LANGUAGE AND POWER

This book is about the ways in which language intersects with the social and political reflexes of power. Over the last forty years, scholars working in Linguistics, English Language and related fields of study have become ever more interested in how powerful groups can influence the way language is used and in how these groups can exercise control over access to language. Similarly, scholars have been interested in the obverse or reflex of this situation; that is, in how the exercise of power meets with resistance and how ‘ordinary’ people can and do contest discursive power through a variety of language strategies. This book sets out a comprehensive programme of study for this significant and expanding area of language and linguistics. Across its four sections, the book provides a history of the field and its associated methods of analysis. It covers the major approaches, the core technical terms and the main theoretical concepts. Additionally, it presents a series of seminal readings by some of the major academic figures in the field. Our aim is for students using the book to be able to identify the ways in which power is disseminated through language, whether that be through print or broadcast media, through legal or advertising discourse, or through political and other forms of institutional rhetoric.

What is power?

In short, power comes from the privileged access to social resources such as education, knowledge and wealth. Access to these resources provides authority, status and influence, which is an enabling mechanism for the domination, coercion and control of subordinate groups. However, power can also be seen as something more than simply dominance from above; in many situations, for example, power is ‘jointly produced’ because people are led to believe that dominance is legitimate in some way or other. This second, more consensual, understanding of power suggests a two-way distinction: power through dominance and power by consent. As both concepts of power feature prominently across this book, it is worth saying a little more about their respective senses here.

Research on power often falls into one of two traditions, the ‘mainstream’ and the ‘second-stream’ (see Scott 2001). The mainstream tradition, the origins of which can be located in Weber’s study ([1914] 1978) of authority in modern and pre-modern states, tends to focus on the corrective power of the state and its institutions. This tradition, essentially the view of power as dominance, focuses on the varying abilities of actors, such as judicial and penal institutions, to secure the compliance of others, even in the face of resistance or insurgence. Importantly, power in this sense does not only reside within the state, but also in other sovereign organizations, such as businesses and the church. In democratic societies, power needs to be seen as legitimate by the people in order to be accepted and this process of legitimation is generally expressed by means of language and other communicative systems. When institutions legitimate themselves with regard to citizens, it is through language that the official action of an institution or the institution itself is justified. Of course, the process of legitimation also presupposes that opposing groups will simultaneously be ‘delegitimated’.
The second-stream tradition of research on power has been mainly concerned with the significance of its persuasive influence. A central figure in the development of this stream is Gramsci (1971), whose concept of hegemony describes the mechanisms through which dominant groups in society succeed in persuading subordinate groups to accept the former's own moral, political and cultural values and institutions. Power is therefore not exercised coercively, but routinely. Within this framework, discourse constructs hegemonic attitudes, opinions and beliefs and, as we shall see throughout this book, does so in such a way as to make these beliefs appear 'natural' and 'common sense'. Developing further the idea of hegemony, Gramsci argues that it is through the cultural formations of individuals (which he calls 'subjects') by the institutions of civil society, such as the family, the educational system, churches, courts of law and the media, that dominant groups in society can gain a more stable position for themselves than through the more obviously constraining powers of the state. An important factor in this process is 'consent': subordinate groups are said to consent to the existing social order because it is effectively presented by the state and its institutions as being universally beneficial and commonsensical. The reason why the concept of hegemony as power is especially important is that it operates largely through language: people consent to particular formations of power because the dominant cultural groups generating the language, as we have noted above, tend to represent them as natural or common sense.

Gramsci (1971) also points out that dominant groups have to work at staying dominant. They attempt to secure domination firstly, by constructing a ruling group through building and maintaining political alliances; secondly, by generating consent – *legitimacy* – among the population; and, thirdly, by building a capacity for coercion through institutions such as the police, the courts and the legal system, prisons and the military in order to create authority. The more legitimacy dominant groups have, the less coercion they need to apply. Again, each of these three hegemonic functions relies on language and communication, which in Louw's words involves the dissemination of 'representations which inculcate identities, beliefs and behaviours confirming the practices and discourses of the ruling group' (2005: 98).

Situated closer to the second stream of research than to the first is Foucault's theoretical model for the analysis of power in discourse (1977, 1980). Rather than seeing power merely as a repressive phenomenon, Foucault sees the concept of power as *productive*, as a complex and continuously evolving web of social and discursive relations. For example, instead of assuming that a powerful person in an institutional setting is in fact all powerful, Foucault argues that power is more a form of action or relation between people which is negotiated and contested in interaction and is never fixed or stable. So Foucault does not regard power as an already given entity which is maintained through the ideological operations of society. We shall return to Foucault's understanding of power in later Strands.

Throughout the book, we will locate instances of power in a range of texts and text types, and the distinctions drawn here will be progressively elaborated and refined as we evaluate different manifestations of power in both public and private contexts. For the moment, we need to introduce another concept which is integrally allied to the idea of power.
Ideology

Intertwined with our understanding of power, ideology refers to the ways in which a person's beliefs, opinions and value-systems intersect with the broader social and political structures of the society in which they live. It is an important assumption of the present book that language is influenced by ideology and moreover, that all texts, whether spoken or written, and even visual language, are inexorably shaped and determined by a web of political beliefs and socio-cultural practices. The position we take is diametrically opposed therefore to a 'liberal' view of language where texts are seen simply as natural outcomes of the free communicative interplay between individuals in society, uninhibited by political or ideological influence. By contrast, our view is first of all that texts are anything but neutral or disinterested, and, secondly, that close linguistic analysis can help us understand how ideology is embedded in language and consequently help us become aware of how the reflexes of 'dominant' or 'mainstream' ideologies are sustained through textual practices. In short, ideology, and its expression in the textual practices that shape our everyday lives, is not something that exists in isolation as a product of free-will, but is instead partial and contingent.

Although coined in the early 1800s by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy, the term ideology is normally associated with Karl Marx, and particularly with his treatise on 'The German Ideology', a project developed in 1845–46, but published, in various languages and instalments, from the 1930s onwards (see Marx [1933] 1965). Over the intervening years, the concept has been adopted more widely (and without any necessary adherence to Marxist doctrine) to refer to the belief systems which are held either individually or collectively by social groups. However, in Marx's original conception, ideology is seen as an important means by which dominant forces in society, such as royalty, the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie, can exercise power over subordinated or subjugated groups, such as the industrial and rural proletariat. This position is captured in one of Marx's best known axioms: 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas' (1965: 61).

Althusser (1971) was one of the first to describe power as a discursive phenomenon, arguing that ideas are inserted into the hierarchical arrangement of socially and politically determined practices and rituals. Althusser highlights the significant roles of ideologies in reproducing or changing political relations through so-called ideological state apparatuses, such as the church, the legal system, the family, the media and the educational system. One contemporary example of an ideological state apparatus (ISA) at work is in the construction of citizens as 'consumers' in the language of public health materials in late modernity. The ISA constructs readers as consumers who should take personal responsibility for their health through proper lifestyle choices. By accepting the role of subjects with personal choices in a consumer culture, people are reproducing the ideology of consumerism and the construction of health problems as individual rather than public or structural problems that need collective solution.

We shall explore further the notions of both ideology and power in B1 and in Strand 2 below.

Language as discourse

Throughout this unit, we have been using the terms language and discourse rather loosely, but it is important to make clear that there exists an important distinction between
the two. Basically, discourse is what happens when language 'gets done'. Whereas language refers to the more abstract set of patterns and rules which operate simultaneously at different levels in the system (the grammatical, semantic and phonological levels, for example), discourse refers to the instantiation of these patterns in real contexts of use. In other words, discourse works above the level of grammar and semantics to capture what happens when these language forms are played out in different social, political and cultural arenas. Admittedly wide as the concept of discourse is, there is general agreement that the term usefully captures both the meaning and effects of language usage as well the interactive strategies used by different individuals and groups in the production and interpretation of actual texts.

Against this conception of language as discourse, scholars researching the interconnections between language and ideology build from the premise that patterns of discourse are framed in a web of beliefs, opinions and interests. A text's linguistic structure functions, as discourse, to privilege certain ideological positions while downplaying others - such that the linguistic choices encoded in this or that text can be shown to correlate with the ideological orientation of the text. Even the minutiae of a text's linguistic make-up can reveal ideological standpoint, and fruitful comparisons can be drawn between the ways in which a particular linguistic feature is deployed across different texts. For instance, the following three simple examples differ only in terms of the main verb used:

- The Minister explained the cut-backs were necessary.
- The Minister claimed the cut-backs were necessary.
- The Minister imagined the cut-backs were necessary.

Whereas the first example suggests that while the cut-backs were unavoidable, the Minister's actions are helpfully explanatory, the more tenuous 'claimed' of the second example renders the Minister's attempt to justify an unpopular measure less convincing. The third example is arguably more negative again, with the 'non-factive' verb 'imagined' suggesting that the opposite condition applies in the embedded clause; namely, that the Minister is mistaken in his or her belief that the cut-backs were necessary.

The point is that when language becomes embodied as discourse it often throws into relief the totality of other possible ways of representing. Ideological standpoint in language can therefore be productively explored through comparisons between different texts, especially when the texts cover the same topic. A rather stark illustration of the variability of discourse representation is provided by the passages below which are taken from two different press accounts of an event of civil disorder in May 2004 in the Gaza Strip:

(a) Israeli attack kills 10 Palestinians in Gaza
   Israeli forces have killed at least ten Palestinians, most of them children, after firing on a crowd of demonstrators in the Gaza Strip today.

(b) Rafah Incident
   Today's incident in Rafah is a very grave incident and the Israeli Foreign Office expresses deep sorrow over the loss of civilian lives.

Without introducing any specific linguistic model at this stage, it is nonetheless worth looking at how certain language structures are deployed across these texts. For
example, of the texts, only (a) has a main verb in its headline while (b) consists of nouns only. Moreover, the verb in the (a) headline is transitive: it takes a Direct Object such that the action performed by the grammatical Subject of the sentence ('Israeli attack') is clearly enacted upon this object. The transitive pattern is further played out through verbs in the opening text ('killed' and 'firing on'), while the agents involved and affected entities are both named, counted and described ('most of them children'). By contrast, the main action in (b) is expressed through a single noun 'incident' – the action has been 'nominalized', in other words. Nominalization offers a less specific representation of an action, largely because it 'stands for' a process while simultaneously eliding those involved in the process. Notice how 'incident' is repeated twice in the opening text while another nominalization, 'loss' – which stands for the process 'somebody lost some thing' – is used. The main 'action' of (b) is located in an altogether different area: the representation of a mental state ('expresses deep sorrow') is offered rather than any account of physical activity (or violence).

Although informally presented here, what we are trying to demonstrate is that linguistic analysis offers a useful analytic tool for probing ideological standpoint across different portrayals in the media of the same event or experience. It is not a question of searching for a version of events which is definitive or truthful, but more a matter of understanding that discourse offers a constellation of different narrative possibilities. Texts (a) and (b) are just two representations from perhaps many possibilities; in this case, from an Israeli Defence Force press release and from British newspaper the Guardian (and you can probably guess which is which). These narrative possibilities privilege certain standpoints over others – often reflecting and reinforcing certain ideological positions while suppressing others.

THE DISCOURSE OF INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

This unit is about language and power in institutional contexts. It is concerned with the ways in which language is used to create and shape institutions and how institutions in turn have the capacity to create, shape and impose discourses. Institutions have considerable control over the organizing of our routine experiences of the world and the way we classify that world. They therefore have the power to foster particular kinds of identities to suit their own purposes because they are primary sites for 'reality construction' (Mayr 2008: 1). The questions we might ask ourselves then are how does this discourse materialize in organizations and institutions? How is it internalized in social practices? And how does it define the identities of people? Across this Strand, we look at the ways power works in the linguistic practices people use in these settings and we examine language and power across a variety of institutional contexts.

Institutions

Institutions (and how they work) have been the object of many investigations in the fields of sociology, media, and cultural and organizational studies. More recently, there
has been a 'linguistic' turn in the study of organizations and institutions with many language-focused explorations of how power and discourse may function in specific institutional settings. Linguistic and discourse analytical approaches to institutional research generally regard linguistic exchange as an important aspect of interaction (Fairclough and Wodak 1997) where language is seen as constitutive of organizations and institutions. From this perspective, language is the principal means by which institutions create their own social reality. Mumby and Clair elaborate this point thus:

Organizations exist only in so far as their members create them through discourse. This is not to claim that organizations are 'nothing but discourse', but rather that discourse is the principal means by which organizational members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are.

(1997: 181)

As Mumby and Clair suggest, the view of discourse as constitutive of social reality does not mean that discourse is all there is. Although discourses play an important role in creating the patterns of understanding which people apply to social interactions, people are not completely constrained by them. On the contrary, people can and do resist and subvert dominant institutional discourses and practices by drawing on oppositional knowledge or tailoring dominant understandings to their personal circumstances. Resistance in discourse is more likely to take active forms in institutional settings where the domination of one group over others is partial and contested (such as management and shop floor), than in more coercive settings (such as government agencies, mental institutions or prisons), although people still can and do resist in discursive behaviour even if that occurs 'offstage' and outside the direct surveillance of those in power (see Scott 1990). Imposed identities can and are constantly (discursively) negotiated, contested and resisted and this will be an important focus for discussion in some of the other Strands of this book. Units A3, A4 and C3, for example, include descriptions of how the process of contestation takes place in the institutional context of a prison. Humour is another form of resistance to dominant (institutional) practices and will be explored in Strand 6, while in part of the following Strand, the discussion of the concept of 'antilanguage' (C3) focuses on how alienated social groups can resist through special, often secret vocabularies. In short, 'resistance' is articulated in many ways and is just as complex a concept as 'power' such that the two should be explored alongside one another.

We have noted how an institution's power and politics are frequently exercised through the discourses of their members. One only has to think of the news media in this respect: we might assume that the fourth estate has an obligation to provide impartial and balanced coverage of important political and social events, but the media is also a large organization that needs to maintain itself and its position. What this means in practice is that to some extent it is the institutional procedures and practices that define what becomes news more so than the events themselves. Additionally, these organizations are owned by ever larger corporations who have their own agendas, not least to produce revenue for their shareholders. And as they push for more profits this puts new constraints on what kinds of events can become news and creates new opportunities for those organizations that are best able to respond to such changes. So in order to understand news texts we need to understand them as the result of
these institutional processes. It is because of these institutional, practical and financial concerns that news media offer only a partial view of the world that fits with the interests of the socially and economically powerful (e.g. war reporting that excludes acts of violence perpetrated against civilians) and so we should be cautious about the public pronouncements of news bosses that their perspective is a disinterested report of objective truth. Fowler (1991: 1–2) provides a good example of this in the pronouncements of Andrew Neil, a former editor of the British quality broadsheet the *Sunday Times*. During the British miners’ strike of 1984–85, the *Sunday Times* consistently voiced a line that supported Margaret Thatcher’s right-wing government and which opposed the actions of the miners and their supporters. Neil, the then editor, pointed out that his paper had a duty to defeat the strike for the ’sake of liberal democracy’. He claimed that his reporters could help break the strike by giving the paper’s readers ‘an impartial and well-informed picture of what was really happening’. Whether or not Neil was being disingenuous is hard to say, but his comments show us how ‘naturalization’ works, where rank political bias masquerades as a ‘commonsense’ position (see further B1).

Institutions therefore attempt to legitimize their own interests and existence through discourse through which they seek to transform (‘recontextualize’) social practices. Weber ([1914] 1978) observes that in democratic systems, the power of institutions needs to be legitimized and justified in order to be accepted by people. For example, the invasion of Iraq by Allied Forces was justified by some Western governments and the military through what Chomsky (1999) has referred to as the ‘rhetoric of military humanism’: discourse that rationalizes military intervention by proclaiming humanitarian goals, such as ‘liberating’ a country from dictatorial rule or defending liberal Western values.

**Discourse, institutions and power**

Mumby and Clair (1997) have identified various strands of research in the study of the relationship between discourse, institutions and power. One strand explores how members of oppressed groups can discursively penetrate the institutionalized form of their oppression; another how subordinate individuals discursively frame their own subordination thereby perpetuating it. A third strand, and especially important for the concerns of this unit, is concerned with the analysis of how dominant groups discursively construct and reproduce their own positions of institutional dominance (Mumby and Clair 1997: 195; see also van Dijk 1993a). However, the concept of *institution* itself is curiously hard to define. Institutions are commonly associated with physical buildings or settings, such as schools, hospitals, media organizations, prisons or courts of law. Popular definitions of an ‘institution’ see it as an established organization or foundation, especially one dedicated to education, public service or culture, or the building or buildings housing such an organization. Clearly, there appears to be a certain overlap in the sense of the terms ‘institution’ and ‘organization’. These terms are often used interchangeably, although ‘organization’ seems to be used more for commercial corporations, whereas ‘institution’ is more associated with the public organs of the state.

Institutions are also seen as inextricably linked to power and, as we have seen, serving the interests of certain powerful groups. Agar defines an institution as 'a socially
legitimated expertise together with those persons authorized to implement it' (1985: 164), which suggests that institutions are not restricted to physical settings and can refer to any powerful group, such as the government or the media. Agar's definition also includes the conception of institutions as involving asymmetrical roles between institutional representatives or 'experts' and 'non-experts' or 'clients', who must comply with institutional norms and objectives. Working from these broad definitions, we will now consider some conceptualizations of 'institutional discourse' and present our own working definition of the term. We will also explore the relationship between institutional discourse practices, power and resistance, as power and dominance are usually organized and institutionalized to enhance their effectiveness.

It may be best to start by asking the question in what ways institutional discourse can be said to be different from 'non-institutional' discourse or interaction. The term 'institutional talk' was coined by Drew and Heritage (1992: 21), although they stress that there is not necessarily a hard and fast distinction to be made between it and 'non-institutional talk' in all instances of interactional events, nor even at all points in a single interactional event. They define talk in institutional settings as involving

role structured, institutionalized, and omnirelevant asymmetries between participants
in terms of such matters as differential distribution of knowledge, rights to knowledge, access to conversational resources, and to participation in the interaction.

(Drew and Heritage 1992: 48)

Therefore, in contrast to ordinary conversation between speakers of roughly the same status, in institutional settings, for example the courtroom, business meetings, service encounters, doctor-patient consultations or classroom interaction, there is at least one participant who may restrict the contributions of the other participant. Drew and Heritage sum up the features of institutional talk as follows:

1. Institutional interaction involves an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or activity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question. In short, institutional talk is normally informed by goal orientations of a relatively restricted conventional form.

2. Institutional interaction may often involve special and particular constraints on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contributions to the business at hand.

3. Institutional talk may be associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts.

(after Drew and Heritage 1992: 22)

This means that in practice interactions in institutional settings have a very specific goal and are often asymmetrical in their distribution of speaking rights and obligations. Courtroom interaction is a particularly marked form of institutional discourse (as we shall see in Strand 7) and many of Drew and Heritage's criteria are borne out in an influential study by Harris on the linguistic structure of interactions in a magistrate's court (1984; see also Cameron 2001). For feature 1 of institutional talk, goal orientation, Harris observed how the goal was eliciting answers from the defendants through a series of questions about non-payment of fines, as in:
M: How much do you earn a week?
D: I don’t earn any determinate amount.

(Harris 1984: 18)

As for feature 2, one particular constraint Harris observed was that defendants were not allowed to ask questions. If they did ask questions, they were reprimanded by the magistrate for the inappropriateness of their conduct, as in:

M: I’m putting it to you again – are you going to make an offer – uh – uh to discharge this debt?
D: Would you in my position?
M: I – I’m not here to answer questions – you answer my question.

(Harris 1984: 5)

The third characteristic of institutional talk, associated with certain inferential frameworks, suggests that people who are engaged in institutional interactions may interpret utterances in a way they might not in other circumstances. In Harris’s study, questions are not asked as straightforward requests for information; rather they become accusations in the courtroom context. In this exchange

M: How much money have you got on you?
D: I haven’t got any on me your worships
M: How’d you get here?
D: I uh got a lift – part way here

the Magistrate’s two questions carry with them accusations which are, respectively, that the defendant has been lying about not having any money and that the defendant must have money because he paid to travel to court. Commenting on Harris’s study, Cameron (2001) points out that the powerless position of defendants is not simply reflected in the courtroom exchanges, but it is also established and maintained through this asymmetry in speaking rights.

These three dimensions — goal orientation, interactional inferences and restrictions on the kind of contributions that can be made — are the main features that underpin the study of institutional interaction. Studying institutional talk is of interest to analysts of discourse not only because of these characteristics but because it is also a way of studying the workings of institutions themselves.

POWER AND TALK

In this unit we will look further at institutional talk. We will explore how the power relations between speakers in such contexts can be analysed through the language they use. We will also show how speakers draw on linguistic resources in different ways, depending on their different and unequal institutional status. In many institutional contexts, such as the police or news interview, the person asking the questions is deemed
CRITICAL LINGUISTICS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The units in Section B provide some context for the concepts and issues broached in the equivalent Section A unit. In this unit, we therefore outline the history of linguistic investigations into power, identify some of the main developments and pinpoint some of the key players. The unit also offers an opportunity to firm up some of the ideas touched upon in A1, notably the issue of how the beliefs and attitudes of the powerful can be represented as 'natural' or 'common sense'.

The approaches that will be described in this section are 'critical' in that they regard language not as something 'neutral' or 'transparent', but instead focus on the social and ideological functions of language in producing, reproducing or changing social structures, relations and identities. This approach to discourse has its roots in the movement known as 'Critical Linguistics' (henceforth CL) and is now mainly associated with what has become known as Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). Both traditions are pre-eminently concerned with the linguistic realizations of power. Before you explore some of the methods for a critical analysis of discourse, in C1, the following overview should give you an idea of some of the main theoretical mainstays of the 'critical' view of discourse, power and ideology.

Critical Linguistics

The term 'critical linguistics' was coined in the late 1970s by Roger Fowler and his colleagues at the University of East Anglia in the UK, and the spirit of what was then a new and challenging approach to the study of language is captured in their seminal publication Language and Control (see Fowler et al. 1979; and see D1). Generally seen as the precursor of Critical Discourse Analysis, CL set out to demonstrate that grammatical and semantic forms can be used as ideological instruments to make meaning in texts and to categorize and classify things, people and events. An early example of work in this area was Trew's study of print media (in Fowler et al. 1979) where he compared headlines from different British newspapers that covered the same event of civil disorder in pre-Independence Rhodesia. Trew attempted to show that the choice of certain linguistic devices in accounts of a particular action (e.g. choosing the passive rather than the active voice) could affect the meaning and force of the text as a whole. Therefore, and in the manner suggested at the end of unit A1, linguistic analysis could expose the potential ideological significance of using agentless passives rather than opting for other constructions in which agents are explicitly stated. For example, Trew discusses in detail (1979: 94) the implications of one of the newspaper headlines: Rioting Blacks Shot Dead by Police as ANC Leaders Meet. Here, 'Blacks' are classified as rioters and put in sentence-initial position, while the actions of the police, who are in fact responsible for the killing, are de-emphasized by the passive construction such that the apportioning of blame is affected. By contrast, the structure of the headline in another paper, Police Shoot 11 Dead in Salisbury Riot, effectively does the reverse: that is, the police become sentence-initial and acquire a focal prominence absent in the other paper, while the phrase 'rioting blacks' is transformed into a numeral which is expanded in subsequent text to 'Eleven African Demonstrators'. In sum, Trew suggests that linguistic structure has an important effect
on the slant given to the story, a slant which it is argued can be aligned with the ideological orientation of the two papers.

One possible limitation of CL, expressed by Fairclough (1992), is that the interconnectedness of language, power and ideology has been too narrowly conceived. Clearly, while the features of grammar, semantics and vocabulary that fall within the normal purview of CL may have ideological significance, other larger structures, such as the whole argumentative and narrative fabric of a text, are significant as well. The early critical linguists have also been criticized for their tendency to see texts as products and for their giving only scant attention to the processes of producing and interpreting texts, or to the possibility that texts can have different meanings to different groups of readers. Nonetheless, CL's development of a theory of language as a social practice, where 'the rules and norms that govern linguistic behaviour have a social function, origin and meaning' (Hodge and Kress 1993: 204) has had a profound influence on much subsequent research, and particularly on scholars working within CDA (see below). The reading for this Strand (D1) is, appropriately, an example of writing from the formative years of CL.

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

Probably the most comprehensive attempt to develop a theory of the interconnectedness of discourse, power, ideology and social structure can be found in the large and loosely grouped body of work collectively referred to as Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA criticizes mainstream linguistic approaches 'for taking conventions and practices at face value, as objects to be described in a way which obscures their political and ideological investment' (Fairclough 1992: 7). CDA also incorporates social-theoretical insights into discourse analysis and its practitioners are often outspoken about their social commitment and interventionist intentions.

Although it is mainly associated with Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk, there is no single, homogeneous version of CDA (as critical discourse analysts themselves often point out) but a whole range of critical approaches which can be classified as CDA (e.g. Gee 1990, 2001; Scollon 1998; Rogers 2004). Common to all these approaches, and echoing the position adopted in unit A1, is the view of language as a means of social construction: language both shapes and is shaped by society.

**But why Critical Discourse Analysis?**

The word 'critical' signals a departure from the more descriptive goals of discourse analysis where the focus has been more on describing and detailing linguistic features than about why and how these features are produced. A critical approach to discourse typically analyses news texts, advertisements, political interviews and speeches, doctor-patient interactions, counselling sessions, job interviews or other so-called 'unequal encounters'. These encounters often employ linguistic strategies that appear normal or neutral on the surface; strategies which are naturalized but which may in fact be ideologically invested (see further below). The term 'critical' therefore principally means unravelling or 'denaturalizing' ideologies expressed in discourse and revealing how power structures are constructed in and through discourse.
Fairclough sums up the idea of 'critical' language study as follows:

Critical is used in the special sense of aiming to show connections which may be hidden from people – such as the connections between language, power and ideology . . . Critical language study analyses social interactions in a way which focuses upon their linguistic elements, and which sets out to show up their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system.

(Fairclough 1989: 5)

Indeed, it is our contention that the term 'critical' is itself open to critique, and as this book develops we suggest ways (especially in Web Strand 11) in which we might interrogate, in a more self-reflexive way, our own position in relation to the discourses we analyse.

CDA's main principles

In a seminal paper, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) outline eight key theoretical and methodological principles of CDA. Below, we summarize these principles as a series of bullet points and, where useful, offer a short gloss expanding the general gist of each.

- **CDA addresses social problems**
  
  CDA is cast here not as a dispassionate and objective social science, but as engaged and committed; it is also seen as a form of intervention in social practice and social relationships (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). Fairclough and Wodak go further, arguing that many analysts are politically active against racism, or as feminists, or within the peace movement and that what is distinctive about CDA is that it intervenes on the side of dominated and oppressed groups and against dominating groups, and that it openly declares the emancipatory interests that motivate it.

- **Power relations are discursive**
  
  This means that the primary focus is on how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258).

- **Discourse constitutes society and culture**
  
  This is the commonly adopted position that language both reflects and (re)produces social relations in a two-way relationship: 'every instance of language use makes its own contribution to reproducing and/or transforming society and culture, including power relations' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 273).

- **Discourse does ideological work**
  
  This principle is expanded to mean that ideologies are particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce 'unequal relations of power, relations of domination and exploitation' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 273). When critical discourse analysts (particularly Fairclough) argue that texts are ideologically shaped by power relations they use the term ideology in the sense of hegemony, which, as we saw in A1, refers to control through the active consent of people rather than through domination.

- **Discourse is intertextual/historical**
  
  This is the claim that discourse must always be analysed in context in order to be understood. Context includes socio-cultural knowledge as well as intertextuality.
The concept of intertextuality refers to the way discourses are 'always connected to other discourses which were produced earlier as well as those which are produced synchronically or subsequently' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 276). Examples of intertextuality would be direct and indirect quotes in, for example, newspaper articles or political speeches that may relate to other speeches or may be turned into a news story. Intertextuality also applies to texts which contain allusions to previous texts, such as the use of proverbs, biblical or literary references, idioms and so on, and where the understanding of which depends on certain intertextual knowledge on the part of the listener or reader.

- **The link between text and society is indirect or 'mediated'**
  CDA attempts to show the connection between properties of text on the one hand, and social and cultural structures and processes on the other. The link between text and society is generally understood as mediated through *orders of discourse* which is Foucault's all-encompassing term covering a range of institutional discourse practices. For instance, the order of discourse that organizes, say, a university will be characterized by a host of interrelated textual practices such as the discourses of essays, meetings, lectures, seminars, administrative texts and so on.

- **Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory**
  CDA typically distinguishes three stages of critical analysis: description, interpretation and explanation (see further below).

- **Discourse is a form of social action or social practice**
  CDA in this mode is intended to be 'a socially committed scientific paradigm' (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 280). One application of this principle has been the production, following linguistic research, of guidelines for certain communication and behaviour patterns, such as the use of non-sexist or non-racist language. The intended outcome of CDA is therefore a change in discourse and power patterns in certain institutions. For example, Van Dijk's discovery of potentially racist language in Dutch schoolbooks led directly to the production of new teaching materials (van Dijk 1993a).

As these eight key principles show, CDA has a clear concern about the exercise of power in social relations, including gender and race.

**Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse**
An important approach in CDA is Fairclough's three-tiered model for the analysis of discourse (1992, 1995a) which is designed as an important first step towards the analysis of language and power in different types of text. The model conceives discourse as text, written or spoken, as discourse practice and as social practice. In other words, Fairclough's framework explores not only the text itself but also its production and interpretation within a larger social context. Therefore, any discourse 'event' (i.e. any instance of discourse) is simultaneously a three-dimensional phenomenon: it is a piece of spoken or written text, an instance of discourse practice and an instance of social practice. The interconnections between the elements in Fairclough's framework are summarized in Figure B1.1.
Figure B1.1 A three-dimensional model of discourse (adapted from Fairclough 1992: 73)

The 'text' dimension involves the analysis of the language of the texts, and includes such features as:

- choices and patterns in vocabulary (e.g. wording and metaphor)
- grammar (e.g. the use of passive verbs as opposed to active structures in news reports; the use of modal verbs)
- cohesion (e.g. conjunctions; the use of synonyms and antonyms) and text structure (e.g. turn-taking in spoken interaction).

The 'discourse practice' dimension specifies the nature of text production, distribution and consumption in society. Looking at discourse in terms of discourse practice means that in analysing vocabulary, grammar and text structure, attention should be paid to intertextuality (see above) because this is an aspect of discourse that links a text to its context. Fairclough distinguishes further between types of intertextuality. *Manifest intertextuality* is overtly drawing upon other texts, such as quoting other people or organizations; *interdiscursivity*, by contrast, is when texts are made up of heterogeneous elements or various discourse types, such as a mix of formal and informal language in a newspaper article (see further C1).

Finally, the 'social practice' dimension of the model deals with issues important for social analysis, such as the power relations and ideological struggles that discourses (re)produce, challenge or transform in some way. Fairclough borrows Gramsci's concept of *hegemony* (1971) (see above and A1) which is not simply about dominating subordinate groups but rather about integrating them through their consent to the moral, political and cultural values of the dominant groups.

Fairclough's model of discourse is built on his view of ideological processes in society, for discourse is seen in terms of processes of and changes in hegemony. He has identified a number of hegemonic processes, which he sees as indicative of wider
changes in discourse practices or in orders of discourse (see above) in society. In general, these developments characterize ways in which discourse genres from one sphere of life have come to influence others. Two such processes are especially important: the *conversationalization* and the *commodification* of discourse. With respect to the first of these, the language of advertising, for example, has become increasingly conversational in its attempt to establish a personal relationship with customers:

'Have YOU tried the only razor with a precision trimmer?'

Here the reader is addressed personally as if on an individual basis. Similarly, the conversationalization or apparent 'democratization' of discourse is apparent in a great many institutions. It involves the reduction of overt power asymmetries between people of unequal institutional power (such as that between teachers and students, employers and workers, doctors and patients, counsellors and 'clients') and the transformation of these asymmetries into more covert forms. Another example would be recent political speeches and interviews, which are now often characterized by a casual manner, colloquial speech forms, and informal forms of address (see, for example, Fairclough and Mauranen 2003; see also B3 below).

With respect to the second type of process, the 'commodification' or 'marketization' of discourse has particularly affected, for example, British universities and other higher education institutions as a result of externally exposed market conditions. The design of university prospectuses can be said to reflect these pressures on universities to 'sell' their courses, using discourse techniques borrowed from advertising, so that the boundaries between information ('The University was founded in 1900 and currently has 15,000 students') and persuasion ('The University is set in a beautiful 200 acre parkland campus'; 'Graduates of the University are *greatly in demand by employers*) are blurred. This inevitably results in a more 'consumer-oriented' relationship between students and universities (see further Strand 9).

The text cannot be satisfactorily analysed without analysing the other two dimensions, discourse practice and social practice. Every text is thus an instance of discourse and social practice, such that a method of analysis will include

- a linguistic description of the text
- an interpretation of the relationship between the discourse processes and the text
- an explanation of the relationship between the discourse processes and the social processes.

**Naturalization and 'common sense'**

A common theme running through much work on language and power is the understanding that the linguistic structure of a text often works 'silently' or 'invisibly' to reproduce relationships of power and dominance. In consequence, the processor of a text – such as the reader of a tabloid newspaper, for example – is encouraged to see the world in particular ways, and in ways which are often aligned with the dominant or mainstream ideology espoused by the paper. Crucially, these ideological assumptions are transmitted surreptitiously, and are mediated through forms of language which present as 'natural' or 'common sense' certain beliefs and values which may prove to be highly contestable or dubious in their own terms.
Consider the following discourse event which unfolded over a few months in the British tabloid newspaper the Sun. This popular daily voiced vehement opposition to the British government’s plans to celebrate the advent of the millennium by the construction, at tax-payers’ expense, of a festival dome in Greenwich, London. Notice how in these extracts the paper sometimes uses italicization to enforce the commonsense status of its position on the 'Millennium Experience':

The Sun Speaks Its Mind: DUMP THE DOME, TONY! (17/6/97)

MPS, businessmen and charities yesterday backed our see-sense campaign to axe the £800 million Millennium Exhibition planned for Greenwich. (18/6/97)

That damned Dome has disaster written all over it. The creative director accuses the Dome secretary... of acting like a dictator who is too easily swayed by public opinion. If only he was. Maybe then this waste of public money would be axed. For that's what public opinion wants. (12/1/98)

(original emphasis)

An appeal to 'common-sense values' of the sort displayed here allows the paper to present its objection to the dome as a position with which any sensible member of society could concur. (Notice how the paper foregrounds these values through italicization.) The paper's tactic is a good example of naturalization in the sense we intend in this book because it captures the process whereby an ideological position is presented as if it were simply part of the natural order of things. Naturalization encourages us to align ourselves with mainstream or dominant thinking, even when that thinking is itself partisan, self-serving and driven by economic and political interests. Indeed, to demur from the Sun's position would be to place oneself outside the community of notional sensible subjects who share the same set of normative values as the paper. Yet if proof were needed of the partisan and capricious nature of such naturalized ideological positions in discourse, consider the following breathtaking 'U-turn' which appeared in the very same tabloid newspaper shortly after the publication of the diatribes above:

The plans for the Millennium Experience are dazzling. If it all comes off, the Prime Minister's prediction will be correct: the Dome will be a great advert for Britain. (24/2/98)

It may have been entirely coincidental that this sudden change in direction occurred on the same day that the paper's owner pledged £12 million worth of sponsorship to the Millennium Dome.

2

REGISTERS OF DISCOURSE

This unit introduces the important concept of register. It is a feature of many institutions and organizations that their presentation in the public domain is achieved