The language of antagonism in political texts: what does it struggle for?

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próxima

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Enrique Grau. *La sonámbula*, 1955.
Óleo sobre lienzo, 94 x 66 cm

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RESUMEN

Este estudio busca ahondar en el lenguaje antagónico en textos políticos y entender la razón de ser que los subyacen. El enfoque de los análisis se dio al lenguaje evaluativo explicito y a la cohesión lexical en dos textos: "Freedom: a Sinn Fein Education Publication" (Text A) y "Democratic Unionist Party Manifesto". El análisis mostró que ambos textos recurrieron a palabras relacionadas con unidad y desunidad para plantear sus argumentos y atacarse mutuamente. El texto A se presentaba informativo. Esto lo hacía impersonal, sin ninguna interacción con el lector. El texto B explícitamente se dirigía al lector. Esto se evidenció por la escogencia de ustedes y usted como pronombres personales inclusivos e interactivos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cohesión lexical, equivalencias, reiteraciones, comeronimia.

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to delve further into antagonistic language in political texts and understand the rationale underlying them. Focus of analysis was on explicit evaluative language and lexical cohesion of two texts: "Freedom: a Sinn Fein Education Publication" (Text A) and "Democratic Unionist Party Manifesto" (Text B). Analysis showed that both texts drew on words related to unity and disunity to make their cases and attack each other. Text A appeared to be informative. This made it impersonal with no interaction with the reader. Text B explicitly addressed the reader. This was evidenced by the choice of you as an inclusive interactive personal pronoun.

KEY WORDS: Lexical cohesion, equivalences, reiterations, comeronymy.

INTRODUCTION

In this article I shall be looking at salient features that underlie political antagonistic texts and through an analysis I shall aim to find the rationale for their language choices. Such antagonism is represented by the texts I have chosen for the study. They are entitled: "Freedom: a Sinn Fein Education Publication" (Text A) and "Democratic Unionist Party Manifesto" (Text B).

My first analysis will examine evaluative language. This can be defined as the kind of language writers or speakers use to state an opinion. The opinion can be good or bad and this constitutes a basic framework of evaluation (Hunston & Thompson, 2000).

I shall be specifically analysing explicit evaluative language as this significantly characterises both texts. A brief allusion to spoken and written language will also be presented (See Graddol, Cheshire & Swann, 1994)

I shall then consider lexical cohesion as a feature that 'creates *textuality*, that property of text which distinguishes it from a random sequences of unconnected sentences' (Mc Carthy, 1991:65) .I shall examine equivalences- synonymous words- as well as reiterations or exact words used by the writers. In addition I shall be looking at inclusion appearing in one of the texts as a case of co-meronymy. The analysis of equivalences and reiterations should

show which language choices the writers want to emphasise.

Interactive features in a text involve important components that constitute it such as personal pronouns, commands and organisation among others. I shall be looking at interactive and non-interactive personal pronouns (see Cook, 1992 & Hoey, 2001).

I intend to find to what extent the writers want to involve their readers in the texts.

As regards organisation of the project, I shall first produce an analysis of the different features. A discussion will follow where I shall present significant findings that the analysis enabled me to discover. Each feature will be analysed in turn looking at both texts alternately.

ANALYSIS
Evaluative language: Text A/Text B

Both texts are rich in evaluative language with a tendency of this being especially explicit. I shall therefore concentrate more on these choices of language. Underlined choices mark the emphasis of the evaluations.

Text A is evaluatively explicit in choices like: Britain has sought to conquer and dominate Ireland (L8). Britain, a large, <u>powerful</u> and <u>ruthless</u> colonial power. (L 9) Partition was <u>imposed</u> on the Irish (L 15). Explicitness is here expressed by directly regarding Britain as the main originator of Ireland's problems. A common denominator of the

evaluations is their bitterness with which they are stated.

Like text A, text B is quite explicit when it evaluates its main antagonist, in this case Sinn Fein. Explicit language is also used to evaluate the British and Irish governments and the official unionist party. Such explicitness is seen in choices like the ones shown in table 1 below.

It is worth noticing that evaluations in table 1 are of different types. An explanation for this will be given in the discussion.

Examples of explicit evaluations total 31: nineteen in text A and twelve in text B as seen in table 2 below.

Table 1

Sinn Fein	British Government	Official Unionist Party	Irish Government
Those who have murdered and maimed the innocent (L 50, 51)	the government is trying to wriggle off the hook. (L 18,19)	..Unionists display a sorry picture (L 6)	Dublin interference in Ulster's affairs is planned to Increase and intensify (L 38,39)
Unrepentant and unreconstructed terrorists (L 57)	The government and UUP leaders made promises on decommissioning which they have broken.(L 44, 45)	What hope is there for them? (L 8)	

Table 2

Text A	Text B
conquer, dominate (L 8)	sorry picture (L 6)
powerful and ruthless colonial power (L9)	divisions mean weakness and distractions (L 7)
British oppression (L 11)	What hope is there for them? (L 8)
Partition was imposed (L 15)	the government is trying to wriggle off the hook (L 18,19)
deeper, more acute more bitter (L31)	Dublin interference in Ulster's affairs is planned to increase and intensify (L 38,39)
British interference which has disrupted the life (L34)	they have broken (L 45)
more acute (L38)	murdered and maimed the innocent (L51)
foolish and self-interested ostrich mentality(L 41)	Unrepentant and unreconstructed terrorists (L 57)
piecemeal treatment (L 42)	
colonial rule (L 45)	
imperialist state (L46)	

DISCUSSION
Evaluative language: Text A/Text B

One of the main characteristics these two texts share is the belligerence and directness with which they address their respective antagonists. Their evaluations are open and straight. This is evidenced in Text A by language choices like: ruthless (L 9), British interference (L 34), **Foolish** (L 41) and Imperialist (L 46)

Regarding Text B, directness in language is seen in choices like: Unionists display a sorry picture (L 6), what hope is there for them (L 8), those who have murdered and maimed the innocent (L 50, 51), unrepentant and unreconstructed terrorists (L 57).

Judging by the examples in Table 1, it can be observed that the type of evaluations for Sinn Fein differs from the ones aimed at the British government and the others.

Evaluation towards Sinn Fein is more intense and full of bitterness and anger. Sinn Fein is portrayed as a deeply hated antagonist. As regards the British government and the official Unionist party, these are viewed as rivals who just break promises, have no hope and are to be sorry for. These latter evaluations are clearly more moderate and admonishing to certain extent.

Text B's rationale for the choice of some incendiary language like *unrepentant* and *unreconstructed* (L57) may stem from the fact that it speaks for a minority that wants to have their voices heard in some way or another. This could make it a text that characterises more spoken than written language, the type heard in public squares inciting people to some kind of action. This may be linked to what Graddol et al. (1994:198) refer to as 'written texts informed by speech'. This can be seen in the use of commands and exclamation marks: *Don't let them get away with breaking their promises –we won't* ! (Line 20, 21), and also the use of capital letters: VOTE DUP YOUR BEST GUARANTEE (L71). See Graddol et al. (1994:194) where they establish differences between speech and writing.

Hunston and Thompson (2000: 22) state that 'evaluations of good and bad are dependent on the value system underlying the text'. The writers of text A and text B based their evaluative language on bad opinions about their respective antagonists. The analysis presented above showed that the value systems of the protagonists in the texts (Sinn Fein – The British government and The DUP – IRA/Sinn Fein) evidently clashed.

ANALYSIS
Lexical cohesion: Text A/Text B
Equivalence and reiteration

Both texts have equivalences and reiterations of words connected to unity and disunity. In text A such words refer to the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and in text B

the words are related mostly to the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the official unionist party.
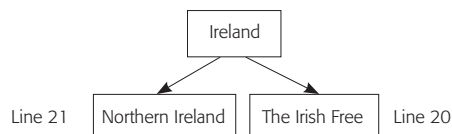
Text A presents equivalences of words related to unity and disunity as well as numerous cases of reiterations .Two features are noteworthy: how disunity words outnumber unity words and the prolific use of partition in the text. A complete list of such words is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3

Unity			
Word	Line (s)	Equivalence	Reiteration
Single	1,4	√	√
Unit	1,4	√	√
Distinct	2	√	
Own	3	√	

Unity			
Word	Line (s)	Equivalence	Reiteration
Halved	12	√	
Partition	14, 15, 24, 28, 35, 37, 41,44, 53,	√	√
Divide	29,37	√	√
Divisions	31,38,40	√	√

The boxes below show Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State as co-meronymies of Ireland. This describes how two components (Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State) make a part of a whole (Ireland).

Ireland

Line 21 | Northern Ireland | The Irish Free | Line 20

Text B also presents equivalences of words related to unity and disunity. Additionally there are cases of reiteration. A complete list of such words is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4

Unity			
Word	Line (s)	Equivalence	Reiteration
United	1, 4, 40	√	√
Unanimous	1	√	
Team	1	√	
Together	1	√	
Shared	2	√	
Uniting	8	√	

Unity			
Word	Line (s)	Equivalence	Reiteration
Divided	5	√	
Divisions	7	√	
Crumbling	15	√	
Breaking	21,26,27	√	√
Erosion	66	√	
Uniting			

Some of the examples of reiteration and equivalence in text B in the tables above can be more clearly seen in the two extracts below. Unity words are in **bold** and disunity words are **in *bold italics***.

In extract 1 below it is evident that unity words play a significant part to build this paragraph.

Democratic Unionist party manifesto

(Line 1) United **and** unanimous, **your DUP** team **is working** together across **Northern Ireland to achieve our** shared **objectives. At the same time we have reached out to other** unionists **to maximise your influence and** strengthen your voice in the new Assembly. **United** we stand!

Exatract 1

In extract 2 below the text has been erased to make the reappearances clearer. Solid lines show repetition and broken lines equivalences. It is interesting to see how ***breaking*** is used three times as an equivalence of ***crumbling*** signalling the importance of this word chain.

Solemn   from Blair and Tremble already   ***crumbling*** (Line 15)

Our pressure resulted in Tony Blair giving
to you before the referendum. We are your best guarantee to
ensure these are fulfilled. Already the government is trying to
wriggle off the hook. They want to let terrorists out of prison without
any linkage to the actual handing in of illegal weapons. Don't let them
get away **with**   **breaking** (Line 21) again – we won't

Playing for time...legislation delayed

Why won't the government let you see the legislation to implement?
On IRA arms and Sinn Fein in government now? They will
wait until after the election so that you will have voted before their
pledge-***breaking*** (Line 26) exposed.

No on
e can accuse us ***of breaking*** (Line 27) our. We are your best

Extract 2

DISCUSSION
Lexical Cohesion: Text A/Text B Equivalence and Reiteration

Text A gives importance to words related to unity and disunity by using them throughout the paragraphs as equivalences and reiterations. Such importance is further emphasised by the choice of ***partition***. This word is repeated nine times. The conspicuous presence of ***partition*** may be due to the fact that most of the negative events that have affected Ireland have ***partition*** as the main cause. The author probably wants

to make noticeable that partition was the factor that started an event worth rementioning. This position is reaffirmed by the other equivalences of disunity language.

Mc Carthy (1991:66) describes reiteration as 'not a chance event' and that 'writers and speakers make conscious choices whether to repeat or find a synonym or a superordinate'

Unity words in text A echo the early Ireland as **single** *national unit (L1).....***distinct** *from* other nations*. Such language seems to long for the good old times of unity .The importance of unity words is only seen

in the beginning of the text where there is information about the early Ireland. This can be seen in extract 3 below.

	single	unit.
	distinct	
own		
(LIne 4) single	unit	

From line twelve on (starting with *halved*) disunity words become important and reappear fifteen times contributing markedly to the development of text A.

Looking at the co-meronymy case on page 7 it can be seen how the writer describes Ireland as being partitioned into counties not countries. S/he refers to Northern Ireland as just 'containing the remalnlng six counties'. The writer regards these counties as a part of Ireland and Ireland as a real country.

As regards text B, the writer also uses equivalences and reiterations of unity and disunity. We can see this in the first paragraph and how it is built on the following chain related to unity: **United**, **unanimous**, **team**, **together**, **shared**, **unionists**, **united**. (See extract 1 on page 8 in analysis)

In this first paragraph the idea of being **united** and **unanimous** is further developed and emphasised by the rest of related words: **unanimous**, **team**, **together**, **shared**, and **united**. It is worth noting how in extract 2 the author introduces in the subtitle (L 15)

his/her assertion of Blair and Trimble's pledges **crumbling**; how the idea of **crumbling** is brought back by using **breaking** and finally how **breaking** reappears twice consecutively to end the paragraph. Up to line 26 the writer wants to re-emphasise the fact that Blair and Trimble break pledges. However, in line 27 breaking is used to exclude the DUP from the pledge-breaking.

Analysis
Interactive Features: Text A/Text B
Interactive Personal Pronouns

As seen in table 5 below text A is characterised by the sole presence of non- interactive pronouns .They refer to people who are neither the writer nor the reader. This gives text A a salient feature. A complete list is shown in table 5 below.

Table 5

Non-interactive personal pronouns	Unionists	Partition
They (L 25)	√	√
It (L 37,38,40)		√

Unlike Text A, Text B contains a significant number of interactive personal pronouns. Their use indicates a great deal of interaction between writer and reader. The marked recurrence of <u>you</u> suggests the writer's intention to communicate with the reader.

Table 6 below shows Text A interactive personal pronouns. Through the inclusive ones the reader is involved in the writer's plan. The exclusive personal pronouns portray the writer and what s/he represents as sole protagonists.

Table 6

Interactive Personal	Inclusive	Exclusive
You	L 17,23,25,52	
We	—	L 2,4,17,21,27,33,39,45,54, 64, 65, 67

Discussion
Interactive Features: Text A/Text B Interactive Personal Pronouns

Text A resorts to non-interactive personal pronouns like *it* and *they*. This choice makes text A an impersonal address. The text appears to be more informative and educational-encyclopaedic. It is worth bringing back its title: **A Sinn Féin <u>Education Publication</u>**.

This encyclopaedic-like appearance is evidenced when it gives sketchy geographical information at the beginning and below line 25.

As far as text B is concerned the choice of <u>you</u> as an inclusive interactive personal pronoun indicates an explicit address of the writer towards the reader and the writer's intention of involving the reader too.

<u>We</u> excludes the reader to tell him/her the numerous things the writer can do like using her/his votes (L 45), *seeking the return of a democratic government* (L 67); The things the writer will not do like *colluding with others* (L 39) and so forth. This is quite marked in text B with <u>we</u> appearing twelve times.

Text B differs from text A in its specificity regarding target readership. The author evidently wants to talk to specific readers (potential voters, undecided sympathisers) in instances like: <u>We</u> (the DUP) *are your best guarantee*. (L 17). <u>You</u> (the reader) *have been given assurance* ... (L 52, 53).

Text B seems to be selling DUP's image. In fact, the use of <u>you</u> is characteristic of advertising. Cook (1992:156) states that 'advertising shares this use of 'you' in displaced and disseminated communication with religious evangelism, official documents, political rhetoric...' Text B embodies the characteristics of a 'site of an interaction' (Hoey, 2001) where the writer attempts to persuade and control.

CONCLUSIONS

Text A and texts B share upfront directness in language as a salient

characteristic of bitter political antagonism. Both texts resort to words related to unity and disunity to make their cases and attack each other. Unlike Text A, which is presented as an educational publication, Text B interacts with the reader by using a significant number of interactive personal pronouns.

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APPENDICES

Text A

FREEDOM

A Sinn Féin Education Publication

IRELAND

LOCATION: Ireland is situated on the most western
periphery of the continent of Europe.
AREA: 84,421 sq. kilometers.
CLOSEST LAND MASS: Britain

DOMESTIC DEBT: £20,000 million.

BACKGROUND
THROUGHOUT history, the island of Ireland has been regarded as a single national unit. Prior to the Norman invasions from England In 1169, the Irish people were distinct from other nations, cultivating their own system of law, culture, language, and political and social structures.

Until 1921, the island of Ireland was governed as a single political unit as a colony of Britain. A combined political/ military campaign by Irish nationalists between the years 1916 to 1921 forced the British government to consider its position.

"The historical and contemporary existence of the Irish nation has never been in dispute. For centuries, Britain has sought to conquer, dominate and rule Ireland. For centuries, the Irish people have sought to free Ireland from British rule. Britain, a large, powerful and ruthless colonial power, was able to defeat the numerous and sustained efforts of the Irish people to liberate themselves. In the course of the 19th century, as a result of British oppression and famine, the population of Ireland was halved."

Séan MacBride S. C, recipient of the 1983 Nobel and Lenin peace prizes.

With the objective of `protecting English interests with an economy of English lives' (Lord Birkenhead), the partition of Ireland was conceived.

Partition was imposed on the Irish people by an Act of Parliament, the Government of Ireland Act (1920), passed in the British legislature. The consent of the Irish people was never sought and was never freely given.

Text A

Proffered as a solution under the threat of "immediate and terrible war" (Lloyd George, the then British Prime Minister). The Act made provision for the creation of two states in Ireland: the "Irish Free State" (later to become known as the Republic of Ireland), containing 26 of Ireland's 32 counties; and "Northern Ireland" containing the remalnlng six counties.

Northern Ireland (the Six Counties) represented the greatest land area in which Irish unionists could maintain a majority.

The partition line first proposed had encompassed the whole province of Ulster (nine counties). Unionists rejected this because they could not maintain a majority in such an enlarged area.

TODAY'S POPULATION

All Ireland: 4,953,297

Six Counties: 1,509,892 (900,000 Protestant, 600,000 Catholic)

Twenty-six Counties: 3,443,405

Combined Nationalist population of Ireland: 3,983,063

1,200,000 people are living in poverty;

In the 26 Counties, 59% of households are estimated to be existing below the poverty line or are headed by an unemployed person.

The partition of Ireland was merely an innovation of the British governments tried and trusted colonial strategy of divide and rule, used throughout its former colonial empire.

However, while the British government had the single objective of 'protecting English interests', its strategy for achieving this created deeper, more acute and more bitter multiple divisions in Irish society than those previously fostered, and which, until then, had helped sustain British rule in Ireland.

"British interference led to the Civil War (1922-23) which has disrupted the life of the counttry for several decades. The imposition of partition had led to a permanent insurrectionary situation in the six North Eastern counties of Ireland".

Séan MacBride S.C.

Text A

Partition did only physically divide the national territory of Ireland. It spawned the Civil War in 1922, which has moulded politics in the 26-County state ever since. It made more acute the divisions between nationalists and unionists in the Six-County state, and between the population of the two states. Not least, it created real and lasting divisions among nationalists themselves.

Increasingly, partition has generated the foolish and self-interested ostrich mentality in the power structures of the two statelets, which seeks piecemeal treatment of the symptoms, through coercion and censorship, instead of root-and-branch treatment of the problem.

Throughout the 19th century and until partition in this century, the British government provided its colonial rule in Ireland with a cover of 'democracy'. Like other colonial powers in continental Europe, which 'integrated' their colonies into the imperialist state, Britain 'integrated' Ireland into the 'United Kingdom' through the Act of Union (1801), which made provision for Irish representation at the British parliament.

In the changed conditions of a full-blown struggle for independence in 1920, new means for 'protecting British interests' had to be found together with a new 'justification' for the continuing British presence which that necessitated.

The 'wishes' of Irish unionists in North East Ireland have provided that 'justification' since partition. Today, this finds expression in Article 1 (a) of the 'Anglo-Irish Treaty' signed in November 1985. Article 1 (a) states:

"The Two Governments
(a) Affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

Text B

DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST PARTY MANIFESTO

United and unanimous, your DUP team is working together across
Northern Ireland to achieve our shared objectives. At the same time we have reached out to other unionists to maximise your influence and strengthen your voice in the new Assembly. United we stand!

Oficcial Unionist Party divided and squabblimg

The Official Unionists display a sorry picture of disharmony and disunity.
Deep divisions mean weakness and distractions. If they can't unite their own party, what hope is there for them uniting the Unionist people?
Only the DUP demonstrates real strength through true unity.

Who will partner IRA/Sinn Fein in a Northern Ireland

Under the Agreement, Trimble and other Unionist "Yes men" are prepared to work with IRA/Sinn Fein in government even without prior decommissioning. They once said "No talks with Sinn Fein." Now it's "more power for Sinn Fein."

Solemn pledges from Blair and Trimble already crumbling

Our pressure resulted in Tony Blair giving pledges to you before the referendum. We are your best guarantee to ensure these pledges are fulfilled. Already the government is trying to wriggle off the hook. They want to let terrorists out of prison without any linkage to the actual handing in of illegal weapons. Don't let them get away with breaking their promises again - we won't!

Playing for time... legislation delayed

Why won't the government let you see the legislation to implement
Blair's pledges on IRA arms and Sinn Fein in government now? They will wait until after the election so that you will have voted before their pledge-breaking is exposed.

Text B
1

No one can accuse us of breaking our promises. We are your best guarantee of keeping others to theirs!
Your Best Guarantee - for a real democratic future

A strong Royal Ulster Constabulary

The future of the RUC is under grave threat. A strong RUC, along with
RIR, is still needed to protect our country. The IRA has not gone away.
We guarantee to oppose attempts to put policing in the hands of paramilitaries. Your security depends upon it.

No cross-border executive bodies

Under the Agreement all-Ireland structures are proposed, in which unionists will always be a permanent minority.

Dublin interference in Ulster's affairs is planned to increase and intensify. We will not collude with others to set up the embryo of a United Ireland. Northern Ireland's future is safe in our hands.

A real need for actual decommissioning

Illegal weapons retained by terrorists are a real threat to your security. The government and UUP leaders made promises on decommissioning which they have broken. We will use our votes in the

Assembly to insist on real and actual decommissioning and the dismantling of their terror machines.

Justice demands that terrorists stay in

All decent people recoil with moral contempt at the prospect of the mass release of those who have murdered and maimed the innocent, whilst the RUC is to be demoralised and disarmed. You have been given assurances by Tony Blair and others. We can be trusted to ensure these pledges are not sidelined.

Text B

No terrorist in goverment

Unrepentant and unreconstructed terrorists should not be in government with control over your life. The leader of the UUP said he would not sit down with IRA/Sinn Fein. In fact, he went further

by entering into an Agreement with IRA/Sinn Fein under which he is pledged to work in Government alongside them! (see the first page in the Agreement)

A truly United Kingdom

We demand, as British citizens, equality of treatment, the protection of our lives, persons and property. We reject the erosion of British sovereignty through the abolition of the Government of Ireland Act. We seek the return of a democratic and accountable Government, free from domination by violent political
terrorists.

VOTE DUP - YOUR BEST GUARANTEE

Party Objectives

The objectives of the Democratic Unionist Party can be best represented in three simple terms:

1. To secure, uphold and maintain the Constitution of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom.

2. To impose and maintain the rule of law in all areas of Northern Ireland so that all citizens are not only equal under the law, but are equally subject to it.

3. To devise and urge a policy of social betterment and equal opportunity for all sections of the community in the economic, educational and social welfare spheres.