Collocating *Peace*

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Abstract

What is peace? How do we experience and interpret it? How true the proverb is: if you want peace, you must prepare for war? In addition, what are its cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic implications? How deeply are we culturally and linguistically imbued in, or conditioned by, metaphors in our interpretation of peace? This investigation focuses on some representative noun+noun sequences in referring to peace, from a socio-linguistic perspective and a critical linguistic approach. As Biber (2002) explains, "noun+noun sequences contain only content words that present information densely and are used to express a bewildering array of logical relations with implicit meaning that the reader must infer from the intended logical relationship". The intended logical relationships represent the conceptual interpretation of cognitively meaningful content words, which, in the end, become the established and consolidated lexical patterns of people's common sense, social practice and ideology: the ideology of war.

Keywords: of, for, peace missions, peace operations, peacekeeping, peacebuilding.

1.   Introduction

A centuries-old proverb says: 'if you want peace, you must prepare for war' (Simpson, 1992, p. 199). A proverb is defined as 'a short well-known saying that states a general truth or gives advice' (OALD, 1989). Is the 'general truth' of the proverb about 'peace' part and parcel of our cognitive interpretation of peace? To what extent do we take it as (good) advice to prepare for war in order to have 'peace'?

The first question is what is peace? As Norman Fairclough (2001, p. 77) points out: "most of the time, we treat the meaning of a word (and other linguistic expressions) as a simple matter of fact, and if there is any question about 'the fact' we see the dictionary as the place where we can check up on them". Thus, according to dictionaries, peace is described as "the absence of, or freedom from, war or conflict"[1]. Consequently, from a semantic and cognitive point of view, peace is the positive aspect (the absence) of a negative state (war or conflict). Seen from the point of view of lexicography, the identity of peace relies upon the lack of a specific feature. However, to fully understand an abstract concept (already in itself a complex task) by referring to its deficiencies, is to highlight the value of its opposite term of comparison, especially when the opposite term has a clear-cut and easy-to-grasp connotative and even visual

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[1] *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (1989).

frame of reference. By definition, 'abstract' means something that does not have a physically identifiable form; it is an idea or a thought. A concrete object, by contrast, has an easily visual or mental physical shape. Opposite terms and concepts are usually compared on the same comparative scale. Thus, the antonyms good and bad, for instance, define opposite abstract qualities; cold and hot refer to opposite measurable temperatures. However, peace and war or conflict cannot be valued on equal opposite terms. The abstractness of peace does not match the concreteness of war, either in terms of ideas or in terms of perceptible and visual impact.

As J.R. Firth (1957), rephrasing a well-known proverb[2], wittily puts it: "you shall know a word by the company it keeps". When two words keep each other's company in recurrent occurrences, thus generating lexical phrase forms with a distinctive meaning, they can be said to be in a relation of collocation (Sinclair, 2004). By analysing some of the most common collocates of peace extracted from the *Contemporary On-line Corpus of American English* (COCA), this paper investigates the ways cognitive processes develop the meaning of *peace* in relation to its collocates.

2.   Questioning the Definition of *Peace*

In the 1960s, the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung (1996) provided an alternative definition of *peace* to counterbalance the traditional one (labelled 'negative peace') recorded in the majority of dictionaries in the European and North American cultural tradition. Our Western cultural interpretation of 'peace' comes from the Roman (Pax) and Greek (Eirene) languages, both implying a direct reference to a state and its forms of government in an orderly country untroubled by civil disturbances. According to Schaffner and Wenden (1995, pp. 3-5), "it is probably impossible to have a culturally neutral definition of peace. Different cultures highlight different aspects or meanings of peace". This paper analyses peace in its traditional Western cultural interpretation. Among the many abstract nouns we commonly use, peace seems to be the only one with a 'missing' trait to characterise its identity. Happiness is not defined as the lack, or absence of sorrow. Neither are wealth, love, joy, pain, friendship, or other common abstract nouns defined in terms of lack of a negative or positive feature. They are always defined with a clear explanation of, and reference to, the 'feeling' or 'state' in question.

Galtung proposed a new definition, which he called 'positive peace'. He put forward an alternative interpretation of peace as "the lack of structural violence", thus extending the idea of peace to include any form of socially, institutionally and/or culturally structural form of violence. Within this category fall, consequently, racism, social inequalities, political abuse, unemployment and each and every socio-cultural and political phenomenon which contributes to create social conflict.

Galtung's proposal was favourably received by many non-violent and pacifist groups and organisations. Many universities around the world opened

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[2] "A man is known by the company he keeps" (Simpson, 1992).

Peace Studies Departments and many Centres and Institutions for Conflict Resolution or Peace Studies were established. Researchers and scholars began to study and investigate the extent of overt and/or covert forms of structural violence from different perspectives and with different approaches. Their research aimed at increasing social awareness by focusing on the role that language and discourse have as major agents in the process of social meaning-making and socio-cultural improvement.

Whether in its positive or negative descriptive meaning, however, peace still lacks a 'body' or a 'frame'. As Wenden (1995, p. 3) points out, although the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali in 1992 claimed that peace is an easy concept to grasp, its definition has proven somewhat problematic for peace researchers who have found it easier to define peace in terms of what it is not rather than what it is. But if defining 'peace' has proved to be a complex task, the 'grasping' of the concept seems to be even harder, unless one simply agrees to conceptually frame peace as the absence of war.

3.   Methodology

As finding a complete and exhaustive definition has proved hard, I decided to investigate how peace collocates in the compounds and expressions we so often hear and read. Adopting Firth's assumption that it is possible to know a word by the company it keeps, I focused my attention on peace's 'habitual friends'. The aim was to see whether their interaction could shed light on possible alternative interpretations of the original meaning of peace.

To this end, among the several available on-line electronic corpora I selected Mark Davies's *Contemporary On-line Corpus of American English* (COCA) for two reasons. The first is because it is a contemporary, constantly updated corpus of about 400 million words. Having such a great number of recorded words constitutes a valid tool of reference, and a contemporary observatory on the use of linguistic expressions related to, or connected with, peace. The second reason has socio-political implications. The United Nations Organisation – UNO – is the international body concerned with *peace* issue policies and strategies. Its offices are in New York and its delegates use mainly English in their public discussions and debates about peace. The delegates put forward, nationally and at a worldwide level, proposals and resolutions about peace. Many of the main linguistic expressions related to peace come from their offices and are adapted, or translated, for a worldwide audience. The US government is the main political and diplomatic interlocutor in any type of peace-related issues. At the international level, US intervention and diplomacy are the main actors whenever peace is concerned. The USA's major role in peace issues means that both the US Government and the US media often report on peace projects. This means that talks about peace are more frequent in the United States than in other parts of the world and consequently, are recorded in the updated electronic corpus, which records instances of the English language taken from several text categories. The COCA corpus provides examples from the spoken and academic registers together with examples from newspapers, magazines and fiction.

COCA allows the extraction of collocates of a word by querying its collocation among various possibilities. One possibility[3] allows querying a keyword in combination with other nouns, either immediately preceding or following it. I queried 'peace' in a keyword+noun item combination and obtained a list of collocates[4]. I selected those which related to my investigation on peace. I subsequently queried each of the noun combinations selected for investigation purposes in the reversed order, that is, I used the noun collocates item as the key word (e.g. process, operation, talks) and queried their collocation with peace as a noun immediately following them. None of them collocates with peace as noun-item following the key item selected.

The linguistic analysis concentrates on the meaning of the collocates in their semantic relations. The critical frame of analysis relies on the socio-cognitive significance of meaning. Meaning is not just a matter of semantics. Descriptive meaning is just one of the aspects of meaning. Connotative meaning often plays a greater role than mere descriptive meaning. People's interpretation of meaning, and understanding of the spoken and written language, is greatly influenced by the socio-cultural implications of the connotation of the words used. Stubbs (1996, p. 107) points out that "no terms are neutral. Choice of words expresses an ideological position. Individual words evoke a frame of reference in which various assumptions are made". He adds, moreover, that connotations can be seen in characteristic collocates, and that connotations condition our interpretation of words.

4.   Data Analysis of *Peace* Collocates

4.1.   *Logical Relation Ambiguities*

In the COCA corpus, at the time of investigation (November 2009), 'peace' counted 42,422 occurrences, out of a total corpus of more than 400 million words. Of these, 'peace' collocates with a noun in 30,409 cases. The most frequent noun+noun collocate of 'peace' in decreasing order of frequency of occurrence are shown below:

Process	2764
Talks	1283
Corps	906
Agreement	737
Conference	680
Plan	563
Negotiations	406
Accord	330
Deal	285
Dividend	264

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[3] COCA allows multiple possibilities. Collocates of a keyword can be searched in combination with other nouns (preceding or following), in combination with verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions or in combination with another selected keyword.

[4] Peace collocates with a following noun in a hundred instances. The most frequent one is "Peace Process"; the less frequent is "Peace Love".

(Continued)

Mission	128
Force	111

As Biber et al. explain in their corpus-based grammar (2002), noun+noun sequences of this type are very difficult to interpret as they presuppose a logical relation which must be inferred by the reader out of a bewildering array of logical relations. Biber provides a list of the most common logical relations (pp. 273-274): "composition, purpose, identity, content, objective, subjective, time, location, institution, partitive and specialisation". He also adds that some noun+noun sequences may have more than one relation or none at all. For instance, 'riot police' does not fit into any of the above-mentioned logical relations. Although at first sight it seems to fit into the 'Function' category, it is not police for creating riots, but police used to control riots.

According to Biber, noun+noun sequences are one of the most prolific categories of compounds[5] in news and academic prose. They contain content words, with no function word to show the semantic relationship between the two parts. They present information densely, represent many different meaning relationships without, however, signaling which meaning is intended in any given case (p. 272). The understanding of dense noun+noun sequences can be made easier by rephrasing them or by adding a preposition to clarify their propositional semantic relations.

As my investigation focuses mainly on the co-occurrence of the noun *peace* in relation to other nouns, I will treat them as combinations of lexical units generating meaning by their combination. They are collocations in the sense that they co-occur habitually but each lexical constituent is also a semantic constituent (Sinclair, 2004). The combination of a n+n acquires the status of a compound, whose lexical structure expresses its semantic role in terms of some process associated to participants and circumstances (Halliday, 1994).

Interestingly, if one checks *peace process* in the Italian, French and Spanish sections of the official UN website[6], *peace process* is translated respectively as: *processi di pace*, *processus de paix* and *proceso de paz*. UN official translations deploy the preposition 'of' and its equivalents. To probe UN official translators' interpretation of the relations between the n+n sequence, I interviewed some English mother-tongue speakers and asked to rephrase for me some of the sequences. The majority of them deployed the preposition "of" in reconstructing the relation between the two nouns, thus reproducing the most typical 'propositional' interpretation of the semantic relation.

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[5] According to Halliday (1994) the line between a compound and a nominal group consisting of a Classifier + Thing is very fuzzy and shifting. Traditionally a compound is characterised by the absence of possibilities of degrees of comparison or intensity. A compound cannot be manipulated and its component parts cannot enter separately into relations of coordination and modification.
[6] The UN homepage is available in six different languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. However, although Italian is not one of the official website languages, it is possible to access documents in Italian by digiting the equivalent Italian translation of the words investigated. The Italian translation deploys the equivalent Italian preposition 'di' for 'of'.

However, if we try to rephrase *peace process*, through the criteria of interpretation based on the list of the possible logical relationships provided by Biber (pp. 273-274) they become: process **for** *peace*; talks **for** *peace*, corps **for** *peace* and so on. One of Biber's categories is 'Purpose', and 'for the purpose of' fits our rephrasing of the noun+noun sequence. To further support this hypothesis, I checked the dictionary definition for the prepositions 'of' and 'for'. 'Of' means 'belonging to'; 'for' indicates 'purpose or function, aim or reason, in order to help or benefit'. Thus interpreted, *peace* processes and the other noun+noun sequences are all to be intended as action, talks or arrangements **for** the purpose of *peace* rather than actions, talks or arrangements **of** *peace*.

The translation or interpretation of the logical relationship in terms of 'of' is semantically wrong and conceptually/cognitively misleading. This applies to other noun+noun sequences: for instance, *peace operation*, *Peace Corps*, *peace conference*, *peace talks*, *peace agreements* and so on. They are translated and rephrased as operation, Corps, conference, talks and agreements 'of' peace and not 'for' peace.

If we interpret, and give propositional meaning to, the above-listed nouns in terms of 'of', it becomes clear that there must be something wrong. The so-called *peace missions*, operations and even corps are military forces[7]. The people making up military corps are people trained to fight in a war, they are soldiers. Their duty is the keeping of civil order. In addition, and above all, they are rarely associated with, or connoted by, images of peace but almost always with states of danger and insecurity, war and death. The presence of soldiers in a country, town or village can hardly be semantically or cognitively interpreted as an action of absence of war. Peace operations and missions with soldiers adopt a military logic (obviously) and view social order from a military perspective. The general atmosphere created by the presence of a contingent of soldiers, carrying weapons and patrolling the streets, is certainly not of a state of calm and tranquillity. Soldiers along the streets may make people feel more secure or protected. At the same time, however, the presence of armed soldiers signifies that there is a danger of war or conflict.

The same criterion, when applied to *peace conference*, *peace talks*, *peace agreements*, *negotiations* or *tables*, shows a faulty logical relation. Statesmen all over the world do not gather to take part in conferences or discussions 'of' peace but 'for' peace; they negotiate agreements and accords 'for' peace and not 'of' peace and so on. When they sit at a 'table', we all hope they discuss 'for' peace,

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[7] The Peace Corps employed in Peace missions or operations are different from the American Peace Corps established by Senator J. F. Kennedy in 1960. This is an organisation of civilian volunteers with the following aims and missions: "The Peace Corps promote world peace and friendship. Today's Peace Corps is more vital than ever, working in emerging and essential areas such as information technology and business development, and committing more than 1,000 new Volunteers as a part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Peace Corps Volunteers continue to help countless individuals who want to build a better life for themselves, their children, and their communities. The Peace Corps' mission has three simple goals: helping the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; helping promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served and helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans" (http://www.peacecorps.gov).

in order to reach important agreements to stop fighting and armed conflicts or to propose peaceful strategies. We do not expect them to sit and talk about peace, in terms of just one of the many conversational and entertaining convivial subjects.

The laws of logical relationships invoked by Biber clarify, from a semantic perspective, the interpretation of some ambiguous noun+noun sequences. The weight of implicit relation of logical relationship relies, in the end, on the choice of a simple, common function word. That function word, however, betrays more than just a syntactic function - in this case, a whole ideology of power, the ideology of war. As Stubbs (1996, p. 92) explains, "[i]t is through, and with the help of, grammar that we can identify and interpret hidden ideological mechanisms. Grammar provides the tool of analysis for interpreting and identifying the linguistic mechanisms which convey ideologies". The argument, he claims, is about semantic habits, and habitual ways of speaking.

4.2.   *Critical Linguistic Analysis*
As discussed in 3.1 above, even in translation from English into other European languages, the equivalent of the preposition 'of' is adopted, rather than 'for'. Translating is not a matter of transforming a word from one language into another but it is a matter of cognitive re-conceptualisation. As Baker (1992, p. 12) explains, "the lexical meaning of a word or lexical unit may be thought of as the specific value it has in a particular linguistic system and the 'personality' it acquires through usage within that system". In addition (p. 18):

> "It is sometimes useful to view the vocabulary of a language as a set of words referring to a series of conceptual fields. These fields reflect the division and sub-division imposed by a given linguistic community on the continuum of experience. The words of a language often reflect not so much the reality of the world, but the interests of people who speak it".

Thus, people interpret peace collocates from the same perspectives. The faulty semantic logical relationship embedded in peace collocates may be the product of ideological conditioning. Peace, at least in Western culture, seems to be much talked about in terms of war metaphors. As Schaffner and Wenden (1995, pp. 82-83) explain:

> "Metaphors tell us something about (cultural specific and universal) aspects of thinking and talking, of language and mind, about the fitting of language to what we perceive, experience and understand. Metaphors are not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. The language used is a reflection of the mapping […] the frequently used keywords and collocations found as a result of the text linguistic analysis show that what is involved is not just conventional language but a conventional mode of thought",

Such conventional mode of thought does not necessarily rely on logic. This could help to explain the often unquestioned use of opposite content words such as peace operations or missions. "Conceptual metaphors are cognitive patterns that are complex, not necessarily fully conscious, and not always based on the laws of logic" (Schaffner and Wenden 1995, p. 85).

Missions, operations and corps are all lexical units belonging to military jargon. The naturalisation of their meaning into the language has ideological implications. As Fairclough (2001, p. 87) points out: "The naturalisation of the meaning of words is an effective way of constraining the content of discourse and, in the long term, knowledge and belief". Naturalisation occurs when among several possible ways of 'seeing' things, one becomes the dominant and the legitimised accepted one. "Naturalisation is the royal road to common sense. Ideologies come to be ideological common sense to the extent that the discourse types which embody them become naturalised" (p. 76).

Critical linguistics is concerned with investigating ideology, that is, the system of beliefs and meanings underlying a text or even single lexical units. "The words and grammar of a language can codify a view of the world and when people use 'their language 'the language itself confirms, reinforces or even directs people's attitude and beliefs" (Chilton, 1985). The war metaphors used in the linguistic expressions concerning *peace* legitimise the cognitive interpretation of *peace* as an abstract, and in some ways unclear, entity implicit in, and depending on, the logic of war. "If you want *peace*, you must prepare for war", has therefore, its logic as a 'general truth or advice'.

The ideology of war, however, serves the logic of power at both the cultural and the economic level. It is not, therefore, surprising, that in the COCA we find 'peace dividend'. According to *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993), *peace dividend* is a financial benefit from reduced defence spending; a sum of money available for other purposes when spending on defence is reduced. Thus, what is saved on military expenses becomes, so it seems, automatically a *peace profit*. However, cuts in the defence budget do not necessarily entail that there are fewer countries at war or that the world has, suddenly, become a more peaceful place. Cutting expenses is a matter of political choices. Together with *peace-oriented strategies*, many countries also have economic interests at stake in post-war countries. Logic would have it that the money saved by cutting defence expenses should be invested in *peace projects*. However, and oddly, *peace-project money* comes from the budget of the Ministry of Defence. Consequently, to reduce military expenditure may imply to reduce military interventions 'of' peace but not 'for' peace. Moreover, to connote peace with the commercial terminology of profit or financial benefit implies highlighting the 'business' side of peace. To further support the idea that peace has a commercial connotation as well, *peace deals*, another noun+noun sequence, is an example. Deal is a specifically commercial term, and so are agreement and accord[8]. Peace should not be a matter of commercial interests or

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[8] "Deal: agreement, esp. in business agreement: promise or contract made with somebody; Accord**:** peace treaty, agreement" (OALD, 1989).

contracts. But, *peace deals*, *peace agreements* or *peace accords* rephrased with an 'of' preposition (also in three European languages: Italian, French and Spanish) allow for ambiguous interpretations. In addition, where there is money, there is power; and where there is power, there is profit. And if we save on military expenditure we make a gain, and where there is a gain there is a benefit. However, a *peace dividend* is not a benefit which derives from *peace*. It is, by contrast, a benefit deriving from investing less in military activities: investing less in missions and operations 'of' peace not 'for' peace.

4.2.1. *Lexicalising* Peace

Two further interesting examples of how ideology is embedded in linguistic expressions are '*peacekeeping*' and '*peacebuildin*g'. In this case, we do not talk about a noun+noun sequence but of the morphological process of what Halliday calls 'lexicalisation', and Fairclough labels 'nominalisation'. Terminological differences apart, they both refer to the morphological process by which an abstract noun is formed from either a verb or an adjective. Thus, *peacekeeping* is formed on the idiomatic verb phrase 'to keep the peace' and *peacebuilding* derives from 'to build the peace'. The ideological implications underlying these two nouns are more important than their morphological derivative characteristics. According to Fairclough (1992, p. 190):

> "New wordings generate new "lexical items" (Halliday, 1966) a technical term which is sometimes used in preference to "words" because the latter is used for so many different purposes, and because "lexical items" captures the idea of expressions which have achieved a degree of fixity and stability… [O]ne type of wording which makes this process particularly clear is wording which involves the process of nominalisation. Creating lexical items brings particular perspectives on domains of experience into wider theoretical, scientific, cultural or ideological purview".

Thus, according to *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993), *peacekeeping* is "the active maintenance of a truce between nations or communities, esp. by international military forces"; and *peacekeeper* (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989) is: "one who keeps or maintains *peace*. Also an organisation that keeps or maintains the *peace*; a soldier in a force so employed".

The UN website has a full page devoted to peacekeeping actions in the world, peacekeeping programmes and strategies[9]. *Peacekeeping* in the COCA

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[9] "Originally developed as a means of dealing with inter-State conflict, UN peacekeeping has been increasingly applied to intra-State conflicts and civil wars. Although the military remain the backbone of most peacekeeping operations, the many faces of peacekeeping now include administrators and economists, police officers and legal experts, de-miners and electoral observers, human rights monitors and specialists in civil affairs and governance, humanitarian workers and experts in communications and public information". Extract from the United Nations Peacekeeping website, http://www.un.org.

has a higher frequency of occurrence than *peacebuilding*. Interestingly from an ideological perspective, whereas *peacekeeping* is widely used at the international level and by international organisations, NGO groups and other non-military actors involved in *peace* programmes prefer to use *peacebuilding* when talking about *peace* projects.

The war metaphor implied in, and underlined by, *peacekeeping* clearly refers to the necessity of keeping the *peace* with armed intervention and with the help of soldiers. Force is necessary, however regrettable this may be. Frequency of occurrence of *peacekeeping* collocates, in the COCA, is as follows:

Word 2 (W2): Peacekeeping

	Word	**W2**	**W1**
1	Force	572	0
2	Operations	325	0
3	UN	245	0
4	Forces	243	0
5	U.N.	240	0
6	Troops	198	0
7	Mission	167	0
8	International	158	0
9	United	145	0
10	Nations	135	0
11	Be	125	0
12	Operation	110	0
13	Is	215	1
14	Missions	181	1

Peacebuilding sustainers, by contrast, rely on the more reassuring and constructive metaphor of 'house'. To build is to create, to make, to construct. *Peacebuilding* has a strong emotive and cognitive connection with house, building and shelter. It reminds one of something solid, permanent, domestic. It does not imply or entail force or soldiers, civil disturbance or the need for armed guardians. It does not collocate with any military-connoted content words, as the table below shows:

Word 1 (W1): *Peace*building

	Word	**W2**	**W1**
1	C.R.S.[10]	2	0
2	Study	2	0
3	Reconciliation	3	1
4	Limitations	1	0
5	Interfaith	1	0
6	Mourning	1	0
7	Ministries	1	0

The two tables above were extracted from the query: compare two words. The first word (Word 1) entered was *peacebuilding*, the second (Word 2) was *peacekeepin*g. As the comparison between W1 (word 1) and W2 (word 2)

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[10] Catholic Relief Services.

shows, *peacebuilding* never collocates with nouns such as force(s), operations, missions, troops or any other military-connoted lexical units. The number of occurrences of *peacekeeping* compared to *peacebuilding* is highly significant. *Peacebuilding* ideology seems to be more concerned with 'creating' a positive attitude and strategy for *peace*. The 'house' metaphor may also bring to mind the idea of sharing, having people around, being together. *Peacekeeping* ideology hides the power of military and economic interests, of the use of force which, however, hardly ever evokes images of *peace* or togetherness.

4.2.2. *Analysing Ambiguities*

In whose interest is it to have an ambiguous expression, even across languages? Ambiguity may serve to put forward, in a covert way, ideology. What is ambiguous and not clear is made clear by our cognitive and conceptual abilities to interpret it. Thus, the war metaphors deployed in connection with *peace*, together with the lack of clarity in the semantic relation between the content words of noun+noun sequences help to create the necessary social consensus to justify military and economic interests. We unconsciously take for granted, or even find it necessary, to rely on war, or war-like solutions, in order to achieve *peace*.

> "Ideology need not function at the level of conscious or intentional bias. But ways of expressing things are not natural. Once it is realised that choices have been made, it is also realised that other choices could be made, and that reality could be differently presented…[L]anguage organises experience. Therefore language is part of experience. Therefore language is never neutral" (Stubbs, 1996, p. 93).

If, rather than having such ambiguous noun+noun sequences, rephrasing with the functional preposition was carried out, perhaps we would start to re-conceptualise our cognitive perception of *peace* and war. As Stubbs points out (1996, p. 90):

> "It is often claimed that language reflects society. But, as Cameron (1990) shows, this view is faulty. It is not that society exists, and is then reflected passively by language. Language itself is a social practice, and language actively reproduces and transforms society. Language can, perhaps in relatively modest domains, be actively changed by human agency. And these changes restructure social relations".

By re-adjusting the semantic logical relationships between meaningful content words related to *peace*, it would be possible to have agency expressed more clearly and explicitly. This would increase social awareness and, perhaps prompt people to think more thoroughly about the socio-cultural and ideological implications expressed by, and implicit in linguistic expressions relating to *peace*.

Linguistic ambiguity also affects our everyday interpretation of life and participation in it. Ambiguity, with its lack of clarity, conditions the way we perceive reality and in the end, makes us accept as 'common sense', the logic of 'illogical' reasoning (in order to have *peace* we need war). Ideological assumptions that we regularly share are part of our commonsensical interpretation of linguistic expressions. One dimension of 'common sense' is meaning (Fairclough, 2001, p. 77). But meaning is linked to our cognitive faculties of interpreting 'knowledge' and gives sense to it. Rephrasing syntactic logic relations may contribute to alter our view, and our common sense, of the world and our social role in it.

5.   Concluding Remarks
In *Politics and the English language[11]*, George Orwell (1946) suggested that:

> "Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one's meanings as clear as one can through pictures or sensations … I have not here been considering the literary use of language, but merely language as an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought. Stuart Chase and others have come near to claiming that all abstract words are meaningless, and have used this as a pretext for advocating a kind of political quietism".

If Orwell talks about language as an instrument for expressing thought, Stubbs (1996, p. 107) claims that words evoke either positive or negative emotions, connotations or mental cognitive frames of reference in which several assumptions are made. Thus, if Crash and Smash do not cognitively and emotionally evoke positive images and trigger preconceptions about negative consequences, missions, operations and Corps certainly do not trigger images of peace. Operation, for instance, is associated to surgery, often an unpleasant and traumatic experience. Mission is often associated to the title of a well-known action film (*Mission Impossible*), where 'good' is restored after a countless number of violent actions. The good outcome of operations (surgery) and missions (violent actions) in some cases may be justified by reference to the well-known saying 'the end justifies the means'. But peace, although an abstract noun, implies and stands for a much more 'concrete' dimension. It evokes positive emotions and sensations. Collocating peace with words that evoke negative emotions contributes to frame it in a cognitive socio-linguistic dimension of meaninglessness and may, in the end, lead us to accept the aberrant logic, and consequences, of *War is Peace,* as stated in Orwell's novel *1984*.

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[11] In *Shooting an elephant and other essays,* Penguin Modern Classics, Penguin Group, London (2003).

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