

Discussion Questions for Norman Fairclough's *Analysing Discourse*

Chapter 3: Intertextuality and Assumptions

1. Introduction

Q1. In Paragraph 40A, NF writes: "What is 'said' in a text is 'said' against a background of what is 'unsaid' but taken as given." Try to find some examples of this in a Japanese or English newspaper report?

2. Difference and dialogicality

Q2. Using the same newspaper report as in Q1, try to identify which of the five 'scenarios' of orientation to difference it contains (Paragraph 41B). (NOTE: It *may* contain *just one* scenario, but *more likely* it will contain a *mixture* of scenarios.)

Q3. [NOTE: This group of questions is taken from my Notes for Chapter 3 (about Paragraph 43B)] Which of Fairclough's interpretations do you think is best? How can we decide? Do you feel comfortable with this lack of clarity about which Scenario the text belongs to? Shouldn't Fairclough try to be more precise, for example by providing clearer criteria and analyzing the text more closely? Or is that level of clarity impossible or inappropriate for this kind of analysis?

3. The public sphere

Q4. Do the TV companies in your country ever have 'debate' programmes about important political topics? Do you think such programmes are an effective 'public sphere'? Why/why not?

4. Hegemony, universal and particular

Q5. If Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony is correct (NOTE: This is a *big* assumption, since many people do not think it is correct!), then the successful use of power by dominant people depends on achieving the *active consent* (or at least the *passive acquiescence*) of the dominated people (Paragraph 45A). Do you think the media has any role in helping the dominant people achieve this consent or acquiescence of the dominated people?

5. Intertextuality

Q6. Using the same newspaper report as in Q1, try to identify what texts and voices are *included* in it and which are *excluded*. Are there any examples of (a) quotations/direct reporting; (b) reported speech/indirect reporting; (c) unattributed intertextuality? Are there any *significant* absences of texts or voices in the report? What is the relation between the author's voice and the attributed voice of others? In conclusion, do you think the report has a high level of *dialogicality*, or not?

Q7. [NOTE: This group of questions is taken from my Notes for Chapter 3 (about Paragraph 53B)] Is it surprising that a British radio broadcast will have a pro-western /anti-Libyan bias? In general is it surprising that national broadcasters have a bias in favour of their own country? (e.g. think of how differently the Japanese media and western media represent the issue of whale hunting). It may not be very surprising, but is it a *good* or a *bad thing*?

6. Assumptions

Q8. Using the same newspaper report as in Q1, can you identify any *existential*, *prepositional* or *value* assumptions in it? What linguistic features of the text 'trigger' these assumptions? (see Paragraphs 55C and 56A) Which assumptions are the most ideological? Are the value assumptions mainly *explicit* or mainly *implicit*? (see Paragraph 57A)

7. Ideologies and assumptions

Q9. In Paragraph 59B, Fairclough writes: '*to claim that [(for example) the existence of souls] is an ideological assumption, one would need a plausible argument that it is indeed effective, along with other related [religious] propositions and beliefs, in sustaining relations of power. This would need to be based on a complex social scientific analysis of the relationship between religious beliefs and power relations ... Certainly, one cannot simply look at a text, identify [its] assumptions, and decide on textual evidence alone which of them are ideological.*'

How, more specifically, can the social analysis help? What sort of *evidence* would be necessary? What sort of *methods* are needed for gathering such a kind of evidence? How should the evidence be interpreted? [NOTE: This group of questions is taken from my Notes for Chapter 3 (about Paragraph 59B)]

8. Other types of assumptions

Q10. Using the same newspaper report as in Q1, can you find any examples of (a) logical implications; (b) standard conversational implicatures; (c) non-standard conversational implicatures?

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