

Discrimination in public speech

Structure of the presentation

1. Relationship between language use and social reality
2. Aspects of public speech
3. Forms of discrimination through public speech
4. Monitoring discrimination in public speech
5. How to establish structural and discursive change

Relationship between language and social realities

Three approaches:

- Language centred approach → If we change the way we use language, than we change our society.
- Structuralist approach → If social structures changes, then there is also a change in expression forms.
- Dialectic approach → Language and social structures both contribute to constituting – and thus changing – society.

Aspects of public speech

- The role of common sense
- The interactional character of public speech
- The power of the recipient

British sociologist Stuart Hall:

"The mass media play a crucial role in defining the problems and issues of public concern. They are the main channels of public discourse in our segregated society. They transmit stereotypes of one group to other groups. They attach feelings and emotions to problems. They set the terms in which problems are defined as 'central' or 'marginal.'"

(Hall, 1971)

British sociologist Stuart Hall:

“The media tend to favour experts, privileged witnesses, middle men - whereas blacks are predominantly an out-group, outside the consensus.

The media reflect organized majority and minority viewpoints - whereas blacks are relatively unorganized.

The media are sensitive to middle class ways of life - whereas blacks belong to the skilled and semi-skilled working class.

The media favour the articulate - whereas blacks are relatively un-articulate, and their anger and frustration often out-runs the terms of polite debate.

Above all, the media are defensive about the sacred institutions of society - whereas black people most encounter problems in these sensitive power-areas: employment, public discrimination, housing, parliamentary legislation, local government, law and order, the police." (Hall, 1971)

Interactional character of public speech

- Potential audience is considered when making an utterance
- Text-producers attempt to establish an – either positive or negative – relationship with recipients

Power of the recipient

The meaning of an utterance is established both:

- by the text producer (defines content and expression form of an utterance)
- by the text recipient (defines way of decoding and interpreting an utterance)

Forms of discrimination through public speech

- Structural discrimination
 - Excluding migrants/minorities from high positions in relevant institutions
 - Excluding migrants/minorities from public appearance
- Content related discrimination (including both verbal and visual elements of content)
 - racist stereotyping
 - marginalising migrants/minorities
 - vilification of persons who challenge racism
 - denial of phenomena of discrimination

Monitoring discrimination in public speech

- Monitoring hate speech:
 - comprehensive monitoring system
 - complaints registration system in combination with a selective monitoring system
- Monitoring subtle forms of discriminatory speech:
 - quantitative studies, looking for the frequency of occurrence of certain items or patterns of discourse
 - qualitative studies, looking for a context sensitive analysis of patterns of content

Structural and discursive change

- Change our own language use
- Influence the language use of others – in our own immediate environment, but also through legal measures and through media monitoring
- Contribute to changing social, institutional and legal structures that currently produce and reproduce inequalities and asymmetric power relations.
- Make use of our two possibilities to vote:
 - Vote for parties that are ready to reduce inequality and discrimination.
 - Vote for media that promote equality.