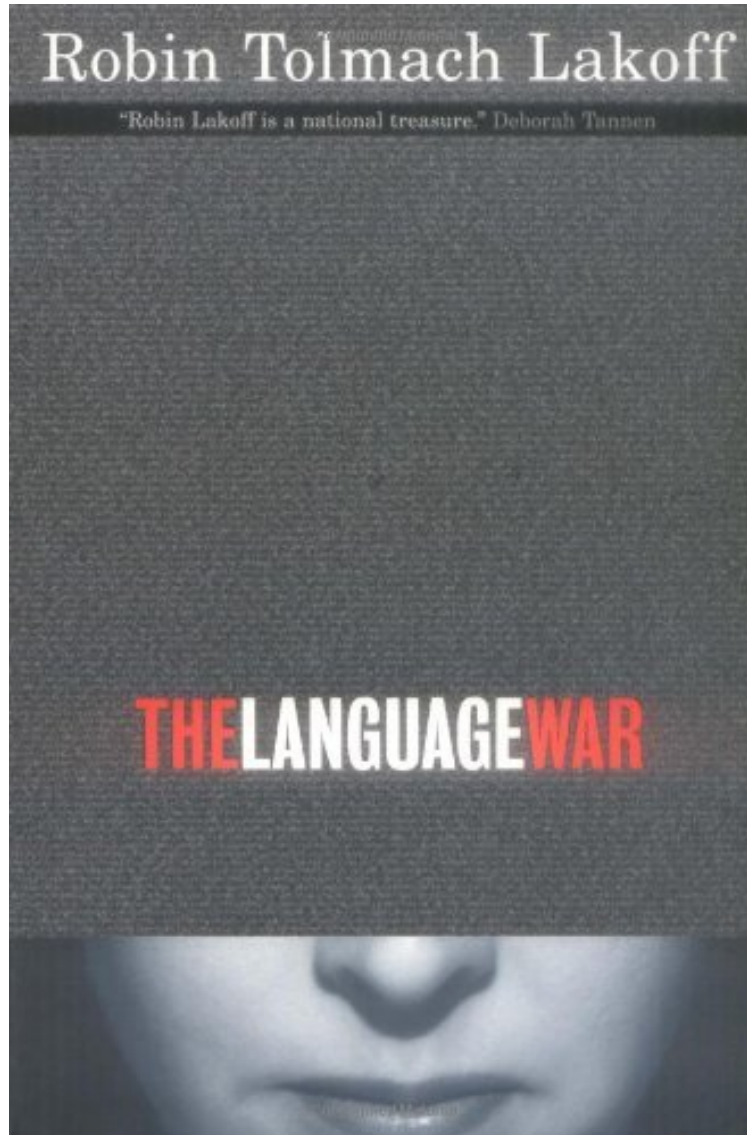


[Free] The Language War

The Language War

Von Robin Tolmach Lakoff

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Von Robin Tolmach Lakoff : The Language War before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Language War:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A linguist's charming look at recent political controversiesVon Robert E. HelmerichsLakoff, a Berkeley linguist, examines several recent controversies from a linguistic point of view. She has chapters on speech codes, Anita Hill, Hillary Rodham Clinton, O. J. Simpson, Ebonics, and Monicagate, but she doesn't discuss the events themselves

(although her viewpoint is usually quite clear); rather, she concentrates on the national discourse on the events. Her overarching thesis is that each of these controversies is part of a language war, in which previously downtrodden groups (especially blacks and women) are trying to seize the right to define themselves away from the traditional holders of power over language (i.e., white middle-class men). She speaks from a post-modern point of view, but much more rationally than I normally associate with the po-mo crowd. Through this book, I have developed much more sympathy for some of the underlying tenets of post-modern thought, if not for the more extreme examples that have turned post-modernism into self-parody (e.g., believing an article claiming that gravity is a social construct). Although Lakoff is somewhat out there at times, she's not too far out, and not all that often; and even when I don't agree with her, I still find myself understanding better the different sides of these very divisive issues, which in itself is a noble goal. And the book is a pure delight to read; Lakoff's style is breezy and pleasant, and she usually remembers to define linguistics jargon for her general audience. She is, however, a self-confessed unrepentant liberal, and more conservative readers may find her point-of-view somewhat hard to take. My only quibble is that her publisher has fallen prey to the evil of endnotes; they are especially criminal in this case, where the notes are few in number but highly useful. They should have been placed at the bottom of the page, where they belong.

Kurzbeschreibung Robin Lakoff gets to the heart of one of the most fascinating and pressing issues in American society today: who holds power and how they use it, keep it, or lose it. In a brilliant and vastly entertaining discussion of news events that have occupied an enormous amount of media space--political correctness, the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, Hillary Rodham Clinton as First Lady, O. J. Simpson's murder trial, the Ebonics controversy, and the Clinton sex scandal--Lakoff shows that the struggle for power and status at the end of the century is being played out as a war over language. Controlling language is a basis for all power, she says, and therefore it is worth fighting for. As a result, newly emergent groups, especially blacks and women, are contending with middle- to upper-class white men for a share in "language rights." Lakoff's introduction to linguistic theories and the philosophy of language lays the groundwork for an exploration of news stories that meet what she calls the UAT (Undue Attention Test). As the stories became the subject of talk-show debates, late-night comedy routines, Web sites, and magazine articles, they were embroidered with additional meanings, depending on who was telling the story. Race, gender, or both are at the heart of these stories, and each one is about the right to construct meanings from language in short, to possess power. Because language tells us how we are connected to one another, who has power and who does not, the stories reflect the language war. We use language to analyze what we call "reality," the author argues, but we mistrust how language is used today--witness the "politics of personal destruction" following the Clinton impeachment. Yet Lakoff sees in the struggle over language a positive goal: equality in the creation of our national discourse. Her writing is accessible and witty, and her excerpts from the media are used to great effect. Pressestimmen "Brilliant and imaginative linguistic analyses. . . highly recommended."--"Choice Kurzbeschreibung Robin Lakoff gets to the heart of one of the most fascinating and pressing issues in American society today: who holds power and how they use it, keep it, or lose it. In a brilliant and vastly entertaining discussion of news events that have occupied an enormous amount of media space--political correctness, the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings, Hillary Rodham Clinton as First Lady, O. J. Simpson's murder trial, the Ebonics controversy, and the Clinton sex scandal--Lakoff shows that the struggle for power and status at the end of the century is being played out as a war over language. Controlling language is a basis for all power, she says, and therefore it is worth fighting for. As a result, newly emergent groups, especially blacks and women, are contending with middle- to upper-class white men for a share in "language rights." Lakoff's introduction to linguistic theories and the philosophy of language lays the groundwork for an exploration of news stories that meet what she calls the UAT (Undue Attention Test). As the stories became the subject of talk-show debates, late-night comedy routines, Web sites, and magazine articles, they were embroidered with additional meanings, depending on who was telling the story. Race, gender, or both are at the heart of these stories, and each one is about the right to construct meanings from language in short, to possess power. Because language tells us how we are connected to one another, who has power and who does not, the stories reflect the language war. We use language to analyze what we call "reality," the author argues, but we mistrust how language is used today--witness the "politics of personal destruction" following the Clinton impeachment. Yet Lakoff sees in the struggle over language a positive goal: equality in the creation of our national discourse. Her writing is accessible and witty, and her excerpts from the media are used to great effect.