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**Discourse and Ideology**

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**Language and ideology**

In this account, Fairclough does the following:

- An exploration of two main questions: theoretical and methodological
- 1. **The theoretical question:** what sort of relationships there are between language and ideology
- 2. **The methodological question:** how such 'language/ ideology' relationships are shown in analysis.

In this account, Fairclough does the following:

- The achievements and limitations of explorations of these questions are to be dealt within Marxism, especially Althusser's contribution to the theory of ideology and its development by Pêcheux into a theory of discourse and a method for discourse analysis
- Discussing the merits of 'locating' ideology in language structures or language events.
  - Outlining a conception of discourse and discourse analysis suggesting that a more diverse range of linguistic features and levels may be ideologically invested than is usually assumed.
  - Including aspects of linguistic form and style as well as 'content'.
  - Arguing that language/ideology issues ought to figure in the wider framework of theories and analyses of power.

### LOCATION OF IDEOLOGY

There is no need to choose between different possible 'locations' of ideology since it is argued to invest [operate] in various ways at various levels of the language.

A key issue is that ideology is both a property of structures and a property of events.

A key problem is to find a satisfactory account of the dialectic of structures and events.

- Ideology is placed in some form of system underlying language practice regarding it a 'code', 'structure', 'system' or 'formation'.
- The 'structure' option has virtue and disadvantage:
  - The **virtue** of showing events by social conventions, norms, and histories.
- The **disadvantage** of tending to defocus the event on the assumption that events are mere instantiations of structures, whereas the relationship of events to structures would appear to be less neat and less compliant.
  - The synchronic moment of fixity is privileged over historical processes of fixation and dissolution.
  - An alternative location for ideology would be the discursive event which has the virtue of **representing ideology as a process** which goes on in events.

- There is a **textual variant** of this location: **ideologies reside in texts**. While it is true that the forms and content of texts do bear the imprint of ideological processes and structures, it is not possible to 'read off' ideologies from texts.
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This is because of two reasons:

- Meanings are produced through interpretations of texts and texts are open to diverse interpretations.
- Ideological processes belong to discourses as whole social events between people, not to the texts which are produced, distributed and interpreted as moments of such events.

media sociology has the notion that text 'consumers' (readers, viewers) appear sometimes to

be quite immune to the effects of such ideologies

Ideologies cut across the boundaries of situation types and institutions, and there is a need to

discuss:

How they go beyond particular codes or types of discourse (a simple example would be

metaphors of the nation as a family).

How ideology relates to the structuring and restructuring of relations between such entities.

- The entities which make the orders of discourse up are:
  - (a) more or less clearly defined,
  - (b) variable in scale, and
  - (c) in various relationships to each other, including the relationships of **complementarity**, **inclusion**, and **contradiction**.
- The entities which are articulated and rearticulated in discourse are not all fully-fledged codes or registers; they may be smaller scale entities such as turn-taking systems, lexicons which incorporate particular classifications, generic scripts for narratives (for instance), sets of politeness conventions, and so forth.

orders of discourse should be seen as heterogeneous in the sense that they articulate both compatible and complementary entities and contradictory entities - such as contrasting lexicalizations, or turn-taking systems.

Ideology is located, then, both in structures which constitute the outcome of past events and the conditions for current events, and in events themselves.

## Discourse and Text

- The Saussurean conception of language use or parole sees it in individualistic and asocial terms.
- Explaining the discourse, Fairclough tried to regard language use as a form of social practice, rather than a purely individual activity or a reflection of situational variables.

Also inherent to discourse is the dialectical relation of structure/ event discussed above: discourse is shaped by structures, but also contributes to shaping and reshaping them, to reproducing and transforming them. These structures are most immediately of a discursal/ ideological nature . orders of discourse, codes and their elements such as vocabularies or turn-taking conventions - but they also include in a mediated form political and economic structures, relationships in the market, gender relations, relations within the state and within the institutions of civil society such as education.

- The relationship of discourse to such extra-discoursal structures and relations is not just representational but constitutive: ideology has material effects, discourse contributes to the creation and constant recreation of the relations, subjects and objects which populate the social world.

Discourse, according to Fairclough, is a complex of three elements: social practice, discoursal practice (text production, distribution and consumption), and text, and the analysis of a specific discourse calls for analysis in each of these three dimensions and their interrelations. The hypothesis is that significant connections exist between features of texts, ways in which texts are put together and interpreted, and the nature of the social practice.

- Ideology enters this picture first in the ideological investment of elements which are drawn upon in producing or interpreting a text, and the ways they are articulated together in orders of discourse: and second in the ways in which these elements are articulated together and orders of discourse rearticulated in discoursal events. In the former connection, it should be noted that the richness of the ideological elements which go into producing and interpreting a text may be sparsely represented in the text.

A further substantive question about ideology is what features or levels of language and discourse may be ideologically invested. A common claim is that it is 'meanings' that are ideological. this often means just or mainly lexical meanings. Lexical meanings are of course important, but so too are presuppositions, implicatures, metaphors, and coherence, all aspects of meaning. For instance, coherent interpretations of texts are arrived at by interpreters on the basis of cues in the text

- Coherence is a key factor in the ideological constitution and reconstitution of subjects in discourse: a text 'postulates' a subject 'capable' of automatically linking together its potentially highly diverse and not explicitly linked elements to make sense of it. In postulating such a subject, a text contributes to constituting such a subject.

Even aspects of the 'style' of a text may be ideologically significant. When for instance public bodies such as government ministries produce public information on their schemes and activities, they select a style of writing partly on the basis of the image they thereby construct for themselves.

#### 4. HEGEMONY

The concept of hegemony is adopted as a form by Gramsci's analysis of Western capitalism.

- Hegemony harmonizes with the dialectical conception of structure/ event, and it provides a framework for theorizing and analysing ideology/discourse which avoids both economism and idealism.
- Hegemony is domination across the economic political, cultural and ideological domains of a society.
- Hegemony is the power over society as a whole of one of the fundamental economically defined classes in alliance (as a bloc) with other social forces; it is achieved as an 'unstable equilibrium'.

Hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through ideological means.

Hegemonic struggle takes place on a broad front which includes the institutions of civil society (education, trade unions, family), with possible unevenness between different levels and domains.

Ideology is understood within Althusser's advances (Buci-Glucksmann (1980): 66), as being 'a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in the manifestations of individual and collective life'.

For Gramsci, ideology is tied to action, and ideologies are judged in terms of their social effects rather than their truth values. Moreover, Gramsci conceived of 'the field of ideologies in terms of conflicting, overlapping, or intersecting currents or formations', which highlights the question of how the elements of 'an ideological complex' come to be structured and restructured in processes of ideological struggle (Gramsci 1971: 195).

- The ideological dimensions of hegemonic struggle can be conceptualized and analysed in terms of the view of discourse. An order of discourse constitutes the discursal/ideological facet of a contradictory and unstable equilibrium (hegemony).
- Discursal practice is a facet of struggle which contributes in varying degrees to the reproduction or transformation of the existing order of discourse, and through that of existing social and power relations.
- For example, the political discourse of Thatcherism, which constituted an unprecedented discourse of political power for a woman leader.

This discursal re-articulation materializes an ideological project for restructuring the hegemony of the bloc centred upon the bourgeoisie in new economic and political conditions. However, most discourse does not bear upon hegemonic struggle.

In most discourse, the protagonists are not classes or political forces linked in such relatively direct ways to classes or blocs, but for instance teachers and pupils, counsellors and clients, police and public, women and men.

Hegemony is a process at the societal level, whereas most discourse has a more local character, being located in particular institutions - the family, schools, workplaces, courts of law, etc.