

‘How to express myself nicely?’– Language Ideologies Behind Obscenities

Gergely Szabó

Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University, Múzeum Boulevard 4., Budapest, Hungary
gergely.szabo9@yahoo.com

The presentation examines language ideologies [1] that are explicated or presented implicitly [2] in metalinguistic discourses about Hungarian obscenities. Language ideologies can be defined as systems of beliefs that appear in discursive practices, have impact on our language behavior and linguistic activity, and determine and ground our attitudes towards others’ language use [3]. I interpret obscenity as a stylistic choice in the socio-cognitive theoretical frame of style [4]. The research qualitatively examined the phenomenon in question in three communities with members of the same age group but with different sociocultural background.

The relevance of my question and its approach from this theoretical stance is based on the fact that what we judge as obscene is influenced by an ideologically conceptualized normative point of view. This is that point of view which prompts us to define obscenity’s prototypical category, what includes lexemes and constructions which may appear to be improper, insulting or impolite, indecent even, for a participant of a given discourse.

The examined communities are composed of young adults who belong together because of their educational institution and their specialization – the sample consists of three groups: law students, electrotechnicians and nurses. In datagathering I applied the method of survey and group interview. The surveys included attitude research mostly, while interview questions examined language ideologies [5].

The presentation focuses mainly on the results of the interviews, which are sorted to these main categories: linguistic ideologies of language decay, language ideologies connected to standardization [6], indexicality and ideologies drawing up the ‘beauty’ of Hungarian language. The aim of my presentation is – in addition to the demonstration of language ideologies related to Hungarian obscenities – to point out some particular functional mechanisms of ideologies.

References

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