non-metaphorical, we found that many of the key terms in the debate are themselves metaphorical labels. As a consequence, interpretation and use of these labels is not as straightforward as is often thought.

1.2. Procedure

Section 2 begins with a statement of the position that metaphor is an essential and fundamental element in normal language meaning and use. Then metaphor is analysed as a semantic and pragmatic phenomenon. Finally, the relationship between the concept of generative metaphor and schema theory is considered.²

Section 3 explains the methodology and then applies the view of metalinguistic metaphor to an analysis of the use of the labels "standard" and

"English" in the English language education debate. Metaphors of language are explored with particular reference to the "generative" opposition of *conduit* and *negotiative* metaphors that forms the background of this study.

In Section 4 the major conclusions and prospects are summed up.

2. METAPHOR

2.1. Metaphor is fundamental to language

Metaphor is a normal feature of language, not simply an embellishing literary figure. It is difficult to isolate for study, however, partly because it operates at many different linguistic "levels" (itself a metaphor): at the grammatical level, at word level, at sentence/utterance/text levels, and at the level of the context and underlying concept of a discourse. "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3).

The English word *metaphor* is derived from the Greek *meta pherein* (=carry across), indicating the importation of understanding or insight from one sphere of experience to another. If metaphor is then broadly, but usefully, described as "experiencing or understanding something in terms of something else" or "seeing as" (Schön 1979), it can be observed that this principle informs a great many aspects of linguistic activity,³ and cognitive activity in general. Metaphors, especially conventionalized metaphors, are a mode of dealing with experience that pervades our cognition; and they are so pervasive that we tend to overlook them and accept the views they present as "literal," natural and non-negotiable.

2.2. Metaphor: semantic aspects

Certain theorists (Cohen 1979) have described metaphor as a phenomenon interpretable only within the semantic system of language. Lee (1992) has pointed to grammatical categorization as a semantic classificatory instrument determining a language's metaphorical perspective on objects and actions. Others (Sadock 1979) have argued that metaphor is not properly within the

sphere of linguistics, narrowly conceived, at all: they have aimed to provide an account of its operation purely within a theory of pragmatics. This study proceeds on the basis that metaphor can be reasonably understood to operate in both semantics *and* pragmatics.

A frequent view of metaphor regards it as arising from semantic anomaly in language. An example would be the utterance *John's a teapot*, in which the speaker's intention would more likely be to highlight John's predilection for tea than to suggest he had a handle and spout and was made of china, etc.

Aitchison analyses this type of metaphor as "the use of a word with one or more of the "typicality conditions" attached to it broken" (1987: 144). This view is related to componential analysis, but is rather less restrictive in that it does not attempt to pin down word-meaning to a definable set of features. In the example above, the typicality conditions attached to *teapot* are mostly inapplicable to John, so most of them are broken leaving only "tea capacity" as a possibly appropriate condition. Aitchison (1987) cites Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Sperber and Wilson (1986) in juxtaposition to demonstrate that, viewed from different perspectives, language can either be seen as fundamentally metaphorical, or metaphor can be seen as linguistically normal:

Our ordinary conceptual system . . . is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

Metaphors . . . are in no sense departures from a norm. (Sperber and Wilson 1986).

This is an important point for this study, because it may be objected that much of what we are dealing with on the word or sentence level is not metaphor at all, but rather questions of fuzzy semantics. Aitchison's point suggests that the distinction is at least partially an artificial construction of the linguist. Metaphor, as writers such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have pointed out, has been sidelined and marginalized by much of modern linguistics. It has been seen as inessential to a study of language meanings. This is the result of the pervasive influence of the generative-transformational grammar paradigm that stresses rule-governed creativity as basic to language as opposed to rule-changing creativity which is applied to the norm-challenging activity of, say, artists and scientists. Such rule-governed creativity is obviously important, but Lee suggests the paradox that norm-challenging creativity in meaning extension is itself a linguistic norm. The

neglect of this fundamental metaphorical process produces a view of language that overlooks significant linguistic encoding of ideology, and this is not a consequence that linguists can afford to accept.

However, a renewed interest in metaphors has recently stressed their importance as instruments of cognition. Metaphors have been assigned a central role in our perceptual and cognitive processes; in fact, "we live by metaphors," as the title of Lakoff and Johnson's influential study on the subject says.

Graddol and Swann (1988) identify "conflicting discourses" in the English language education debate. Those discourses can be illuminated as structured by metaphorical perspectives on language. Further, the individual terms systematically understood in different senses in linguistics and lay discourse can be seen to be powerful local metaphors within overall structuring metaphorical frames. As Lee (1992) demonstrates, a study of metaphorical aspects of texts often allows identification of the unifying ideological tendencies that otherwise may escape attention in the narrow concentration on more traditional paradigms of linguistic analysis. That is the reason why we have chosen this view.

2.3. Metaphor or "slippery semantics"?

Concerning the expression "coming out of a coma" and "to be under age," Aitchison poses and then answers a crucial question:

So are these metaphors? Or ordinary uses with a typicality condition broken? As these examples show, the two are indistinguishable. . . . The necessity of breaking typicality conditions —or in other words, the inevitability of metaphor— is so high in some semantic fields that one cannot communicate without it. (1987: 145)

One such field is the discussion of language. It is not, then, a case of arguing that certain features in the texts (e.g. the variable meanings of words such as *standard*) are accountable for as "metaphor" rather than, for example, as "slippery semantics" or as "weasel words" (Cameron and Bourne 1988: 155). The deeper issue appears to be "Why are particular words prone to the effects of slippery semantics so consistently in particular contexts?" Or put another way, "What motivates or drives the semantics in these cases?" The analysis of such issues in terms of local and generative metaphor goes a long way

towards explicating the root causes of particularly problematic and pragmatic phenomena in ideologically motivated texts.

2.4 Classification and selection

Lee (1992) observes that "classification is fundamental to the encoding of our experiences." He points out that the experience is encoded to make sense of the world somewhat arbitrarily and in culturally-specific ways. The generally accepted set of metaphors, or ways of perceiving, in each speech community is agreed by social convention, not by any inherent correctness or objective accuracy. Lee presents the example of the English noun *dog*, which is used to stand for creatures as diverse as "poodle" and "alsatian," despite the fact that in some respects the latter more closely resembles "wolf" than it does "poodle." The same arbitrariness applies to other word-classes: for example, to different senses of the verb *climb* in the following sentences: "She climbed down the rock face"; "See how the ivy climbs up to that window"; or in the variability of the adjectival force of *strong* in such combinations as: "a strong cup of tea," "a strong possibility."

Lee also demonstrates the way in which grammatical classes themselves are arbitrary categories related to the world-view. For instance, English refers to concepts such as "storm," "wave," "lightning," "wind" by constructing sentences around the noun phrase (e.g. "There's a *storm* in the west"), whereas in other languages (Whorf 1971) these concepts are structured around verbs (e.g. "It is *storming* in the west"). This demonstrates that language inclines its speakers to consider events and objects in certain largely pre-determined ways —for example, a "storm" as some sort of object, when it is arguably more like a collection of events.

"Language . . . is clearly not simply a mirror that reflects reality . . . it is also highly selective" (Lee 1992: 8). The selectivity of language means that there is considerable underspecification in utterances: for hearers to achieve any sort of meaning, they must assume relevance (Sperber and Wilson 1986) and their own knowledge base must fill in a great deal of information not encoded in the speakers' utterances. Selection then allows certain features of a situation to be highlighted while others are hidden. This selection is often achieved through the use of metaphorically extended vocabulary in particular metaphorically structured texts and contexts: such contexts select particular meanings from all the potential meanings of a particular word as the preferred meanings. From this it will be seen that there is a complex

interaction in the creation and comprehension of metaphor between the metaphorical potential of the *individual word*, its location in a *text*, and the location of that text in a *context of situation*. These three sites of metaphor will have to be considered in the analysis of the texts.

This will be seen to have relevance in the case of such metaphorical items as *standard English*. It is most usual to consider such items as perfectly straightforward and literal. Perhaps there may be difficulties in reaching agreement concerning specific definition and application, but basically it is usually agreed that in such cases there exists an entity to be defined and subsequently referred to. The epiphenomenalistic view supported by Lee, on the other hand, points to the fact that such labels are metaphorical linguistic constructions rather than uncontroversial entities.

2.5. Pragmatic aspects of metaphor

A recent influential approach broadly defined within a pragmatic perspective is that of Sperber and Wilson (1986). They argue that metaphor and related tropes can be accounted for in terms of relevance theory:

On this approach, metaphor and a variety of related tropes (e.g. hyperbole, metonymy, synecdoche) are simply creative exploitations of a perfectly general dimension of language use. The search for optimal relevance leads the speaker to adopt, on different occasions, a more or less faithful interpretation of her thoughts. The result in some cases is literalness, in others metaphor. Metaphor thus requires no special interpretive abilities or procedures. . . . (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 237)

This account provides an interesting angle from which to view the production and comprehension of metaphor, relating it to general linguistic processes—an approach supported in this study. The significance of this view is that wider contextual aspects of a text or situation will be predicted to have an influence on the interpretation of metaphors: and this is clearly demonstrated in the section of textual evidence. However, Sperber and Wilson do not provide any more than this interesting angle: an insight into how metaphor is related to "literal" language through the common search for "optimal relevance." Their theory does not account for the characteristic difference of metaphor, for example, in its role of "seeing as" (Schön 1979).

In short, they appear to acknowledge the commonly recognized difference between metaphorical and literal language, but do not account for that difference in their description of processes of production and comprehension. Schön's explanation of metaphorical processes as basically redescription through "seeing as" will be taken as the most useful for the purposes of this study.

2.6. Generative metaphor and schema theory

One of Schön's examples is the following: *Metaphor is a linguistic microchip*. It is well known that the silicon microchip of computer technology saves space and time in processing: operations that previously took up space, power and time are now performed instantaneously by a tiny object, freeing the consequently smaller machine for other tasks. In a similar fashion, metaphor can be seen to have a compacting, concentrating function in language and communication, whereby several ideas or feelings are communicated by the use⁴ of a shorter word or phrase. In Schön's graphic terms, the device of metaphor thus provides "great economy and high leverage": equally, we might choose to unpack Schön's image of "lever," and see the use of metaphor as the use of a lever: raising increased meaning with reduced effort!

The above example is consciously explanatory. Not all generative metaphor is so deliberate and overt. In fact, Schön's discussion of generative metaphor, mainly in the context of social policy, begins by observing that such metaphors regularly arise as part of the normal process of problem setting.

Problem settings are mediated . . . by stories people tell about troublesome situations —stories in which they describe what is wrong and what needs fixing. When we examine the problem-setting stories . . . it becomes apparent that the framing of problems often depends upon metaphors underlying the stories which generate problem setting and set the directions of problem solving. One of the most pervasive stories about social services, for example, diagnoses the problem as "fragmentation" and prescribes "coordination" as the remedy. But services seen as fragmented might be seen, alternatively, as autonomous. Fragmented services become problematic when they are seen as the shattering of a prior integration. The services are seen something like a vase that was once whole and now is broken.

Under the spell of metaphor, it appears obvious that fragmentation is bad and coordination good. But this sense of obviousness depends very much on the metaphor remaining tacit.

... We can spell out the metaphor, elaborate the assumptions which flow from it, and examine their appropriateness in the present situation. (Schön 1979: 255).

Identification and analysis of generative metaphor is therefore a useful tool in making unexpressed assumptions explicit, and it underlies the analytical methodology used in this paper.

The following example will lead us into a useful linking of the compacting and framing functions of metaphor with aspects of schema theory.

From nineteenth century German history, Otto von Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor," stands out as a compelling and powerful figure, his supposed characteristics summarized aptly in the epithet "Iron." In a similar manner, a prominent, recent British politician rejoiced in a similar title for over a decade; equally, this naming was intended to summarise characteristics, and allowing a degree of *seeing as*.

In this case, the effect is perhaps less specific than in the case of the microchip discussed above. In the case of the "Iron lady," a whole range of popular opinion and folkloric historical interpretation, that might otherwise have taken laborious paragraphs to convey, is immediately communicated by the use of a short phrase. In a lengthy explanation of the British Prime Minister's attributes, the immediate force of reference would be reduced. Such language is often described as "evocative": this is the main effect of metaphor: the evocation of schemata, making communication richer, quicker, and inevitably more complex and difficult to analyse.

Certain instances of this sort of use of metaphor lead to disputable and indeterminate effects, however. Unlike the focused "redescription" of the metaphor of microchip, the term "Iron Lady" has evoked different schemata for different people. It is a term alluding either to strength of character (for her supporters), or to lack of sympathy (for her detractors). One term, while obviously meaning a lot, means *different* things to different people.

As will be found in the textual evidence section, many of the metaphorical terms argued over are, in fact, being interpreted by two (or more) groups according to how these terms are framed in opposing powerful generative metaphors. Interpretation seems to involve an interaction of metaphor and schemata in which not only do metaphorical expressions

themselves evoke particular schemata, but prevailing schemata determine the interpretation of certain local metaphors in context.

3. TEXTUAL EVIDENCE TAKEN FROM THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION DEBATE

3.1. A methodology for analysis

The basic framework of the methodology is the notion of generative metaphor, involving, as we have already stated, a *seeing as* redescription of an event. The particular instances of generative metaphor important to this investigation are the metalinguistic *conduit* and *negotiative* metaphors.

Richards (1936) coined the well-known terms *tenor* and *vehicle* to denote respectively the *subject* and the *metaphorical expression* ascribed to it. Following a more recent usage, this study uses the more accessible *topic* and *vehicle* in the same senses.

While Schön's basic insight provides the framework for the analysis, Stevick's (1989) discussion of "attributive and reminiscent connections" is the starting point for the detailed dissection of the two metaphorical labels in our analysis. Stevick points out that

any metaphor . . . carries its own set of what we may call 'attributive and reminiscent connections', though, of course, the precise contents of this set will vary from person to person and from occasion to occasion. Here we shall refer to these as 'associative features'.

The use in this study of associative features of certain of the metaphors is simply an analytical tool to make certain schematic features more explicit: to slow down the process of interpretation and allow reflection on the range of meanings and associations being evoked. By thus making the features explicit, we can observe their interactions, and see which ones are highlighted and which hidden, as we relate the use of individual metaphors to overall structural metaphorical frames as realized in the textual context. As

Lee (1992) has observed, "meaning is not an inherent property of words, but is strongly influenced by contexts of use."

The sort of metaphors that are socially or politically problematic, and are therefore frequently employed, are those that serve powerful ideologies⁵ and have a wide range of potential associations. As will be seen in the discussion below, a metaphor such as *standard* may be introduced in one part of a text with one set of associations active, in that its co-text determines which schema has been activated. Thus, it may be relatively uncontroversial and gain acceptance. Later, however, the metaphor is reintroduced with a different co-text: the term *standard* remains the same, and it brings with it the activated associations from the previous occurrence. But the co-text has been altered to evoke a different schema: what was previously, for example, a concept of "lowest common denominator" has now been imbued with notions of status, prestige and exclusivity. This has not happened overtly, no explicit propositional sentence has been written to redefine the word *standard*.

In such cases, however, we are not dealing with a clean switch between separate meanings, as Cameron and Bourne (1988) appear to suggest. Lehnert (1979: 80, cited in Cook 1989: 71) points out that ordinary words with more than one meaning (such as *nail* or *seal*) are interpreted through schemata relevant to the particular discourse giving the appropriate meaning in context, "a phenomenon referred to in Artificial Intelligence as 'expectation driven understanding'" (Cook 1989: 71).

3.2. Textual evidence

In this article we will be examining metaphors of language employed in the area of the recent and continuing educational debate on the teaching of English in the United Kingdom. Over the last decade or so a debate on language has been going on in Britain. Crowley points out that similar debates on language education have been with us for at least 150 years, and probably a lot longer. He states that "language becomes a crucial focus of tension and debate at critical historical moments, serving as the site upon which political positions are contested" (1989: 258). This field has been chosen as the site for analysis, as it is, by virtue of the metalinguistic subject matter and the political heat generated, potentially a most rewarding area in terms of covert, yet powerful, metalinguistic metaphor.

The capacity of language to talk about itself or "language reflexivity" (Sinclair 1991) is not confined to conscious and carefully considered

deliberate definition (as found, for example, in dictionaries and reference grammars): it is a phenomenon that pervades normal language use in different contexts and in a variety of subtle and often unnoticed ways. Everybody, at certain times, reveals their particular views on the process of communication through language in their everyday metalanguage, without even realizing it. For example, expressions such as "get your thoughts down in writing" seem to imply an understanding of linguistic communication that involves a view of ideas, thoughts, concepts, feelings, etc. as essentially objectifiable and separable from their place of origin —the human mind. This logically implies that such ideas, concepts, etc., can themselves be transferred intact from place to place, and from person to person. The natural conclusion is that the primary means of such transference must be language. Hence we frequently speak of ideas and thoughts as though they were objects to be passed across the linguistic counter in straightforward, transparent, uncomplicated transactions. This is the metaphorical concept of language as *conduit*.

On the other hand, there is another coherent tendency in every day metalanguage, encountered in expressions as: "I read between the lines and then I understood." This view apparently stresses the effort of the hearer/reader in "making sense" from an essentially incomplete message. This view is less pervasive than that previously mentioned, but it is nevertheless important. It is the *negotiative*⁶ view of language.

3.3. Metaphors under discussion

The main metaphorical labels significant in the English language education debate that can be examined against the background of conduit-negotiative generative metaphor are as follows: "standard," "English," "dialect," "linguistic equality," "linguistic diversity," "linguistic uniformity," "grammar," "correctness," "appropriateness," "language," "knowledge about language," "language awareness." It would be desirable to discuss each of these metaphorical labels in relation to the others, but in this article we are going to concentrate on the first two ("standard," "English") in the collocation "standard English."

3.3.1. *Standard*

The label "standard" as applied to language has received countless definitions from commentators anxious to stress one or more of the range of meanings it can evoke. Haugen's (1966) classic treatment aims at separating out functional and formal aspects of the standard language issue, providing the well-known matrix (see figure 1), "within which it should be possible to discuss all the major problems of language and dialect in the life of a nation" (1966: 110):

	<i>Form</i>	<i>Function</i>
<i>Society</i>	Selection	Acceptance
<i>Language</i>	Codification	Elaboration

Figure 1

So often, however, popular and politically-motivated discussion of issues encompassed in this matrix fails to distinguish categories of "language," "society," "form" and "function," leading to the arbitrary and linguistically unprincipled judgements towards certain forms of language. This general unclarity can therefore be in the interests of groups aiming to preserve the social *status quo*. Such groups are observed in this article to exploit the metaphorical aspects of words such as "standard" or "English" to evoke emotive schemata.

Lee refers to "standard English" as "an artificial object, constructed by the collaborative efforts of lexicographers, grammarians and educators over the centuries" (1992: 188). Downes (1984) points to the ideological character of standard English as "a complex of belief and behaviour towards language, which evolves historically." These views stress the metaphorical nature of the label "standard English," which stands for and evokes particular values, perceptions, beliefs...—leading to a "*seeing as*-effect" where disparate and fuzzy phenomena and attitudes appear to be fused in one coherent, uncontroversial socio-linguistic entity.

Discussing the historical origin of the term "standard," Joseph, like Downes, refers to a development of cumulative, self-confirming metaphor:

like most metaphors, 'standard language' was chosen for its aptness to a particular concept, and subsequently worked to channel thought about that concept in the direction of its own implications. (1987: 14)

This shows *standard* to have an element of Schön's generative metaphor, channelling thought in a particular direction. Joseph (*ibid.*) cites Weinreich's

understandable desire to disambiguate discussion of standard languages by resorting to the use of a different terminology:

it is necessary to distinguish between standardized and non-standardized language. This set of terms is proposed to avoid the use of the ambiguous word 'standard', which among others has to serve for 'socially acceptable', 'average', 'typical', and so on.

Our purpose is not to avoid the word, however, since many participants in the debate evidently make capital out of its metaphorical connotations. Our aim is to disambiguate the use of the label itself, by exposing its metaphorical features as they relate to aspects of the textual and the situational context or "topic." To this end, some main associative features of the word *standard* are listed below:

Standard

<i>Vehicle</i>	<i>Topic</i>
basic version	unmarked form
common	resource for all
usual type	normal, most frequent
"high standards"	educational achievement
the gold standard	accepted currency
"British standard"	minimum safety requirement
approved measure	pass mark

Individuals must compile their own lists, since in any such list there is bound to be an element of selectivity: what this partial listing aims to do, however, is begin to alert the reader to the wide range of associative features attached to such labels that can become metaphorically salient in particular contexts.

The Language Trap

The content of the pamphlet *The Language Trap* (Honey 1983) has been aptly summarized by Graddol and Swann:

Honey's pamphlet directly challenges the 'linguistic equality' claim and attributes to linguists some measure of responsibility for *declining standards* —both educational and moral— in British schools. The argument, briefly, is that linguists are playing a 'cruel trick' on working-class children and those from ethnic minority

groups by encouraging teachers to foster the vernacular at the expense of standard English —the language of social improvement, hence the use of the expression 'language trap' in the pamphlet's title. (1988: 97)

The label to be examined here is *standard*. It is interesting that in the extract from Graddol and Swann (1988), the word *standard* is used in two widely separated senses: firstly in the collocation *declining standards*, and secondly in the term *standard English*. This demonstrates the way in which the word is often used in close proximity in the same discourse—even the same paragraph—with these different senses. Of course, in the text cited, a linguistically aware audience believes that they *are* meant as different senses. The overall textual and situational contexts determine this for the reader. The paragraph was written by two linguists as a summary of Honey's views, so there is a significant distancing of both the sentiments and the expression.

In the following passage from Honey (1983), however, we observe a similar co-occurrence, but may perceive a rather different textual relationship between the two uses of *standard*:

It is true that gradual change, on a small scale, is always possible — indeed it is apparent now in regard to the notion of the '*standard*' or '*correct*' for both spoken and written English, which is changing in small ways all the time, and especially widening the range of variation *it regards as acceptable* compared with the past. . . . While the concept of *standard English* becomes in some respects more accommodating, the prejudices against non-standard become, if anything, even stronger. (Honey 1983: 22-3).

Firstly, it is interesting to note a case of metaphorical *seeing as* effect achieved through grammatical classification, as discussed by Lee (1992). Honey gives grammatical-subject status to the notion of "standard" or "correct": the italicized phrase (*it regards as acceptable*) even makes this notion itself responsible for attitudes, exonerating people from any blame of prejudice. No doubt a stylistic case could be made for this grammatical choice, but it would be disingenuous to deny the effect of removing human agency in this social context.

The co-text of "standard" in its first occurrence here strikingly includes the word "correct," and is loosely related to the meaning of the word as seen in the first occurrence in Graddol and Swann passage above ("declining standards"). The second occurrence is again the collocation "standard

English." The repetition in Honey's text suggests to the reader, in the absence of contrary information, that the second occurrence of the word is a cohesive anaphoric reference back to "standard" or "correct." This linguistic link is supported and confirmed by both the overall argument on a whole-text level and by the text's social position as part of a political debate. Since promotion of the traditional teaching of "standard English" is one of the main issues in Honey's text, it is important for him to establish a clear link between this variety of English and authoritative notions of "correctness." But as Trudgill has pointed out,

The fact is that there is no such thing as 'correct English', and notions such as 'corruption' have no part to play in discussions about language. 'Standards' will not fall if we encourage the use and tolerance of non-standard dialects. (1975: 71)

In the last sentence of this passage Trudgill deliberately juxtaposes two uses of *standard* in a co-text aimed at distinguishing them. He also employs inverted commas to highlight the contentious use of the word in public educational debates. This is in sharp contrast to Honey's co-text which is angled to identify the notion of "correctness" with notions of "standards" of all sorts: thus, "non-standard" language is conversely associated with injurious social prejudice and unacceptability. The occurrence of different co-texts can therefore be seen to lead to the activation of disparate set of associations for standard and thereby quite different schemata.

*The Kingman Report*⁷

The concept of "standard English" is especially important to the politically-motivated aims of the *Kingman Report*. Cameron and Bourne (1988) have traced the significance of the label in *Kingman*. Their analyses note that the report's account of "standard English" omits any explicit reference to dialect variation as a function of social class, but only explains historical and geographical variation. Although it would be fair to say that class-based groups may be implicit in references to "particular social groups" and so on (Kingman 1988: 9), it is reasonable to point out that "standard English" is presented in *Kingman* as, *per se*, an entirely classless concept. Whatever education may aim at, and whatever provision may be made for non-standard dialect tolerance in schools, such a presentation is a deliberate masking of an important aspect in the make-up of the metaphorical label of "standard English."

In the process of pointing to the omissions of a consideration of class, however, Cameron and Bourne give the impression that *Kingman* is exploiting a simple dual ambiguity of the label "standard English" as meaning either "ordinary" or "excellent," "normal" or "normative":

thus, the normative is passed off as the merely normal; or . . . the language of a class is passed off as the common tongue of a whole people (in Kingman's terms, which exclude the concept of class, SE (standard English) is the language of the nation rather than that of the family and immediate circle). (Cameron and Bourne 1988: 155).

To present the problem only in terms of the opposition between two readily distinguishable senses of a word is, however, to overlook the complexity of the metaphor of "standard English." Such an analysis may perpetuate polarized argument of the sort "It means this," "No, it means that." Standard English, as a metaphor, means both and more besides; and unless proponents of mutually opposed political views acknowledge this, such debates will continue.

"Standard English," therefore, is far from being a straightforward label for an uncontroversial entity: it is profoundly metaphorical in the interpretation of each of its two component words. The other component of the "Standard English" label, "English," is discussed below and is found to be at least as potent a metaphor as "standard."

3.3.2. *English*

The State of the Language

In the opening pages of the collection of essays *The State of the Language* (Ricks and Michaels, eds., 1990) a chart is presented based on a column of text from the Oxford English Dictionary. The column represents part of this dictionary's noun entry for "English," and draws arrows from salient definitions and examples in the entry to brief references to articles published in the collection. This is a neat way into the contents of the volume: it is also a striking reminder of the range of meanings that the one label "English" interacts with—the (singular?) English language, literary and standard forms, issues of grammaticality, and so on.

Greenbaum's contribution to the volume begins by quoting Enoch Powell's speech:

Others may speak and read English —more or less— but it is our language not theirs. It was made in England by the English and it remains our distinctive property, however widely it is learnt and used. (Powell 1988, cited in Greenbaum 1990: 150).

The ownership attitude to the English language of which this is a vehement expression is explained by Greenbaum as deriving "partly from the use of the same name for the language and for the largest ethnic group in the British Isles" (1990: 160). So here we observe metaphor arising through a case of *seeing as* effect of the type discussed before, when one entity is redescribed in terms of another, just because the two quite separate things share the same name.

Powell's own contribution to the volume, "Further thoughts: Grammar and Syntax," contains the following prescription to protect "the structure of English":

a cultural elite which has absorbed its English while being educated in Latin grammar and the Latin classics. (Powell 1990: 485)

The appeal to Latin syntax as standard by which to judge English is almost universally considered by linguists to be misguided. Powell's argument is based on the claim that the loss of certain linguistic distinctions results in an impoverished language (his example is the lack of the British English distinction between so-called "aorist" *I saw* and "perfect" *I have seen* in American English). Linguists generally point to other ways in which these losses are counterbalanced by new uses, but as Milroy and Milroy indicate,

it is noticeable that guardians of the language do not generally recommend the 'superior systems' of non-standard dialects: they confine their claims about superiority to aspects of standard English grammar (such as the shall/will distinction). It can be suggested therefore that their real concerns are not wholly linguistic but largely social: they are in some way promoting the interests of the variety most widely considered to have prestige. (1985: 15)

Powell's desire for a cultural elite may be seen as an explicit manifestation of one of the associative features held for many by the metaphorical label "English."

An example of this association is discussed by Greenbaum (1990). Greenbaum relates that in Illinois, USA, in 1923 a law was enacted which "proclaimed that the official language of the state should be known from then

on as the American language and not the English language" (Greenbaum 1990: 17). This concern over the force of the metaphorical label "English" was echoed at the Reading Sociolinguistic Symposium (April 1992) at which a paper entitled "Creolisation and the Tense-Aspect-Modality System of Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin" was presented by G. O. Simire (Université de Nice). It was pointed out that the designation "Anglo-Nigerian Pidgin" for this pidgin deriving from English had been coined to avoid the inclusion of the label English in the name of this language variety (Nigerian Pidgin English). The use of the word "English," it was claimed, would have focused attention on one particular stage in the development of the variety, and thereby given the impression that the pidgin was inferior to the high-prestige standard English of which it would be judged a "corruption."

English our English

The metaphorical label "'English" is, not surprisingly, central to the pamphlet *English our English* (Marenbon 1987), published by the centre for Policy Studies. As Cameron and Bourne indicate, the social context of *English our English* is that of "right-wing political lobbying, which in the 1980s regularly pointed to a "crisis" in the teaching of this and that" (1988: 149). Marenbon's pamphlet has been described by Crowley as having as its underlying aim

to construct a certain view of the social order and to propagate it. Thus this is a text which uses language as the site upon which political contestation can take place; and in particular the contestation of the prevailing modes of education. Its political intent slips through in the last lines in which the writer declares: 'in the future of its language there lies the future of a nation'. The irony is that this essay is based upon a rejection of the task of renewing our language in order to meet our present and future demands and needs. For what is being said in this text and others like it is this: 'in the past of our language there lies the future of our nation'. (1991: 243)

A *conduit* metaphorical view of unitary speaker/writer-controlled meaning is seen to be a generative force in *English our English*. Marenbon might even have been laying claim to the invention of the conduit metaphor when he wrote:

Such unanimity in usage makes standard English an excellent vehicle for clear communication, for conveying information and ideas without

misunderstanding. It is no accident that standard English, rather than a dialect, has become an international language. (Marenbon 1987: 25)

This is an expression of conduit metaphor par excellence!

4. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

In this study it has been argued that language is fundamentally metaphorical in its basic creativity, and that local word metaphors emerging through the processes of classification and selection are oriented in generative metaphorical frames operating at text and concept levels.

This has been demonstrated in the analysis of two metaphorical labels ("standard" and "English") as they have been used in the case of the English language education debate, where the conflicting discourses identified by Graddol and Swann (1988) have been seen in the context of an opposition between generative conduit and negotiative metalinguistic metaphors. a

NOTES

1. Cf. Sinclair, J. H. (1991) on "language reflexivity."

2. The notion of generative metaphor involves a *seeing as* redescription. Schön's first example of generative metaphor is drawn from the real experience of industrial researchers enabled to improve a synthetic-bristle paintbrush through the use of the generative metaphor "pump": *seeing a paintbrush as a pump* allowed them to understand the process of "painting" in terms of "pumping." Schön explains metaphorical processes as basically redescription through "seeing as."

3. Rumelhart (1979) assigns a crucial role to metaphor in the acquisition of language, in which learners are using a kind of metaphorical extension in applying old words to new situations and objects. The creative rule-formation and lexical innovation of children acquiring a language demonstrates the generative principle of metaphor at work.

4. The phrase "by the use of" is employed on purpose, in preference to the word "in," as will become clear below.

5. Bloor and Bloor point out that "when we talk about a language being powerful we are using a transferred epithet, a type of metonymy. Such metaphors suggest that in some sense power resides in the language itself" (1990: 40). It is useful to expose this metonymy, but while this is clearly not the case, it is worth noting that the conduit metaphor makes it possible for non-negotiable power to be encoded in language, in that it engenders a belief in fixed, authoritative meanings. So perhaps terms such as "powerful language" are not so wide of the mark in their acute perceptions of what is going on in manipulative uses of language.

6. Linguistic communication is characterised as a means of bringing individual worlds into convergence by negotiation (Widdowson 1984: 860).

7. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language*. Chairman: Sir John Kingman

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