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## 12 Close reading: functional linguistics as a tool for critical discourse analysis

*J. R. Martin*

### 12.1 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an approach to discourse analysis which focuses on inequality in society and the ways in which texts are used to realize power and ideology. CDA is concerned not only with analysing texts to investigate power, but also with finding ways of redressing inequalities. The leading figures in CDA have involved themselves in issues such as racism, sexism, colonialism and environmentalism (Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard 1996, Chilton 1985, Fairclough 1995a, Fairclough and Wodak 1997, Lemke 1995, van Dijk 1991, Wodak 1987a, b, Wodak *et al.* 1990). They have also addressed issues in the field of language in education, where questions of inequality and how to redress inequality are always present (Cope and Kalantzis 1993, Fairclough 1992a, Giblett and O'Carroll 1990, New London Group 1996, Walton 1996, Wodak *et al.* 1989).

CDA and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) have been closely associated since the pioneering work of critical linguists at East Anglia (Fowler *et al.* 1979, Fowler 1996). Fairclough (1995a: 6–10) notes that SFL is a congenial theory for CDA because it is multifunctional, well adapted for text analysis and concerned with relating language to social context. Australian theorists have used and adapted SFL to gain a critical perspective on texts in a wide range of registers (e.g. Hasan 1996, Kress 1985/1989, Martin 1986, Melrose 1996, Schirato and Yell 1996, Thibault 1991, Threadgold 1997), including work of special educational significance (Christie 1999, Christie *et al.* 1991, Lee 1996, Martin 1985/1989, 1990).

For many, one of the real strengths of SFL in the context of CDA work is its ability to ground concerns with power and ideology in the detailed analysis of texts as they unfold, clause by clause, in real contexts of language use (including the analysis of multi-modal texts involving pictures and diagrams, e.g. Kress and van Leeuwen 1996, O'Toole 1994). SFL provides critical discourse analysis with a technical language for talking about language – to make it possible to look very closely at meaning, to be explicit and precise in terms that can be shared by others, and to engage

in quantitative analysis where this is appropriate (Nesbitt and Plum 1988, Plum and Cowling 1987; cf. Biber 1988).

In this Chapter I'll take the multifunctionality dimension (see Chapter 2) which Fairclough (1995a) finds attractive as an organizing principle for the chapter, and exemplify some of the ways in which SFL enables a critical perspective on discourse which addresses a number of CDA concerns.

## 12.2 Constructing power (ideational meaning)

To begin I'll look at some work by Ruth French, Joan Rothery and Geoff Williams on gender relations in infant and primary school. Ruth, a primary school teacher, was working with two of Australia's key language in education specialists on functional grammar in relation to gender and genre. The text they were working with was *Piggycbook*, a picture book and feminist narrative for young readers (Browne 1989).

From the perspective of ideational meaning we are interested in how a text of this kind constructs power (especially gender roles). In the experience of CDA analysts one relevant part of language is TRANSITIVITY; its purpose is to construct processes, the participants involved in them and the circumstances in which they take place. In the English language (Halliday 1994, Mathiessen 1995) the most critical variable has to do with whether or not a process is brought about by an impending agency. When we say, for example, that someone is sitting, or singing, or thinking, or reading, there is an ongoing activity undertaken by someone. But when we say that someone sat the baby up, or sang the baby to sleep, or taught the child to read, we have an activity that is undertaken by someone (sitting, sleeping, reading) and made possible by someone else (who enabled them to sit, sleep, read). Halliday refers to the participant who undertakes an activity as Medium, and the participant who brings about the undertaking as Agent. So, Mediums act or get acted on, and Agents act themselves on Mediums. The causal relation between Agent and Medium is outlined in Figure 12.1.

Clearly this dimension of meaning is central to the analysis of inequality and power in discourse. It allows us to ask questions about who is acting, what kinds of action they undertake, and who or what if anything they act upon. If we consider Mrs Piggott's role in *Piggycbook*, clause by clause,<sup>1</sup> we arrive at an analysis such as that outlined in Table 12.1. From this we see that at the beginning of the story Mrs Piggott is very agentive inside the home, acting on domestic things. Then we enter a phase of the story where she stops acting on domestic participants, a role she maintains until the last line of the story where she becomes an Agent again, but this time on something outside not inside the home – the family car.

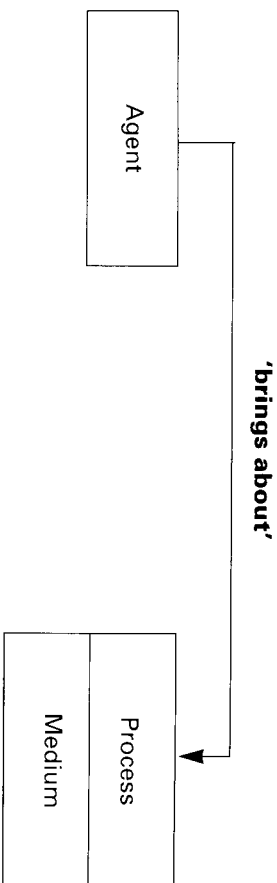


Figure 12.1 The relation of Agent to Medium

Table 12.1 Mrs Piggott's Activity in *Piggycbook*

Agent (Actor acting on things)	Process [Range] (what happens)	Medium (Actor acting or Goal being acted on)	Circumstance (when and where)
[Mrs Piggott]	was	his wife	inside the house
[Mrs Piggott]	hurry up with	the breakfast	
[Mrs Piggott]	hurry up with	the breakfast	
Mrs Piggott	washed	all the breakfast...	
[Mrs Piggott]	made	all the beds	
[Mrs Piggott]	vacuumed	all the carpets	
[Mrs Piggott]	went	[Mrs Piggott]	to work
[Mrs Piggott]	hurry up with	the meal	
[Mrs Piggott]	hurry up with	the meal	
Mrs Piggott	washed	the dishes	
[Mrs Piggott]	washed	the clothes	
[Mrs Piggott]	did the ironing	[Mrs Piggott]	some more
[Mrs Piggott]	cooked	[Mrs Piggott]	where
's	was	Mum (Mrs Piggott)	the... day; not there
was	coming home	Mrs Piggott	
came back	walked in	Mum (Mrs Piggott)	when
stayed	came back	[Mrs Piggott]	
was happy	stayed	Mrs Piggott	
she (Mrs Piggott)	mended	Mum (Mrs Piggott)	
		the car	

On the other hand, if we consider Mr Piggott and the boys we find a complementary pattern of roles. In the first part of the story they do things and say things, but don't act directly upon anything in the home; and the circumstances of their activities have to do with things outside the home – work and school. Then Mrs Piggott leaves and they have to open the envelope containing her good-bye note. Subsequently they are forced to try (not very successfully) to act on domestic things, after which they more or less give up trying to behave as people and snuffle around like pigs, rooting for scraps on the floor. Once Mrs Piggott returns they turn back into people and act successfully on domestic things while Mrs Piggott mends the car.

**Table 12.2** Mr Piggott and the boy's Activity in *Piggybook*

Agent (Actor acting on things)	Process [Range] (what happens)	Medium (Actor acting or Goal being acted on)	Circumstance (when and where)
	lived	Mr Piggott	with his two sons ...
	called	he (Mr Piggott)	every morning
	went off	he (Mr Piggott)	to his ... job
	called	Simon & Patrick	
	went off	they (Simon/Patrick)	to their ... school
	left the house	they (Mr/Simon/Patrick)	
	called	the boys	every evening
	came home	they (the boys)	from their ... school
	called	Mr Piggott	every evening
	came home	he (Mr Piggott)	from his ... job
	had eaten	they (Simon/Patrick)	
	got home	the boys	one evening ...
	demanding	Mr Piggott	
	got home	he (Mr Piggott)	from work
	opened	it (the envelope)	
	are pigs	You (Mr/Simon/Patrick)	
	shall ... do what	we (Mr/Simon/Patrick)	
	said	Mr Piggott	
they (Mr/Simon/Patrick)	had to make	their own meal	
they (Mr/Simon/Patrick)	had to make	their ... breakfast	next morning
Mr P, Simon & Patrick	tried to look after	themselves (Mr/boys)	
they (Mr/Simon/Patrick)	(never) washed	the dishes	
they (Mr/Simon/Patrick)	(never) washed	their clothes	
	squealed	the boys	after ... meal
	should know	I (Mr Piggott)	how
	grinned	Mr Piggott	
	became ... grumpy	they all (Mr P/boys)	
	have to root around	we (Mr P/boys)	
	find	some scraps	
[Mr P/boys]	snooted	snooted Mr Piggott	
	come back	[Mrs Piggott]	
	suffled	they (Mr P/boys)	
	washed	the dishes	
Mr Piggott	made	the beds	
Patrick and Simon	did the ironing	Mr Piggott	
	helped	they (Mr P/boys)	
	enjoyed it (cooking)	they (Mr P/boys)	with the cooking

I have glossed over the details of this analysis here (for support in undertaking analysis of this kind see Chapter 2 and Martin *et al.* 1997). But what I have offered does, I think, indicate something of the detail, precision and explicitness of a close reading of power in relation to agency and the gendered relations it enacts. Alongside this, the analysis digitalizes the meanings involved so that they can be counted if one wants to approach questions of language and in/equality from a quantificational perspective. We can say just how many times a participant is involved in processes in just what kinds of ways: once we've analysed enough examples, we can perform statistical analyses to check the significance of differences between female and male protagonists and what they act upon, from one stage of the story to another. Usually, to get enough examples, we have to analyse more than one text.

This brings us to the problem of the social, since when we bring in more texts we want them to be comparable – and comparability has to be stated with respect to a model of the social context in which texts occur. In SFL, social context is modelled as systems of register (field, mode and tenor) and of genre (see Chapter 1). These social systems are seen as realised through language. This means that linguistic analyses such as transitivity (Tables 12.1 and 12.2) can be related to social analyses through the concept of realization. When we say that language realizes register and genre we mean that language construes, is construed by, and over time reconstructs the social. Power in other words is not a fixed variable; it shifts around, as texts unfold (as in text 12.1), as social subjects develop and as communities evolve.

Ruth French and her class were mainly concerned with the way in which grammar construed gender and genre in *Piggybook*. Working together they came up with the following summary of their analyses. The students involved were in Year 6 when this text was negotiated. In Text 12.1 they refer to Mediums acted on by Agents as Goal, and the Agents acting on them as Actors (see Chapter 2).

### Text 12.1. *What we learnt about the grammatical patterns of Piggybook.*

#### Beginning

All the Goals Mrs Piggott did were to do with housework.

Only Mrs Piggott had Goals. This shows she is the only one doing something TO something else.

Mr Piggott and the boys only did things for themselves; they did not do work in the home. This is shown by the fact that they didn't have any Goals. They were the only characters that talked. They told Mrs P to hurry up.

#### Resolution

At the end, everyone did an action to something – to benefit the whole family, not just themselves. Everyone had Goals at the end.

Now the Goals for Mrs Piggott included more than housework.

[*She mentored the cat* – displayed as an Actor Process Goal diagram]

The Goals had a big role in structuring the narrative. The pattern of Actors and Goals changes at the end. This makes the Resolution.

The inspiration for critical orientations to literacy teaching of this kind goes back of course to work by critical linguists at East Anglia (see especially Trew's (1979) canonical deconstruction of media discourse in relation to British colonialism in Zimbabwe). For a richer analysis of social actors than those illustrated above see van Leeuwen (1996). Poynton (1985) addresses gender relations from the perspective of SFL; her work is nicely complemented from the perspective of critical theory by Cranny-Francis (1990, 1992) (see also Cameron 1990, 1992, Coates 1996, Kothoff and Wodak 1997, West *et al.* 1997, Wodak and Schulz 1986), Kress (1996)

suggests that deconstructive activities such as those illustrated should lead to productive activities which renovate gender relations if CDA is to fulfil its ambition of redressing inequalities (see also Janks and Ivanić 1992 on emancipatory discourse). This challenge is taken up in part in an educational context by Cranny-Francis (1993) and Lee (1996); see also Walton (1996) for a critical review of critical social literacy programs and the research that informs them.

### 12.3 Enacting power (interpersonal meaning)

In this section, I'll draw on some work I did with one of Australia's leading cultural theorists, Anne Cranny-Francis, when we were members of the Newtown Semiotic Circle (during the time it met in Sydney in the late 1980s and early 1990s to exchange ideas across the frontiers of SFL and critical theory). Anne and I were working on popular culture at the time, looking in particular at the ways in which popular music could be deployed to challenge power (Cranny-Francis 1994, Cranny-Francis and Martin 1991). One of the multimodal texts we looked at in some detail was U2's 'Sunday Bloody Sunday', a song about the troubles in Ireland. The group performed the song for several years in the 1980s (up to their 1988 Rattle & Hum tour); ever controversial, it was banned by Mrs Thatcher in Northern Ireland, and the group apparently wore out their welcome in a number of pubs in the south. During one of their final performances of the song, included on their Rattle & Hum tour video collection, Bono phased the following rap (Text 12.2) into the song: as Bono points out in the introduction to the performance on the video, the band was in a state of shock because of an IRA bomb blast in Enniskillen which had killed eleven people and injured several others earlier that day.

#### Text 12.2

I'm going to tell you something. I've had enough of Irish Americans who haven't been back to their country in 20 or 30 years, come up to me and talk about the resistance, the revolution back home, and the glory of the revolution, and the glory of dying for the revolution. Fuck the revolution! They don't talk about the glory of killing for the revolution. What's the glory in taking a man from his bed and gunning him down in front of his wife and children? Where's the glory in that? Where's the glory in bombing a Remembrance Day parade of old age pensioners, their medals taken out and polished up for the day. Where's the glory in that? To leave them dying or crippled for life or dead under the rubble of the revolution that the majority of the people in my country don't want. No more. Say 'No more.' No more. – No more. – No more. . . .

From the perspective of interpersonal meaning we are interested in how a text of this kind enacts power. How does it position some 50,000 American fans in the debate over Ireland, and Britain's ongoing control of the

northern counties? The most relevant part of English clause grammar in this case is MOOD (see Chapter 2). Its purpose is to position speakers in relation to listeners as stating, questioning, commanding or exclaiming. The four choruses of 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' can be used to illustrate these functions, since each deploys a different mood and so positions listeners to receive information, to provide information, to perform a service or to empathize with the feeling:

**typical Statements** (declaratives): include a Subject and Finite, with the Subject coming before the Finite [Subject *we*, Finite *can* below]

*We can* be as one tonight.

**typical Questions** (interrogatives): include a Subject and a Finite, usually with the Finite coming before the Subject, and a Wh phrase if asking for information [Subject *we*, Finite *can*, Wh *how long* below]

*How long must we* sing this song?

**typical Commands** (imperatives): do not have a Subject or Finite

Wipe your tears away.

**typical Exclamations** (minor): don't have a Subject or Finite (or any verb):

Sunday, bloody Sunday.

In addition there is the possibility of a non-finite clause, which has a verb, but not one which is negotiable (see Chapter 2). Non-finite clauses, in other words, are clauses which might have been part of the repartee, but have been back-grounded, to take them out of the repartee. To see how this works, consider Text 12.3 from Monty Python's first movie (text from Martin 1992).

#### Text 12.3 Monty Python – argument

I came here for a good argument.  
No, you didn't. You came here for an argument.  
Well, an argument isn't just contradiction.  
It can be.  
No it can't. An argument is a connected series of statements intended to establish a proposition.  
No it isn't.  
Yes it is. . . .

Note how the Subject and Finite elements of clause structure are used to sustain three volleys of repartee:

1. I came . . . – No, you didn't . . .
2. an argument isn't . . . – it can be. – No it can't.
3. An argument is . . . – No it isn't. – Yes it is.

Non-finite clauses simply remove this dialogic potential by eliminating the meaning which makes a clause negotiable – its finiteness. There are two types of non-finite clause: the reals or imperfective, realised by the *-ing* form of the verb, and the irrealis or perfective, realised by the infinitive (with *to*). Note how the responses below negotiate the meaning of the preceding finite clause, not the non-finite one (even though the non-finite clause, small caps, is closer).

It was always controversial, SINGING THIS SONG.  
– Was it?

They have decided NOT TO SING THE SONG ANY MORE.  
– Have they?

On the basis of these distinctions we can analyse the way in which Bono positions and repositions his audience in his rap (Subject and Finite underlined throughout). He begins with declarative mood, giving information:

[declarative]  
I m going to tell you something.

I ve had enough of Irish Americans who haven't been back to their country in 20 or 30 years, [who] come up to me and [who] talk about the resistance, the revolution back home, and the glory of the revolution, and the glory of dying for the revolution.

He then switches to imperative, to dismiss the way in which he feels some Irish Americans glorify the revolution:

[imperative]  
Fuck the revolution!

This is followed by a declarative clause, giving information about the acts of killing the revolution has involved:

[declarative]  
They don't talk about the glory of killing for the revolution.

This is followed in turn by four interrogative clauses which ask the audience for information about the existence or location of glory in two kinds of killing. The information the audience has been positioned to provide is of course impossible to provide, since glory is not a value we naturally

associate with killing a father in front of his family or bombing elderly war veterans. For this reason Bono's four queries would be referred to in traditional terms as 'rhetorical questions' and would be heard not as asking for information but as giving the information<sup>2</sup> that glory is not to be associated with such activity.

[wh interrogative]  
What's the glory in taking a man from his bed and gunning him down in front of his wife and children?

Where's the glory in that?

Where's the glory in bombing a Remembrance Day parade of old age pensioners, their medals taken out and polished up for the day.

Where's the glory in that?

Bono continues with a non-finite clause<sup>3</sup>, which includes as an embedding the controversial declaration that the majority of people in Ireland don't want the revolution:

[non-finite]

To leave them dying or crippled for life or dead under the rubble of the revolution that the majority of the people in my country don't want.

This non-finite clause, itself non-negotiable, contains within it a deeply embedded clause qualifying *the revolution* which itself qualifies *the rubble* which complements the preposition *under* in a circumstance of location in an agentive relational clause. This embedded clause (*that the majority of the people in my country don't want*) contains a proposition that in a sense clinches Bono's argument – since if it is the case that Irish people don't actually want a revolution, then Irish-Americans ought not to be supporting one (for non-finiteness and embedding, see Chapter 2) I'm not acquainted with the poll on which this proposition is ultimately based or how controversial Bono's reading of that poll might turn out to be. But rhetorically, the proposition has been placed in a next-to-unassailable position, since embedded clauses, although finite, are not really arguable;<sup>4</sup> and the clause into which it is so deeply embedded has no finiteness to negotiate.

At this point Bono uses a minor clause to construct his anguished plea for an end to the carnage:

[minor: Command]  
No more.

And follows with an imperative instructing the audience to join him in his plea:

[imperative]  
 Say 'No more.'

They take up the invitation, with Bono leading the chant:

[minor; Initiation^Response]

No more.

– No more.

[minor; Initiation^Response]

No more.

– No more. . . .

This is a very compelling piece of rhetoric. It sends shivers up and down my spine each time I watch it on the video, and must have been absolutely electrifying live. The music of the song is very much backgrounded throughout the rap. The lighting is subdued, with a spotlight on Bono who has moved away from the rest of the band to the left of the stage. It is the wording, voice quality and body language that take advantage of his charismatic speaking position in front of an audience of adoring fans to drive the message home.

What seems crucial to this interpersonal enactment of Bono's power is not just the number or type of mood selections he makes, but the manner in which he moves from one selection to the next (alongside the ideational meanings he positions listeners to interact about). His goal is to align the audience with his position, a significant objective given the amount of funding for the IRA donated by Irish expatriates in America. He pursues this by first tabling a proposition about the glory of the revolution, then dismissing it (*Fuck the revolution*), then subverting it (*Where's the glory. . .*), then undermining it (*the revolution that the majority of the people in my country don't want*), then pleading for an end to the violence (*No more*), and closes by aligning the audience to plead with him, chanting in response to his cue. This positioning harmonizes with the lyrics of the song proper, in which Bono refuses violence and calls for a Christian resolution to the troubles (*The real battle's yet begun, to claim the victory Jesus won, on Sunday bloody Sunday*) without involving an appeal to Christianity, which in the context of rock music is likely to alienate as many listeners as it aligns.

In this section we've looked at one of the ways in which interpersonal meaning is used to enact power, and drawn attention to the importance of looking closely at the way in which meanings unfold in a text. The contingency of one choice in relation to the next is critical to understanding the way in which texts position readers and listeners. It's important to remember in research that the rhetoric of this contingent unfolding is lost once we start counting choices, aggregating them, doing statistics and looking for global patterns across texts and their speakers.

It's also important to note that enacting power is not necessarily a bad thing. Speaking for myself, I don't begrudge Bono taking advantage of his role as a performer to argue against violence. To my mind, popular music gives a very public voice to people from a range of marginal positions who might not otherwise be heard. When Billie Holiday recorded 'Strange Fruit' in 1939 it was banned from American radio, since the United States was not ready for a song about lynching (especially one that used such a disturbing metaphor for the bodies of lynched African Americans hanging dead in trees). But the record was released and the song performed. It still resonates throughout the civil rights movement in America and elsewhere in the world. Her power to enact what haunting courage, what incisive verve! The price she paid. . . .

For work on other interpersonal systems in relation to power, see Martin (1995b) (on modality) and Martin (1999b) (on evaluative language). Related work on interpersonal meaning from a functional perspective is found in Kress (1985) and Poynton (1985). From the perspective of CDA, Wodak (1996) looks at interaction in doctor/patient consultations, school committee meetings and therapeutic communication; Coulthard (1996) considers police interviews. Eggins and Slade (1997) provide a general SFL framework for looking at conversation, interpreted locally as interaction and globally as genre.

#### 12.4 Naturalizing power (textual meaning)

Finally, let's look at some research reported in Chapter 10 by Mary Macken-Horarik and Joan Rothery, who worked innovatively for several years with the New South Wales Disadvantaged Schools Program. Mary and Joan were investigating the discourse of secondary school English, looking at narrative genres, and at the critical responses students were expected to write on examinations (Macken-Horarik and Rothery 1991, Rothery 1994, Macken-Horarik 1996). At one end of the marking scale for responses they found texts like 10.1, which respond emotionally to the short narrative under consideration; at the other end of the scale they found texts like text 10.2, which retell the story as an abstract psychonarrative in which the protagonist wrestles with morality (in the case of this response, the ethical issue has to do with facing reality and avoiding the fantasy world of TV).

From the perspective of textual meaning we are interested in how texts naturalize power by weaving together meanings into an apparently seamless whole in order to position readers and listeners in particular ways. Essentially this has to do with the way in which the writers texture ideational and interpersonal meaning – the way they phase these strands together to form a coherent response. Texts 10.1 and 10.2 are both coherent in this respect; but they establish complementary reading positions, which examiners may treat in different ways.

Let's explore this complementarity from the perspective of Theme and

New as outlined by Halliday for the English clause (see Chapter 2). In English, Theme is realized through first position. New is realized through a major pitch movement on what is known as the tonic syllable, and tends to be realised clause finally. We can simplify the analysis for writing by looking at the information in first and final position. Theme realizes a text's method of development – the angle or perspective the text takes up with respect to the information it constructs. New realizes a text's point – it constructs an expanding pool of information as the subject matter of a text.

In Text 10.1, the main patterns of Theme selection have to do with the student writer and the text the student is responding to:

Method of development of Themes (in finite, ranking, non-branched clauses)

student critic:

I  
I  
I  
I  
I

the text:

it (the passage)

The way 'Click' is written by itself in a sentence and in capital letters this (the way the mood of the characters is portrayed so clearly) the ending

quotations from the text:

'like a padlock snapping open'  
'Sounded through the room'  
it ('sounded through the room')

etc.

The author

As far as New is concerned, the overwhelming pattern has to do with the student's emotional response to the text, with the author's technique as a supporting motif:

Point of News (in ranking clauses):

emotional response:  
erie and isolated  
so lonely

so afraid  
empty  
a depressing ending that made me feel scared and afraid  
the emptiness  
another example of how the author creates the feeling of  
isolation . . . displayed  
hollow and dead  
(fear) in your mind  
(enjoyed) . . . immensely

author's technique:

this way (. . . like a padlock snapping open)  
the effect that she wanted  
the exact sound it [= CLICK] makes  
the way it sounded through the room

technique evaluation:

so effective  
so clearly  
very clear and well written

text:

the ending  
the passage

Overall, the most general pattern is for the student and the narrative to be positioned as Theme in relation to emotional response as New. In Text 10.2, on the other hand, the overwhelming choice for Theme is the narrative's main protagonist, Jenny, with the text and the TV switch as minor motifs:

Method of development (Unmarked Themes in ranking clauses)

Jenny:

she  
she  
because her parents and herself  
they  
Jenny  
she

her hiding place  
 Jenny  
 and Jenny  
 when she  
 Jenny's reaction  
 Jenny  
 when she

the text:

Click by Judith Stamper  
 Click  
 The conclusion 'Click . . . television switch sounded . . . the room . . . a padlock snapping open'

the switch:

the television switch  
 [the padlock]  
 [and it's snap]

TV world:

that the world of television  
 the make believe world

etc.

this whole experience; the dead girl's face; the shock of reality  
 the girl  
 because there

As far as patterns of New are concerned, the dominant pattern has to do with the morality of the narrative (fantasy vs reality), with the nature of Jenny's family relations and the accident as supporting motifs.

Point (News in ranking clauses)

fantasy vs reality:

a young girl . . . run away from reality and . . . unhappiness and death . . . confronted her . . .  
 the fantasy, make-believe world of television  
 back into reality  
 to 'switch the channel', to escape; to hide from reality  
 protection from reality  
 too fake  
 realised  
 the awakening of reality in that mind  
 a realisation that it couldn't run away

family problems:

with her family life  
 lonely  
 apart  
 a very distant relationship  
 recognised this (= having a very distant relationship)  
 hide from it (= the distant relationship)

accident:

outside  
 the accident  
 already dead  
 into the dead girl's face  
 back inside

etc:

a . . . didactic short story, the moral . . . the ending . . . story, and . . .  
 title conveys to . . . reader  
 symbolic  
 Jenny  
 Jenny's mind  
 a television commercial on  
 like a padlock snapping open

Overall, the most general pattern is for the story's protagonist to be positioned as Theme in relation to ethical response as New.

In sum then, the reading position naturalized by Text 10.1 would be filled by an examiner interested in how the student reacted emotionally to the story (since the angle on the story is the student and the point is her feelings). The reading position naturalized by Text 10.2, on the other hand, would be taken up by an examiner looking for the student's understanding of the moral of the tale (since the angle on the story is its heroine and the point is how to live – fantasy vs reality). In New South Wales there are certainly teachers who read both texts compliandy outside of the context of public examination. But as Mary's and Joan's research revealed, under examination conditions Text 10.1 is read resistantly, and given the lowest possible grade (E–), whereas Text 10.2 is read compliandy, and celebrated as an outstanding response (A+). In teaching and in the syllabus, both texts are referred to as involving a 'personal response'. In the absence of explicit teaching about which kind of reading position to naturalize in exams, it's up to the students to figure out the difference and recognize which contexts place value on one or the other. In other words the secondary English curriculum is a canonical hidden curriculum, which deploys what Bernstein (e.g. 1975) refers to as an invisible



pedagogy to enfranchise certain groups of students and disenfranchise others (Chouliariki 1997/1998, Christie 1999).

From these examples we can see that power is a context-specific variable. What works in one situation may not work in another, and inequality has as much to do with knowing when to say something as learning how to say it. At the same time, it's important to remember that if we are interested in redressing inequality, we have to focus attention on the way in which texts can be designed to align readers and listeners: otherwise we don't have a model of discourse which we can use to renovate our social world.<sup>5</sup> The flow of meanings in a text naturalizes a reading position for that text, a position which speakers and writers design because of the ways in which they want to act on others.

Not all texts naturalize a single position; sometimes voices<sup>6</sup> in a text contest with one another. One good example of a seamless text of this kind is the following exchange (Text 12.5) between Frank and Rita in the movie *Educating Rita* (Cranney-Francis and Martin 1994) in which teacher and student clash over the value of Frank's poetry (evaluation underlined):

**Text 12.4 From the film *Educating Rita* – Frankenstein scene, abridged**

R: ... This is brilliant. You have got to start writing again. Frank. It is brilliant. It's it's witty; it's profound, full of style.

F: Oh tell me again, and again.

R: No, it is, Frank. It's not just me that thinks so. Me and Trish sat up and read them last night and she agrees with me. Why did you stop? Why did you stop working when you can produce work like this? Uh, now what did Trish say? It's more resonant than purely contemporary poetry. It has in it, like, it has in it a direct line through to the 19th century traditions of em like wit and classical allusion.

F: Oh, that's marvellous, Rita. It's fortunate I never gave this to you earlier. Just think if you'd have seen this when you first came here.

R: Oh, I would never have understood it.

F: You would have thrown it across the room and dismissed it as total shit, wouldn't you?

R: I know. But, I mean, I could never have understood it then. I wouldn't have been able to, you know, recognise or understand the allusions.

F: This clever pyrotechnical pile of self-conscious allusion is worthless, talentless shit. There is more poetry in in the telephone directory and probably more insight. However, this has one advantage over the telephone directory: it is easier to rip. It's pretentious, characterless and without style.

R: It's not.

...

Here we find a different pattern of information again to that in Texts 10.1 and 10.2. In Text 12.4 Frank's poetry is a predominant choice for Theme, and choices for New have to do with its value. Rita values the work highly:

... This is brilliant.

It is brilliant.

It's it's witty;

it's profound, full of style.

It's more resonant than purely contemporary poetry.

It has in it, like, it has in it a direct line through to the nineteenth century traditions of em like wit and classical allusion.

I wouldn't have been able to, you know, recognise or understand the allusions.

Frank, does not agree:

and dismissed it as total shit, wouldn't you?

*This clever pyrotechnical pile of self-conscious allusion is worthless, talentless shit.*

There is more poetry in in the telephone directory and probably more insight.

However, this has one advantage over the telephone directory.

It is easier to rip.

It's pretentious, characterless and without style.

This kind of response to text was not entirely absent<sup>7</sup> in Text 10.1:

This is what makes the passage so effective

– the way the mood of the characters is portrayed so clearly, the ending was very clear and well written.

But there it was overwhelmed by emotion; in Text 12.4 it is the aesthetic value of the poetry which is at stake.

The disagreement in Text 12.4 seems more like the argument the client thought he'd paid for in the Monty Python skit exemplified (Section 12.3). But in the film it soon degenerates into volleys of name calling as Frank and Rita hurl insults at one another. Difference explodes into verbal violence of a deeply hurtful order:

**Text 12.5 continued...**

R: Yeah, Yeah. Well, eh, I'll tell you what you can't bear, Mr Self-pity and Piss-artist. What you can't bear is that I'm educated now. I've got what you have and you don't like it. I mean, good god, I don't need you. I've got a room full of books. I know what wine to buy, what clothes to wear, what plays to see, or papers and books to read and I can do it without you.

F: Is that all you wanted? Have you come all this way for so very very little.

R: Oh yeah, it's little to you, Frank, who squanders every opportunity and mocks and takes it all for granted.

F: Found a culture have you, Rita? Found a better song to sing. No, you found a different song to sing and on your lips it is shrill and hollow and tedious. Ah Rita, Rita.

- R: Oh ho ho ho. Rita. Nobody calls me Rita but you. I dropped that pretentious crap as soon as I saw it for what it was. Rita. Nobody calls me Rita.  
 F: What is it now then, eh? Emily or Charlotte or Jane or Virginia?

As Texts 10.1 and 12.4 exemplify, the consequences of resisting the reading position being naturalized by the person you are interacting with can be severe: for the person you are resisting (the examination candidate in Text 10.1) or for the person resisting you (the stinging repartee in Text 12.4). One of the key tasks in applied linguistics research has to be that of making understandings available as to the consequences of assuming one reading position or another. For example, in the Australian secondary English curriculum you have to know the differences among a 'personal' response, Leavisite criticism and New Criticism (Belsey 1980). As far as textual meaning is concerned the key differences in these responses are outlined in Table 12.3.

**Table 12.3** Information flow in relation to types of criticism

response type:	Theme	New
Personal	I (= writer)	emotion [AFFECT]
Leavisite	hero	ethics [JUDGEMENT]
New Criticism	text	aesthetics [APPRECIATION]

In general terms, personal responses takes the writer as point of departure and the writer's emotional response as news; Leavisite response takes the hero of the story as point of departure and the ethics they engage with as news; New Criticism takes the text as point of departure and the aesthetic value placed on it as news. In New South Wales, a personal response suits many English teachers in classrooms, but for purposes of public examination students would be well advised to write a Leavisite response for narrative and a New Critical response for poetry.

For helpful discussions of the English curriculum placed under the microscope here, see Hunter (1994) and Granny-Francis (1996). Detailed work on Theme across a range of registers is found in Ghadessy (1995); for fairly technical discussions of textual meaning see Halliday and Hasan (1976) and Martin (1992). Alternatives to disenfranchising pedagogy are outlined in Christie (1999), Cope and Kalantzis (1993), New London Group (1996) and Martin (1999). For related CDA work on texture in relation to reading position, see Fairclough (1996) on the technologization of discourse and Fairclough (1995b) and Wodak (1996) on media discourse.

## 12.5 Disassembling power: a note on nominalization (ideational metaphor)

One of the regions of analysis where CDA and SFL have contributed most fruitfully to each other has been the interpretation of nominalization,

involving what Halliday (1985) calls ideational metaphor (Chapter 2). Halliday's work in this area begins with the notion of grammar and semantics in what he calls a 'natural' relation with each other.

### Text 12.5 Took the Children Away, by Archie Roach

One dark day on Framingham  
 Came and didn't give a damn  
 My mother cried go get their dad  
 He came running fighting mad  
 Mother's tears were falling down  
 Dad shaped up he stood his ground  
 He said you touch my kids and you fight me  
 And they took us from our family  
 Took us away  
 They took us away  
 Snatched from our mother's breast  
 Said this was for the best  
 Took us away

In Text 12.5 (Roach 1990), meanings map onto wordings directly:<sup>8</sup>

Participants come out as nouns (*Framingham, My mother, their dad, He, Mother's tears, Dad, he, He, you, my kids, you, me, they, us, our family, us, They, us, our mother's breast, us*).

Processes come out as verbs (*Came, cried, go get, came running, were falling, shaped up, stood, said, touch, fight, took, Took, took, Snatched, Said, was, Took*).

Qualities come out as adjectives (*mad*). And logical relations come out as conjunctions (*and, and, and*).

This kind of direct mapping of meanings onto wordings is associated by Halliday (e.g. 1985) with spoken language, and is representative of the language used by Aboriginal people to recount their experience as children of being taken from their families by government officials to be raised in institutions and foster homes, isolated from their native language and culture. As I revise this paper in June 1999, the Australian government continues to refuse to apologise to Aboriginal people for this shameful policy. The language of their refusals is very different from that used by Archie Roach to document the genocide. Here's an example (from Manne 1998: 55).

### Text 12.6

The Prime Minister acknowledges and thanks you for your support for his personal apology to indigenous people affected by past practices of separating indigenous children from their families. However, the government does not support an official national apology. Such an apology could imply that present generations are in some way responsible and accountable for the actions of earlier generations, actions that were sanctioned by the laws of the time, and

that were believed to be in the best interests of the children concerned. [Senator Herron writing on behalf of the Prime Minister, John Howard, to Father Brennan in late 1997]

In language of this kind the mapping of meaning onto wording is no longer direct. Processes are regularly realized as nominal groups instead of verbs, as if they were things, not actions: *your support, his personal apology, past practices of separating*. . . , *an official national apology, an apology, the actions, actions*. One effect of this is that logical relations are realized not by conjunctions connecting clauses but by prepositions and verbs connecting nominalised actions (e.g. *for your support, for his personal apology, for the action; affected by past practices, such an apology could imply*). The result is a radical retexturing of what in typical spoken language would have sounded rather different. Here's a version of what Text 12.6 might have sounded like without this kind of indirect mapping of semantics and grammar:

#### Text 12.6A

The Prime Minister received your message and he thanks you because you supported him because he apologised personally to indigenous people because government officials took their children away from them. But the government will not apologise officially on behalf of the nation, because if it does, then people might argue that indigenous people can blame present generations and make them explain why government officials took their children away; but they took them away because the laws of the time approved and allowed them to take them away, and the government thought the children would benefit more if the officials took them away than if they left them with their families.

Note that at certain points in our translation we have had to fill in material that was not made explicit in Senator Herron's reply: Who was it that took the children away? (government officials); Who might hold current generations responsible? (indigenous people). This highlights the way in which nominalized language allows writers to manipulate agency. In Text 12.6A there are nine Agents, all but one of them people acting on other people (Agents underlined below):

because you supported him  
 because government officials took their children away from them.  
 that indigenous people can blame present generations  
 and indigenous people make them explain  
 why government officials took their children away;  
 but they took them away  
 and the laws of the time allowed them to take them away,  
 if the officials took them away  
 than if they left them with their families.

In Text 12.6 on the other hand there are only four Agents, none of them specific individuals (Agents underlined below):

. . . affected by past practices of separating indigenous children from their families,  
 the government does not support . . .  
 Such an apology could imply . . .  
 . . . were sanctioned by the laws of the time

Alongside this issue of manipulating agency, nominalized language also enables writers to reframe arguments in their own terms. In Text 12.6A for example, there are eighteen ranking clauses to argue with; the Mood elements of these clauses (Subject and Finite) are listed below:

#### Subject Finite

The Prime Minister received . . . did he?  
 and he thanks . . . does he?  
 because you supported . . . did I?  
 because he apologised . . . did he?  
 because government officials took . . . did they?  
 But the government will not . . . won't they?  
 because if it does . . . might it?  
 then people might argue . . . might they?  
 that indigenous people can blame . . . could they?  
 and indigenous people make . . . would they?  
 why government officials took . . . did they?  
 but they took . . . did they?  
 because the laws of the time approved . . . did they?  
 and the laws of the time allowed . . . did they?  
 and the government thought . . . did they?  
 the children would . . . would they?  
 if the officials took . . . did they?  
 than if they left . . . did they?

In Text 12.6 on the other hand there are only four ranking clauses<sup>9</sup> to dispute. The first two are in effect performatives (acknowledging and thanking), so there is nothing to challenge. This leaves two clauses, one having to do with the government not supporting an apology and the other with what such an apology could imply:

#### Subject Finite

The Prime Minister acknowledges . . . does he?  
 and (he) thanks . . . does he?  
 However, the government does not . . . doesn't it?  
 Such an apology could . . . could it?

This shifts the debate away from the facts of the matter (who did what to who and who will hold who accountable as in Text 12.6A) and over to the abstract legal niceties of whether or not an apology will lead to claims for compensation, which is what the government is really worried about. At this point in Australian history, leadership means not having to say you're sorry.

Re-reading early work by critical linguists (e.g. Trew 1979) one has the impression that nominalization is treated as a bad thing because it distorts reality. Contemporary critical theory would probably prefer to argue that although Archie Roach and Senator Herron are very differently positioned in this debate, both use language to construct agency and arguability in terms that contest power. Halliday's work on ideational metaphor provides an ideal lens for unpicking the texture of discourse in highly charged contexts like that of the stolen generations in Australia or the troubles in Ireland (cf. Bono's use of nominalisation in Text 12.3). This lens can also be applied to the somewhat less sensational struggle over the English curriculum outlined for Texts 10.1 and 10.2. (Note the degree of nominalisation involved in writing *Click is about a young girl who has run away from nelly and is unhappiness and death that it confronted her with.*) For recent work on 'nominalized' texture, see especially Christie and Martin 1997, Halliday and Martin 1993, Martin and Veel 1998.

## 12.6 Integration

Space precludes an illustration of my point here, but in closing I would like to emphasize the need for the integration of analyses in critically oriented research. Halliday's metafunctions are the most powerful technology we have for factoring out the complementary meanings of a text and relating them systematically to their social context. But just as a functional grammar is a resource for reconciling ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings in the clause, so our theory of discourse has to address the integration of different kinds of meaning in text. Beyond this, we have to consider the relation of language to other systems of meaning (e.g. music, image, kinesics) and interpret texts across a range of cooperating semiotic modalities. I suspect that genre theory will continue to have a key role to play in theorizing the integration of meanings, across modalities (see Christie and Martin 1997, Martin and Veel 1998).

I would also stress the need for better descriptions of social context to guide and motivate the linguistic analyses we undertake. These will prove most useful where context is modelled as a social semiotic (after Halliday 1978) – that is, as a system of meanings. This has been the project of Sydney-based systemic linguists now for more than a generation (e.g. Eggins and Slade 1997, Fries and Gregory 1995, Hasan and Williams 1996, Martin 1992, 1999a, Poynton 1985, Ventola 1987); it involves treating context as an inter-discursive resource of social actions. As this project unfolds, the precise relation of particular linguistic choices to social parameters will become

increasingly clear – we'll have both a semiotic theory of the social and a social theory of language to work with. It is such a functional linguistic perspective on intertextuality that this book invites researchers to help construe.

Finally, I'd like to encourage researchers to focus more attention on emancipatory discourse, which Janks and Ivanic (1992: 305) describe as 'using language, along with other aspects of social practice, in a way which works towards greater freedom and respect for all people, including ourselves'. For example, as I write, in Australia one burning issue has to do with land rights for Aboriginal people; another relates to the generations of Aboriginal children taken from their families – the 'stolen generations' (Section 12.5). I don't think we can participate productively as critical linguists in these debates without considering more carefully the discourses that other disenfranchised groups have used to contest practices which disempower them. This will allow us to understand how changes have been achieved and to take heart from the achievements of others. We have to spend less time looking at discourses which oppress and more time looking at discourses which challenge, subvert, renovate and liberate – and celebrate those discourses as enthusiastically as we can. Otherwise our analysis is too negative and too depressing. We need some celebratory discourse analysis alongside our critique!

## Notes

1. In Table 1, the Process column includes Halliday's Range function – nominal expressions which function as expansions of the process rather than as distinct affected or effected participants
2. Technically speaking, what we have here are interpersonal metaphors of mood (Halliday 1985 and Chapter 2) – statements realized as interrogatives rather than declaratives (examples of what are referred to as 'indirect speech acts' in speech act theory).
3. It is tempting to read this clause as a continuation of the previous sequence, with *Where's the glory* implied. But in that case, it should be imperfective (*in leaning . . .*), not perfective (*to leave*).
4. Note that the tag and elliptical response in an exchange such as *They support a resolution that the majority of the people in my country don't want, don't they?* – *Do they?*; it's the main clause, not the embedded clause which is negotiable.
5. I accept of course that social subjects make different readings of texts (tactical, resistant or compliant) depending on their reading position; but I insist on the notion that text can naturalize a reading position – since, without this notion, agency (our ability to act on the social) is effaced and without agency we cannot challenge power.
6. I'm concerned here with contesting voices, which I've referred to elsewhere as conatextuality (Crammy-Francis and Martin 1991), not simply with heteroglossia.
7. Following Bakhtin, some theorists would thus refer to the play of critical voices in Text 10.1 as involving dialogism (or heteroglossia, after Kristeva); others might even refer to Text 10.1 as a mixed genre on such grounds. I wouldn't myself use the term genre in this way, but have no objection in substance as

long as room is made for the notion of a text naturalizing a reading position with one or another voice, or genre, foregrounded by the global trajectory of meanings in the text.

8. There are in fact three exceptions to this in this stanza of the song: *give a damn* (process as verb + noun), *fighting mad* (process as intensifier) and arguably *for the best* (quality as head of a nominal group). Note that in each case, however, the indirect mappings are 'fossilised' in lexicalized phrases.
9. The clause following *imply* is taken as an embedded fact, not a projection, in this analysis: *Such an apology could imply [that present generations are in some way responsible and accountable for the actions of earlier generations, actions that were sanctioned by the laws of the time, and that were believed to be in the best interests of the children concerned]]*.

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