

# Linguistic Contributions to the Analysis of Hate Language

Gary D. Prideaux

This paper examines several cases before the Canadian Human Rights Commission in which the author served as an expert witness. The data consist of texts taken from Internet or telephone message sites which allegedly communicate racist and/or anti-Semitic content, thereby contravening the Canadian Human Rights Act. To analyze such materials systematically, it was necessary to collect and organize research from diverse areas of linguistics into a coherent analytic instrument, resulting in the creation of a “toolkit” for text analysis. The toolkit is first discussed and then applied to the selected texts. It is concluded that the texts are indeed racist and anti-Semitic. It is also concluded the methodology is appropriate for the analysis of any texts, including those involving persuasion and manipulation.

*Keywords:* expert witness, discourse, text analysis, hate language

## 1 Introduction

Language is the common currency of both lawyers and linguists. As Engborg and Trosberg (1997) point out, lawyers formulate texts with special purposes, such as contracts, and exploit the rhetoric of persuasive language when arguing cases. As the editors of *Forensic Linguistics* point out in their introduction at the launching of that journal (French & Coulthard, 1994), linguists have been called upon from time to time by both the

police and officers of the courts to provide expert opinions on matters of language. Linguists, especially those with an interest in the analysis of corpora, discourse, and texts, investigate those structures, principles, conventions, and rules which are used in language production and comprehension. Lawyers and linguists therefore have an overlapping interest in language use, even though they approach language issues from quite divergent perspectives.

When asked to offer expert opinions on matters of language which have significant legal import, linguists are generally asked to provide analyses of linguistic materials from a scientific perspective, analyses which have the potential for far-reaching legal consequences. And, as is often the case with those providing expert testimony, it is crucial that the court has a clear and unambiguous understanding of exactly what is being claimed in an often highly technical area.

Thus, the linguist as expert witness is challenged to make clear to the court precisely the kinds of analytic methods that are brought to bear on the particular issues under contention. It is imperative that the court have a clear understanding of what the linguist is doing, how the methodologies have been established, how they have attained scholarly acceptability, and how they apply to the particular circumstances. This often is not a simple task, and in some instances it can be extremely difficult to present complex and technical issues in such a way as to be understandable to a lay audience, even a highly educated one.

The purpose of the present paper is to respond to this challenge by indicating how linguistics, and in particular discourse analysis and pragmatics, can be applied to yield analyses of corpora which are cited as legal evidence. This research, therefore, falls within the general domain of “language as evidence” as discussed by, for example, Coulthard and Johnson (2007). The texts under consideration here are alleged to contain “hate language” and as such contravene Section 13.1 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Section 13.3 of this fundamental Canadian document states:

It is a discriminatory practice for a person or a group of persons acting in concert to communicate telephonically or to cause to be so communicated, repeated, in whole or in part by means of the facilities of a telecommunication undertaking within the legislative authority of Parliament, any matter that is likely to expose a person or persons to hatred or contempt by reason of the fact that that person or those persons are identifiable on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination.

First, however, some personal background is in order. In 1993, I was called upon by the Canadian Human Rights Commission to provide a discourse analysis of four texts which, the Commission claimed, offended the *Charter*. The texts were transcriptions of messages played on a telephone line sponsored by the “Canadian Liberty Net” and were directed primarily against homosexuals and to a lesser extent against Jews and people of colour. In order to provide a cogent written analysis, it was necessary to preface the analysis with a brief description of linguistic research methods and then apply these to the texts. I was later called upon to testify as an expert witness in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (“Payzant and the Canadian Human Rights Commission versus Canadian Liberty Net and Tony McAleer and Harry Vaccaro Liberty Front”). It is important to notice that Tribunals of the Canadian Human Rights Commission have legal status, are conducted according to Canadian court principles, and may impose penalties if the complaints are upheld. The case was successfully pursued and the “Canadian Liberty Net” was forbidden from further activities.

In 1995, I was called upon again to provide an analysis and to testify before a second tribunal (“Chilliwack Anti-Racism Project Society and the Canadian Human Rights Commission versus Pastor Charles Scott and the Church of Christ in Israel”). The texts were again transcriptions of phone-in messages, directed primarily against Jews. This case was also successfully pursued.

In 1997, the Canadian Human Rights Commission asked me to provide an extensive written analysis of some 31 messages taken from a U.S. website called the “Zündelsite” ([www.zundelsite.org](http://www.zundelsite.org)) which contained much material written by the Holocaust denier Ernst Zündel, who was at the time a Canadian resident but a German citizen. In order to do justice to the very large amount of materials provided to me, I found it essential to construct an extensive set of analytic tools to deal with the variety of texts. I provided the analysis and testified before the Tribunal for two and a half days as an expert witness in “The Canadian Human Rights Commission and S. Citroen et al. versus Ernst Zündel”. This was by far the most challenging case I worked on, and it extended over more than five years, with many delays and postponements, challenges, and legal appeals. The case had far-reaching implications for the legal interpretation of the Charter and for the power of Parliament as represented by Section 13.1, cited above.

In what follows, I will draw upon the analyses constructed for those cases as well as upon my own experiences as an expert witness. The paper is structured as follows. This section presents a brief explication of the methods of linguistic analysis which can be applied to the analysis of texts. In next section, some sample texts are provided, along with partial analyses built upon those methods. The final section offers some general observations and conclusions from the analyses.

## **2 The Toolkit**

In order to analyze the texts in a systematic way, it was necessary to gather research and methodologies from diverse areas of linguistics and organize them into a coherent analytic instrument. The result of this synthesis was the creation of a “toolkit” for text analysis. This instrument was not only useful for the analysis of the texts but was also a convenient way to present often complex linguistic concepts to members of the Tribunal in a compact and

user-friendly form. That is, it provided a kind of map or catalogue of the components used in the analyses.

Rather than recapitulate the steps involved in putting the resulting set together, I will simply present its outline. Table 1 specifies the areas of linguistics which were found to be relevant in undertaking the analysis, along with a characterization of those aspects of each field which could be brought to bear.

---

Table 1

*A Toolkit for Text Analysis*

Modules	<u>Relevant Components and Functions</u>
<i>Pragmatics</i>	Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (and Four Maxims) Sperber & Wilson's (1995) Relevance Principle shared cultural and world knowledge (Green, 1989; Levinson, 1983; Leech, 1983)
<i>Lexical Selection</i>	revealing speaker/writer attitudes (Brown & Yule, 1983) containing propositional information (Renkma, 1993) containing presuppositions (Levinson, 1983; Blakemore, 1992)
<i>Information</i>	fore-/background information (Givón, 1993)
<i>Management</i>	given (shared)-new information (Prideaux, 1993) bridging functions for coherence, cohesion (Givón, 1983)
<i>Semantics</i>	lexical and sentential meaning, propositional content, inference,

	entailment, semantic relations (synonymy, etc.), speech act functions (Green, 1989; Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Renkma, 1993)
<i>Syntax</i>	principles of sentence organization, anaphora, quantification, etc. (Fox, 1987; Renkma, 1993)
<i>Rhetorical</i>	strategies used to build or refute an argument; strategies of
<i>Structure</i>	persuasion (van Dijk, 1984, 1992; Greenberg et al., 1988; van Dijk et al., 1997)

---

While it is clearly the case that the rough taxonomy of Table 1 could be restructured in a variety of ways, the toolkit is nevertheless a useful organizational framework. At this point, it is helpful to illustrate each of the modules briefly.

The *pragmatics* module focuses on the study of language use from the perspective of social, conversational, and psychological principles (see, inter alia, Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Green, 1989; Blakemore, 1992). An important contribution to an understanding of the pragmatic principles involved in discourse participation stems from the work of H. P. Grice (1975), and further elaborated on by, among others, Green (1989), Fox (1987), and Sperber and Wilson (1995). Grice's major insight was to formulate what he called the *cooperative principle* of discourse, in which he suggested that in order for a discourse to advance smoothly and appropriately, the speaker typically adheres to four maxims, presented in Table 2.

---

Table 2  
*Grice's (1975) Maxims*

Maxim	<u>Description</u>
<i>Quantity</i>	make your contribution as informative as is required; do not make your contribution more informative than is required
<i>Quality</i>	do not say what you believe to be false; do not say something for which you lack sufficient evidence
<i>Manner</i>	avoid obscurity of expression; avoid ambiguity; be brief; be orderly
<i>Relevance</i>	be relevant; make your contribution fit into the discourse

---

Grice observed that, in accordance with the cooperative principle, a hearer normally assumes that the speaker is adhering to the maxims. Of course, within a particular discourse, any one of the maxims might be violated. For example, if a speaker says more (or less) than is required, the *maxim of quantity* is violated. Or, if the speaker deliberately lies, misleads, or asserts something for which no evidence is available or adduced, the *maxim of quality* is violated. Or, if a speaker utters a vague or ambiguous comment, the *maxim of manner* is violated. Or, when asked a question on a particular subject, if an individual responds with information on another topic, the *maxim of relevance* is violated. Participants in a discourse normally assume that the four maxims are operative, and when one or more is violated, miscommunication can occur. Since this is the case, the cooperative principle can be viewed as a meta-condition holding for any normal discourse. In contrast, the overt suspension of the cooperative principle occurs only when there is a specific reason to do so as, for example, when someone tells a joke or makes a pun.

When encountering a text, the reader's task is to construct a mental representation in order to interpret it, the result of which

is the reader's *meaning representation*. Contributions to that meaning representation come from all the modules discussed here, with the reader drawing information from all sources to arrive at the most reasonable interpretation.

A central source contributing to the meaning representation of a discourse is the particular *lexical items* selected by the speaker. Words carry with them a rich complex of meanings, both inherent and connotative. A verb like *know*, for example, has as a part of its meaning that an *experiencer* of the knowledge is required, that the speaker asserts the veracity of that which is known, etc. For a sentence like

1. Fred forgot how to prove the theorem.

the speaker implicitly asserts that Fred cannot now prove the theorem. Similarly, the use of a particular word can invite the hearer to a specific interpretation which is not overtly present in the sentence. For example, if a speaker says (2a),

- 2 a. Fred forgot to bring his coat.
- b. Fred did not forget to bring his coat.

the normal interpretation for the hearer is that Fred did not bring his coat. However, if the speaker says (2b), the normal interpretation might be that Fred did bring his coat, even though the sentence would still be true even if Fred intentionally left his coat at home. In such cases, the presence of additional information is crucial for the hearer's correct interpretation, and in the absence of that information, misleading conclusions might be drawn.

The speaker/writer's *attitude* toward the content of the text can be represented by lexical choice, as well as by the use of written devices, and through the exploitation of rhetorical devices. For example, if a writer writes,

3. Fred provided a beautiful proof of the theorem.

the choice of the adjective *beautiful* reflects the writer's attitude toward the proof, just as a negative attitude might be reflected if *beautiful* were replaced with *awkward*. Similarly, if one were to say (4a) instead of (4b),

- 4 a. Sadly, Fred arrived after the party was over.



- b. Happily, Fred arrived after the party was over.

we see two very different attitudes on the part of the writer. And of course, the reader, following the Gricean maxims, interprets the utterances accordingly. Thus, the collocation of words, their co-occurrence within a discourse, can serve as an effective means to represent the attitude of the writer.

A common written device for expressing a writer's attitude is the use of quotation marks around a particular word or phrase to signal that the writer is distancing him/herself from the veracity of the expression. Such *scare quotes* indicate that the writer intends to draw special attention to his or her attitude toward the expression. For example, if one were to read a sentence such as

5. John buys *Playboy* "only" to read the short stories. the reader would infer that the writer disbelieves John's assertion that his only interest in the magazine is the fiction. An analogous form is used in the spoken language, where the scare quoted phrase is placed under heavy stress and contrastive intonation.

*Information management* refers to the ways the writer organizes a text to reveal such factors as which elements are important (foregrounded) and which are less important (backgrounded), as discussed for example by Givon (1993). The foreground/background distinction is typically coded in English by clause types. For example, in

6. Fred ate his dinner while listening to the news. The reader takes as foregrounded the content of the main clause and as background that of the subordinate clause.

Another information management strategy which encompasses both syntax and semantics is the *given-new principle*. *Given* information is defined as that which is known by the writer/speaker and shared by the reader/hearer, while *new* information is that which the writer knows and which the writer assumes the reader does not know. The basic notion is that when a new piece of information is introduced into a discourse, it is new for the hearer, but of course known to the speaker. Thus, in

7. A little dog wandered into the room.

*a little dog* is viewed as new information and this is coded syntactically by the use of the indefinite article *a*. However, when the same entity is later referred to, it typically is coded by either a definite article (e.g., *the dog*) or by a pronoun (e.g., *he, it*, etc.). The given-new principle states that within a discourse, given (shared) information is introduced before new and functions as a kind of mental address for the reader, such that the reader can attach new information to some relevant point in the discourse.

The *semantics* module in a sense encompasses all the others, though in this particular case, it is useful to restrict it to such concepts as speech acts (e.g., assertion, denial, interrogation, etc.), semantic roles, propositional content, and the like. For example, in reading

8. Fred claimed that Sam broke the window.

the reader understands that the sentence consists of two propositions, each consisting of a predicate and its arguments (roughly, P1 = (claim, Fred, P2) and P2 = (break, Sam, window) where each proposition is syntactically coded by a clause. Moreover, the reader understands that Fred believes the content of the second proposition, that *Fred* is the agent of the verb *claim*, that *Sam* is the agent of the verb *broke*, *the window* is the semantic *patient* of the verb, that the speech act function of the sentence is assertion, etc.

Similarly, the *syntactic* module is reflected in the other modules as well. Here, we focus on the syntactic codings for such phenomena as event ordering, anaphora, and topic continuity. For example, when reading

9a. Sam jumped on his bike and fled the scene.

we tend to infer that Sam fled on the bike, even though this is not overtly stated. If, however, we encounter

9b. Sam fled the scene and jumped on his bike.

we do not infer that Sam's initial departure was on his bike, but that a later stage it was.

Or, for example, if we read

10. Fred broke the window and then he ran away.  
 we assume that *he* stands in an anaphoric relationship with *Fred*. However, in the presence of additional contextual information, such as “John urged Fred not to hit the ball toward the house”, *he* might conceivably refer to *John* rather than *Fred*. The *default value* of the reference, however, is normally that reference which requires the minimal effort to make the association, via the principle of *relevance* (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). The principle of *topic continuity* therefore says that the writer intends the reader to construct the simplest and most immediately relevant interpretation of pronouns, nouns, NPs, etc. This principle will play a crucial role in some of the analyses below.

The final module of the toolkit, and one which is used especially often in polemical discourse, is that of *rhetorical devices*, including, for example, rhetorical questions, the stipulation of some proposition without a valid reason, or the use of *epithets* as code expressions for some particular entities (as in *egghead* for *intellectual*).

In some rhetorical questions, it is crucial that a particular presupposition be accepted for the question to be sensible. In a question like (11a) as opposed to (11b),

- 11 a. Don't you believe in democracy?
- b. Do you believe in democracy?

it is presupposed that you, the reader, should believe in democracy. In the second case, however, there is no such presupposition: the question is information-seeking and not rhetorical at all. We are all familiar with such loaded questions as “Has Fred stopped beating his wife?” In order to answer to this question felicitously, either positively or negatively, one must first subscribe to the proposition that Fred is a wife-beater.

Of the many rhetorical devices available, some stand out as particularly important in the analysis of polemical discourse. One such device is the use of a set of terms, a kind of *code*, to refer to a group, while another is one which singles out or *targets* a group and then attributes some properties to that group. Yet another takes the properties of select members of a group and projects

these, through *generalization*, on to all members of the group. One of the most notorious devices, and one which is found frequently in the anti-Semitic literature, is one which *inverts* or reverses roles, such that victims are portrayed as aggressors, while the aggressors are presented as unfortunate victims. Finally, the *alibi* strategy uses different senses of single word in different places and blurs the distinctions among the senses. These common rhetorical strategies are defined in Table 3.

---

Table 3  
*Some Common Rhetorical Strategies*

Strategy	<u>Description</u>
<i>targeting</i>	a particular group or entity is singled out, to which some particular characteristics are attributed
<i>inversion</i>	a particular expression with its commonly held meaning is inverted, such that its meaning changes to its opposite, as in instances in which victims are changed into aggressors and aggressors become victims
<i>code</i>	employs the use of metaphor and establishes a series of expressions laden with negative associations in order to construct a network of interrelated and often interchangeable terms
<i>generalization</i>	the attributes of a particular instance are projected upon the superordinate category to which that particular instance belongs
<i>alibi</i>	involves the equivocal use of words, wherein important terms and expressions are given a special, often restrictive definition in one location and are then used subsequently and without notice

in a different, often broader, meaning to lead to logically untenable and misleading conclusions

---

In summary, extensive research into the structure of discourse reveals that the interpretation of any particular text is governed by a variety of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors; that a meaning representation is much more than just the literal meanings of the words and the sentences; that both explicit and implicit information are used; that bridging assumptions are constructed; that pragmatic knowledge is exploited; that various rhetorical strategies are employed; and that participants' attitudes colour interpretations. The resulting toolkit can then be applied to the analysis of specific texts. We now turn to an analysis of selected passages of alleged hate language.

### **3 Sample Texts and Analyses**

The passages selected here for analysis are taken from materials provided by the Canadian Human Rights Commission. These were downloaded from an Internet site (the Zündelsite) by agents of the Commission and other complainants and constituted materials on the basis of which the Canadian Human Rights Commission, in conjunction with others, launched a complaint against Ernst Zündel, a German national living in Canada. I was asked to prepare analyses of a large number of passages, but in the interests of brevity, only a few are discussed here.

The first three examples are taken from a document called "66 Questions and Answers on the Holocaust". This is a Holocaust denial document presented in a pseudo-scholarly style which takes the form of 66 specific questions and answers ostensibly dealing with commonly asked questions and misunderstandings about the Holocaust. The passages are cited in quotations, directly as taken from the Web site.

Question 41. Can bodies be burned in pits?

No. It is impossible for human bodies to be totally consumed by flames in this manner because of lack of oxygen.

In order to make sense of Question 41, the reader must accept a crucial presupposition, namely that such burning would result in total consumption of the remains. There is absolutely no evidence offered for this presupposition, and no evidence is given for the claim of the impossibility of total consumption in the answer. Moreover, quite the wrong verb is used here, namely *burn*. Obviously, virtually anything can be burned in pits. However, those (Jews) who claimed that they saw bodies being burned in pits used the term *burn*, rather than *incinerate*, the appropriate verb to indicate total consumption. Thus, the answer simply does not relate to the putative claim of first-hand observers. Grice's maxims of both quality and relevance are violated, and lexical slight-of-hand is used to turn the reader from the real claim to a non-sequitur.

Question 47. If six million people had been incinerated by the Nazis, what happened to the ashes? That remains to be "explained". Six million bodies would have produced many tons of ashes, yet there is no evidence of any large ash depositories.

This question presupposes that the Nazis did incinerate six million people, although serious historians have not made that particular claim. The claim is instead that the Nazis killed six million Jews (and another five to six million others), but not that all the six million Jews were *incinerated*. In order to make sense of this question, a "fact" must be accepted which has never been seriously proposed. Moreover, there is a second and more obvious flaw in the answer as well. Even if six million were claimed to be incinerated and no ash deposits were found, this in itself does not mean that the incinerations did not take place. As

every serious scientist recognizes, the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

Finally, the true tone of this document is revealed by not only the absence of serious scholarly form, but more crucially by a remarkable cynicism, exemplified in Question 39.

“

Question 39. What is the difference if six million or 300,000 Jews died during the Second World War?  
5,700,000.

This answer crassly trivializes human life by making a sick play on the ambiguity of the phrase “What is the difference...?” The author represents his dismissive attitude to the value of Jewish lives by exploiting the mathematical sense of difference rather than its ethical and moral sense. It is difficult to imagine a more powerful means of showing disdain and utter contempt for a group of persons.

A more thorough analysis of the entire document reveals that the 66 questions actually mislead rather than inform the reader. The fact that the document is cloaked in a matter-of-fact type of language does not give it legitimacy and, in fact, serves to single out Jews and portray them as liars, criminals, and opportunists.

The second passage is taken from “An Open Letter from the Zündelsite to all principled Freedom-of-Speech activists globally: We Are In Need of Intervenors!” The passage is:

To claim that World War II was fought by the Germans, as the Holocaust Lobby incessantly claims, just to kill off the Jews as a group, is a deliberately planned, systematic deception amounting to financial, political, emotional and spiritual extortion. The “Holocaust,” first sold as a tragedy, has over time deteriorated into a racket cloaked in the tenets of a new temporal religion - replete with martyrs to the Faith, holy shrines, high priests like Wiesel

and Goldhagen, and theologians of the Faith such as Raul Hilberg, Deborah Lipstadt et al.

This passage offers a host of opportunities for analysis and interpretation. We begin with the use of the verb *claim* in the first sentence. This verb takes as its complement a clause whose truth is asserted to be a part of the belief system of the one making the claim, as we saw in the discussion of (8) above. Thus, in the first sentence of the passage, the clause “*that World War II was fought by the Germans ... just to kill off the Jews as a group*” is asserted to be a true claim made by a group called the “*Holocaust Lobby*”. However, no evidence is given for this claim, no citation is offered, and in fact the assertion violates both the maxims of quality and relevance. The use of *just* also leads the reader to believe that the “*Holocaust Lobby*” is claiming that this is the only reason the war was fought.

The use of the term *Holocaust Lobby* entails an implicit meaning that such a well-defined group actually exists and it is constituted of those, including Jews, who advocate the reality of the Holocaust. Moreover, Jews, as members of the Holocaust Lobby, have predicated of them such negative properties as deception and financial, political, emotional and spiritual extortion. This collocation of expressions and association of terms enables the covert assertion that Jews as a group are deceivers and extortionists. Using the *target* strategy, the writer of the passage clearly singles out a group, Jews, and then attributes negative properties to them.

The second sentence contains a passive relative clause associated with the subject *The “Holocaust”*, namely *first sold as a tragedy*. Passive structures without overt agent noun phrases (as would be the case for a passive such as *first sold as a tragedy by the Jews*) are used when the agent is either shared information or is understood by topic continuity through the maxim of relevance. In this particular case, the reader is invited to assume that the agent is the *Holocaust Lobby*, which was introduced in the previous sentence. Moreover, the use of scare quotes around



the expression “*Holocaust*” reveals the writer’s skeptical and dismissive attitude toward the events encapsulated in that word. In that same relative clause, *sell* is used in its metaphoric sense of *promote* or *convince*, and it at the same time takes on attributes of shady, illicit, and negative commercialism, invoking hucksterism and racketeering, leading to a negative set of attributes stereotypically associated with Jews during the Third Reich, and still present in much anti-Semitic literature.

The content of the relative clause, then, is that initially the *Holocaust Lobby* convinced some (unspecified) persons that the Holocaust was a tragedy, implying that the writer disputes this claim, and in the second sentence that the *Holocaust Lobby* has turned the Holocaust into a racket masked as a religion.

One important consequence of this passage is that the term *Holocaust Lobby* has been established as a negative epithet, a code term for Jews. The *code* strategy has been used to single out all Jews and to cast them in a negative light. The text attempts to establish the falsehood of the Holocaust and then to treat this as if it were information shared by the writer and reader. Finally, through the *target* strategy, the writer associates Jews with a raft of negative (and stereotypically anti-Semitic) qualities. The passage invites the reader to join the writer in the belief that the Holocaust is not true and that those who assert its truth are in fact evil. In this case, the *reversal* strategy is used to turn the victims of the Holocaust, the Jews, into the aggressors.

The next passage for analysis is taken from a Zündelsite document called “Urgent Appeal For Your Cooperation” and states:

In other words, this time I want to expose and unravel this facet of the “Holocaust” as the driving force for the entire “Holocaust” extortion industry.

I am particularly looking for material where the “Holocaust” was used or invoked or implied or where “survivors” were implicated in crimes, rackets, shady deals, extortion or war crimes against Germans or, later, British Palestine Police, the Palestinians in Gaza, the

West Bank and Israel, the Lebanese in Sabra and Shatila, and in the 1967 and 1976 Egyptian wars, where Jews used the “Holocaust” as an excuse for their crimes.

In the first paragraph, the writer asserts, by the use of scare quotes, skepticism toward the Holocaust and also asserts the existence of an activity or endeavor labeled *the ... “Holocaust” extortion industry*. The writer’s attitude that this activity is illegal or illicit is reflected by the use of the negative term *extortion* to modify *industry*. The term *industry* itself evokes a commercial, bureaucratic, production-line set of associations which, when associated with *Holocaust*, also evokes the dispassionate business-like aspects of the Final Solution in Nazi Germany. The term *Holocaust industry*, like the term *Holocaust Lobby* discussed earlier, serves as a negative epithet for Jews. The writer asserts a disbelief in the Holocaust and an intention to expose its untruth.

The second paragraph explicitly asserts that Jews committed crimes. The term *Jew* is used for the group and not for a subset of this group. However, the force of the first part of the passage is that the writer is seeking evidence for the assertion that Jews committed crimes. The term “*survivors*”, placed in scare quotes, reveals the writer’s skepticism about the existence of, and derision toward, such individuals. Here the *alibi* strategy is used since on the one hand, the writer denies the existence of the “*survivors*” and of their suffering while, on the other hand begging for evidence of evil conduct on the part of the survivors in order to justify their suffering, which was just denied. If the writer denies the existence of such persons, it is a contradiction to assert that they could be “...*implicated in crimes, rackets, shady deals, extortion or war crimes...*”. On the other hand, if the writer’s use of scare quotes indicates an attitude of derision toward the individuals, they must exist in order for the writer to assert that they carried out such crimes.

The Holocaust is implicitly justified by these arguments because, via the *reversal* strategy, its victims, the Jews, are

represented as evil people who got what they deserved. The thrust of the two passages is that the writer asserts that Jews are criminals, while at the same time seeking for evidence to support the assertion. The overt request for supporting evidence is unnecessary if supporting evidence is already in the possession of the writer, since otherwise the request would violate the maxims of *quantity*, *quality*, and *relevance*.

It is sometimes useful to take conclusions drawn from an analysis and represent them schematically. A schematic analysis of this particular text can be represented as follows:

I (= the writer)

1. a. assert the existence of a Holocaust extortion industry
  - b. want to expose (1a)
2. a. assert I need evidence to support (1a)
  - b. since I do not have adequate evidence to support (1a)
3. a. assert that Holocaust survivors, if they exist, were involved in
  - crimes, rackets, shady deals, extortion, and war crimes
  - b. assert that Jews are criminals
  - c. assert that Holocaust survivors deserve the treatment they got in the Holocaust
4. a. assert that Holocaust survivors do not exist, since there was no Holocaust.

This passage can thus be seen to exhibit internal contradictions, to assert that Jews are criminals, and to acknowledge implicitly the need for evidence to support this assertion, implying in turn that the writer does not possess such evidence.

The final passage offered for analysis is taken from a Zündelsite "Power Letter" of July 1996. It states in part:

The day of global reckoning is dawning. The Jewish Century is drawing to a close. The Age of Truth is waiting to be ushered in, and we will be its ushers.

This passage, brief as it is, constitutes a covert threat against Jews. Here, the writer contrasts the *Jewish Century* with the *Age of Truth*. This contrast itself constitutes a rhetorical device which pits the two terms against one another along the particular dimension of *truth*. The contrast implies that the *Jewish Century*, the twentieth century, is dominated by lies. The use of *we* in the paragraph also needs an interpretation. Who are its referents? The relevance principle invites the interpretation that *we* refers to those who oppose the Jews and threaten to lead the way in their destruction. When *we* is read in its inclusive sense (that is, including both the writer and the reader), the reader is invited to be a member of the writer's group. Furthermore, *we will be the ushers* invites the reader to challenge Jews and oppose them by violence.

These few passages constitute a tiny sample of the texts found in the anti-Semitic materials taken from the Zündelsite. Their overall individual and collective thrust is to portray Jews in a highly negative light while attempting to accomplish two goals: to deny the existence of the Holocaust and to turn the victims of the Holocaust into aggressors. The subtext is to resurrect Nazi ideology, give it legitimacy through hate and targeting, and to extol the virtues of National Socialism.

Detailed linguistic analyses of these materials and many more like them reveal that they do single out Jews, among others, as targets for hatred and contempt. It must be emphasized that these materials do not constitute simple expressions of freedom of speech, since they violate a broad range of linguistic, pragmatic, lexical, and discourse principles in their attempt to obfuscate, lie, and mislead. Only through a clear and detailed analysis, based on well-established scientific principles of linguistic analysis, can the obvious nature of such texts be shown

to be what they are, crude and misleading polemical attempts to spread racist views.

It might be of interest to the reader to learn that although the Zündel case began in 1997, it was not concluded until 2002. After extensive testimony from dozens of witnesses, even including Mr. Zündel's former wife, and after numerous postponements, challenges to the Tribunal's legitimacy, and legal appeals, the Tribunal did offer up its decision on January 18, 2002. In its 101 page ruling, the Tribunal found that the material from the Zündelsite was likely to expose Jews to hatred or contempt and concluded that Mr. Zündel had breached the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Zündel "denied Canada" and fled to the United States on a temporary visa. However, when the visa expired, the American authorities deported him back to Canada. He applied for refugee status in Canada, the same country he had earlier "denied". He was not granted refugee status but was rather imprisoned upon his return and later deported to Germany, where he had previously been convicted *in absentia* of the crime of Holocaust denial. He was imprisoned upon arriving in Germany.

#### **4 Discussion and Conclusions**

It is a commonplace observation that hate language is easy to identify, but notoriously hard to define. In the examples above and others like them, the question is not really whether such passages are hateful in a technical or legal sense, but rather how that claim can be demonstrated. How, for example, are we to know that these passages are not just jokes or tongue-in-cheek gestures? We presume that the average/ordinary reader (that is, one not aligned to a racist and anti-Semitic ideology) will view such materials seriously and not as poor attempts at humour.

What then is the analytic contribution here? I suggest that what specific linguistic analyses of texts, such as those offered above, actually accomplish is to provide an overt, structured framework which reveals the linkages, the associations, the

presuppositions, and attitudinal aspects of the writers of the messages. Such analyses provide a means to demonstrate why and how such messages carry the weight they are intuitively recognized as carrying.

Linguistic analysis attempts to reveal and bring to our awareness those principles that we tacitly know and follow when we engage in discourse. We do not consciously know a rule of grammar which associates a simple question like “Has John eaten?” with its declarative counterpart “John has eaten”, a rule which some linguists describe as moving the inflected verb *has* from its normal declarative position to a sentence-initial position. Yet when we utter questions of this sort, the sentences we produce correspond precisely to such a rule of grammar. Similarly, when we contrast the meanings of sentences containing a verb like *know* with those containing *doubt*, as in “Jerry knows/doubts that Fred attended the party” we distinguish between two claims that Jerry is making. In the case of *know*, Jerry is asserting the truth of the clause “Fred attended the party”, whereas in the case of *doubt*, he is asserting his hesitation and questioning its truth. All speakers of English tacitly know these distinctions and rules, even if though not directly and consciously available to us. In fact, few people (other than linguists, perhaps) ever bother about such things.

Similarly, in the analysis of texts and, in our case, the analysis of hate language texts, the contribution that the linguist can provide is to make clear and explicit those principles and rules which govern our discourse, and how they are used in both our speaking and understanding as they guide us to the construction of meaning. Put differently, the contribution of the linguist is to make overt and to place on the table for analysis the facts, principles, and rules involved in the construction of discourse, either in its creation or in its understanding.

Thus, a fine-grained linguistic analysis of texts is not a simple pedantic exercise, but one which, based on extensive scholarship and well-established empirical evidence, gives us a deeper understanding of what we might in hindsight call the

obvious. It allows us to understand how we draw the inferences we draw, how we ascribe attitudes to writers and speakers, how we share presuppositions, and how networks of associations are created. Linguistic analyses of texts reveal their fabric, their internal structure, their contradictions, their internal (in)consistencies, their assumptions, their goals, and their means. It unveils that which is just below the surface, allowing us to see the relationships and connections with clarity and precision.

For these reasons, linguistic analysis provides an important contribution to a fuller understanding of the nature and organization of all discourse, not just the language and discourse of hate. Perhaps even more important, however, is the fact that such analyses can be applied not just to hate language, but to any texts. In particular, they can be applied to ordinary discourse without regard to its polemical or rhetorical intent. That this is the case can be readily seen in the examples offered in the second section above, in which ordinary texts and utterances can be shown to harbor far more meaning and content than their words alone reveal.

Discourse, be it written or spoken, is highly complex, extremely rich in both what it represents explicitly and what it infers covertly. In discourse, we use the vast reservoirs of our language in a normal and natural way. But it is also the case that such devices and conventions can be bent to the service of manipulation and deception. By understanding how our language works we can be ever more vigilant in guarding against those who would use it to misguide and deceive us.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and especially to Mr. Eddie Taylor, former counsel for the Commission in these cases, for permission to use the materials found in Table 1, as well as to Dr. Mark Freiman for his insightful comments in the early preparation for the analyses. I am also grateful to my colleagues in the discourse research group

at the University of Alberta, both students and staff, for their comments and suggestions as this work evolved over several years. I am especially grateful for the comments and suggestions of Pamela Asquith and Isabel Picornell, both of whom have been familiar with this work and the theoretical aspects of the relevance of discourse analysis to forensic issues for many years. This research was funded in part by the Canadian Human Rights Commission and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Research Grant 410-96-0349.

## References

- Blakemore, D. (1992). *Understanding utterances. An introduction to pragmatics*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chafe, W. (1994). *Discourse, consciousness, and time: The flow and displacement of conscious experience in speaking and writing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Coulthard, M., & Johnson, A. (2007). *An introduction to forensic linguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Engberg, J. & Trosborg, A. (Eds.) (1997). *Linguists and lawyers: Issues we confront*. Tostedt: Attikon Verlag.
- Fox, B. A. (1987). *Discourse structure and anaphora*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- French, P., & Coulthard, M. (1994). Forensic linguistics: Editorial introduction. *Forensic Linguistics, 1*, vi-ix.
- Givón, T. (1983). *Topic continuity in discourse: Quantified cross-language studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Givón, T. (1993). Coherence in text, coherence in mind. *Pragmatics & Cognition, 1*, 171-227.
- Green, G. (1989). *Pragmatics and natural language understanding*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Greenberg, J., Kirkland, S. L. & Pyszcynski, T. (1988). Some theoretical notions and preliminary research concerning derogatory ethnic labels. In Smitherman-Donaldson, G.,



- & van Dijk, T.A. (Eds.), *Discourse and discrimination* (pp. 74-92). Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics, Vol 3: Speech acts* (pp. 41-58). New York: Academic Press.
- Johnson-Laird, P. (1983). *Mental models*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London & New York: Longmans.
- Levi, J. N. (1994). Language as evidence: The linguist as expert witness in North American courts. *Forensic Linguistics, 1*, 1-26.
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Prideaux, G. D. (1993). Subordination and information distribution in oral and written narratives. *Pragmatics & Cognition, 1*, 51-69.
- Prince, E. F. (1981). Toward a taxonomy of given-new information. In P. Cole (Ed.), *Radical pragmatics* (pp. 223-256). New York: Academic Press.
- Renkma, J. (1993). *Discourse studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sperber, D., & Wilson, D. (1995). *Relevance* (2nd edition). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse analysis: The sociolinguistic analysis of natural language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1984). *Prejudice in discourse: An analysis of ethnic prejudice in cognition and discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1992). Discourse and the denial of racism. *Discourse and Society, 3*(1), 87-118.
- van Dijk, T. A., Ting-Toomey, S., Smitherman, G., & Troutman, D. (1997). Discourse, ethnicity, culture and racism. In T.

van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as social interaction* (pp. 144-180). London: Sage.

Zündelsite (1996). [www.zundelsite.org](http://www.zundelsite.org).

**Gary D Prideaux** received his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Texas at Austin in 1966. He taught at the University of Alberta from 1966 until his retirement in 1999. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Japan (1967-68). He was the recipient of several Social Sciences and Humanities research grants and is the author of numerous articles and books in the areas of psycholinguistics and discourse analysis. He served as department chair for two terms. He now lives in retirement on Gabriola Island, British Columbia, with his wife Pam and their Airedale, Saki. Address: 1257 McGillvary Ave., Gabriola Island, British Columbia V0R 1X2, Canada. Email: [gprideau@ualberta.ca](mailto:gprideau@ualberta.ca).