

Language and ideology

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores of the theoretical question of what sort of relationships there are between language and ideology and the methodological question of how such 'language/ ideology' relationships are shown in analysis. It is an attempt to build from 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.

Language ideologies are cultural conceptions about language, its nature, structure and use, and about the place of communicative behavior in social life(Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).

Hodge, Kress and Jones (1979) draw attention to the importance of language for the study of ideology: Ideologies are sets of ideas involved in the ordering of experience, making sense of the world. This order and sense is partial and particular. The systems of ideas which constitute ideologies are expressed through language.

In this account, Fairclough does the following:

- 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.

2. 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. This is because of two reasons: -

1. Meanings are produced through interpretations of texts, and texts are open to diverse interpretations.

Texts are inherently ambiguous and subjective. Their meaning is not fixed but actively constructed by the reader based on their own background, experiences, and biases. Different readers will inevitably interpret the same text in different ways, potentially leading to diverse ideological interpretations.

2. Ideological processes belong to discourses as whole social events between people, not to the texts themselves.

Ideologies are not static entities contained within texts. They are dynamic systems of beliefs, values, and practices that emerge and evolve through social interactions and power dynamics. While texts can express, reinforce, or challenge these ideologies, they are not solely responsible for creating them. The meaning of the ideology and its impact on readers cannot be fully understood without considering the broader social context and power relations.

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) and 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.

3. 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 discursive/ 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.

Saussure's View:

- Limited Scope: Confines language use (parole) to individual acts, detaching it from the crucial social context.
- Overemphasis on Expression: Sees individual expression as the sole driver of linguistic variation, neglecting overarching social influences.
- Power Dynamics Ignored: Fails to acknowledge how social structures and power dynamics profoundly impact how language is utilized.

Fairclough's Critique:

- Social Practice Lens: Emphasizes that language use is inherently a form of social practice, intricately entangled with societal structures and shaped by them.
- Discourse Analysis: Advocates for analyzing "orders of discourse," codes, and conventions that frame individual language use.
- Dialectical Relationship: Highlights the dynamic interplay between language use and social structures: both influence and are influenced by each other. Power dynamics, ideology, and social institutions all exert complex, mediated effects on discourse through shared understandings and established conventions.

Discourse as Constitutive, Not Just Representational:

There is a link between discourse and social structure:

Fairclough challenges the notion that discourse merely reflects reality, arguing that it actively shapes and constructs it.

- Ideology and discourse are not simply ideas, but have material effects on the social world, impacting power relations, identities, and even objects.
- Discourse plays a role in creating and reproducing social structures, not just representing them passively.

Three-Dimensional Framework:

- Fairclough proposes a multi-layered understanding of discourse:
 - Social Practice: The broader context where discourse occurs, including power dynamics and social relations.
 - Discursive Practice: The process of producing, distributing, and consuming language (text production, etc.).
 - Text: The actual linguistic product (spoken, written, etc.).
- Analyzing discourse requires examining all three dimensions and their interconnectedness. Fairclough posits a strong link between textual features, how texts are constructed and interpreted, and the nature of the surrounding 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 discursal 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.

Hegemony, as Gramsci theorized, isn't just about overt class warfare or grand clashes of ideologies. It's a subtler, more pervasive process

Hegemonic re-articulation: While discourse can be used to reshape power dynamics, especially for the dominant class (bourgeoisie).

- Local struggles, global impact: Teachers, counselors, police – these are all engaged in "local" interactions within institutions like schools or courts. Yet, their actions can reinforce or challenge dominant ideas. Imagine a teacher constantly praising obedience. This might not be explicitly about class, but it subtly reinforces a certain power structure.
- The everyday and the societal: Hegemony operates at multiple levels. Grand political speeches are one aspect, but it's the constant repetition of certain ideas in everyday interactions that truly normalizes them and makes them seem "natural."

Here's an analogy: Hegemony is like weaving a giant tapestry. Grand political pronouncements might be the bold threads that define the overall design.

But it's the countless smaller threads – the everyday interactions – that actually hold the tapestry together and make the image visible. Not all discourse directly shapes hegemony, it's the constant interplay between these "local" interactions within institutions and broader societal forces that ultimately shapes how power is distributed and ideas are normalized.

Hegemony still provides both a model and a matrix: It provides a model: in education, the dominant groups also appear to exercise power through constituting alliances, integrating rather than merely dominating subordinate groups, achieving a precarious equilibrium which may be undermined by other groups, and doing so through discourse and ideology, through the struggle around local orders of discourse.

Hegemony provides a matrix: the achievement of hegemony at a societal level requires a degree of integration of local and semiautonomous institutions and power relations, so that the latter are partially shaped by hegemonic relations.

From the perspective of hegemony, it is processes which are in focus: local processes of constituting and reconstituting social relations through discourse, global processes of integration and disintegration transcending particular institutions and local orders of discourse.

Discoursal change, and its relationship to ideological change and to social struggle and change in a broader sense, is where the emphasis must be placed, and where the language/ideology problem should be confronted.

Two structural change which move across boundaries between institutional orders of discourse in their possible links to wider hegemonic projects are:

One is discourse democratization. which involves the reduction of overt markers of power asymmetry between people of unequal institutional power -teachers and students, employers/managers. This tendency is manifested in a different institutional domains. It appears to be interpretable not as the elimination of power asymmetry but its transformation into covert forms. Such discourse can be seen in terms of contradictory mixtures of discourses of equality and power.

- Second, is 'synthetic personalisation', which is the simulation of private, face to-face, person to- person discourse in public mass-audience discourse - print, radio, television.