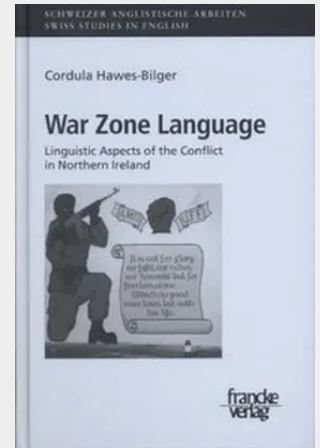


War Zone Language

Language and the Conflict in Northern Ireland

Language plays an important role in the constitution of community identities in Northern Ireland. It is 'loaded': groups and individuals hijack the words of others, reconquer words and defend their own Language. Occasionally, they surrender their use of words, that is, they compromise on Language. In the discourses of the various parties and communities in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, both the choice of words and the choice of sentence structures are ideologically motivated. In particular, this study investigates the important role of 'constructive ambiguity' in the Irish peace process: the authors of political agreements such as the Good Friday Agreement tried to please nationalists and unionists simultaneously by using vague Language. The British and Irish Governments found Sets of words about the decommissioning of paramilitary arms acceptable to the republicans and still carried the other parties along. Similarly, the IRA leadership managed to win the trust of moderate nationalists, unionists, and the British and Irish governments and, at the same time, reassure the hard-line republican base that it was still committed to achieving a united Ireland.



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