Douglas Mark Ponton

Understanding Political Persuasion

Linguistic and Rhetorical Analysis

SERIES IN LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Summary

This book builds on the consolidated research field of Political Discourse Analysis and attempts to provide an introduction suitable for adoption amongst a readership wishing to understand some of the principles underlying such research, and above all to appreciate how the tools of discourse analysis might be applied to actual texts. It summarises some of the work that has been done in this field by authorities such as Halliday, Fairclough, Wodak, Chilton, Van Dijk, Martin, Van Leeuwen and others to provide the would-be analyst with practical ideas for their own research. Naturally, this would not be the first time that such a handbook or introductory reference book has been proposed. Fairclough himself recently produced one; however, his work, simply entitled Political Discourse Analysis, inevitably includes theoretical insights from his own research. The beginning analyst can, at times, experience a sense of bewilderment at the mass of theoretical writing in linguistics, in the search for some practical, usable tools. I explain a variety of such tools, demonstrating their usefulness in application to the analysis of a number of political speeches, from different historical periods and diverse social contexts.

The author's hope is that would-be students of political rhetoric, of whatever level and from a variety of research areas, will be able to pick up this book and find tools and techniques that will assist them in actual work on texts. Naturally, it is also hoped that they will be inspired to follow up the suggestions for further reading which they will find in the bibliography.
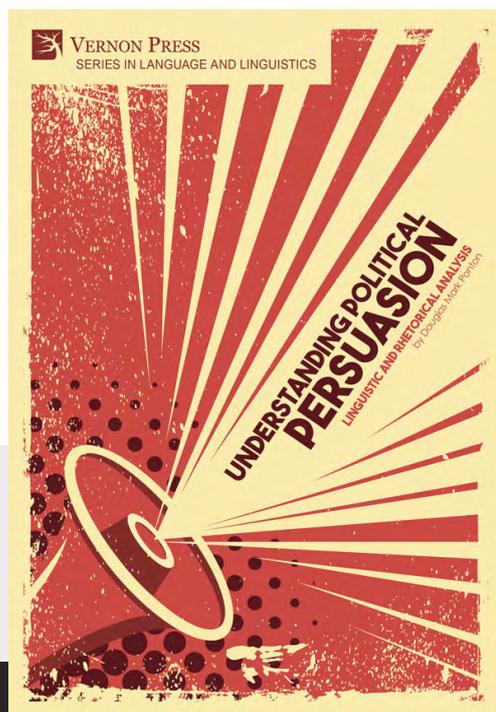
About the author

Douglas Mark Ponton is Associate Professor of English Language and Translation at the Department of Political and Social Sciences, University of Catania. His research interests include political discourse analysis, ecolinguistics, interactive sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, pragmatics, corpus linguistics and critical discourse studies. His main publications are For Arguments' Sake: Speaker Evaluation in Modern Political Discourse and Meaning Politics: a Manual of Political Discourse Analysis. As well as politics, his research deals with a variety of social topics, including tourism (he has published on the Montalbano effect and cruise tourism), the discourse of mediation; ecology, local dialect and folk traditions, including proverbs and Blues music. He published a paper on the figure of the bandit in popular song, exploring the lyrics of Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie. Douglas Ponton is also a keen amateur musician.

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