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Good afternoon. My presentation today summarizes Norman Fairclough's 2000 paper in the Journal of Sociolinguistics on "Discourse, social theory and social research: The discourse of welfare reform."

Theoretically, the paper rests on two core assumptions:

First, as elaborated in Section 1, Fairclough's position is that Sociolinguistics should connect *social theory* with *linguistics and semantics*. From this perspective – one consistent with Giddens and others – *dialectics* – such as structure AND action and macro AND micro must overcome *dichotomies* – such as structure OR action and macro OR micro.

Second, as detailed in Section 2 of the paper, Fairclough asserts that given the "turn to language" that characterizes late modern societies we can say that modern social life is *textually-mediated*. In other words *practices* are lived through texts.

Fairclough concludes that "What is missing is a theoretical specification of... how language and other forms of semiosis perform the social magic which they are credited with" (p. 165).

Building on these two theoretical foundations, in Section 3 the paper previews its use of discourse of welfare reform under Tony Blair and New Labor as a way of illustrating how a sociolinguistic theory that takes these assumptions seriously might provide exactly such a missing explanation.



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Moving beyond the paper's first three introductory sections, a reader is immediately confronted by a rich and dense variety of technical concepts.

There is talk of practices and positions and performances.

We are told that -- Work entails modes of production. Identities must be constructed. And the world has its representations.

Somehow genres and discourses and styles are implicated.

Elements are brought together in moments, which should be analyzed as processes of articulation.

There are networks and fields and orders of discourse.

Later in the analysis Fairclough introduces recontextualization, framing and classifications.

## §4 Textual Practices

- Practices = work + identities + visions
- *Practices connect structure with action by bringing physical, social, cultural and textual elements together in moments*
- Moments of textual practices have three facets: *genre, discourse, and style*
- *Fields are demarcated by networks of practices*
- *At the field level textual practices constitute an order of discourse which discloses struggles over external boundaries and internal structure*

Section 4 introduces a number of these concepts.

First, all social practices involve 1) forms of work (or production), 2) the construction of social identities, and 3) representations (or visions) of the social world.

These practices – as practices of production/work – bring together 4 elements: physical, sociological, cultural/psychological and text/discourse. By text/discourse Fairclough includes spoken and written language, along with gestures and images.

We refer to instances which bring together these 4 elements as moments.

Analysis focuses on the processes of articulation – that is, how the elements are brought together.

While Fairclough has introduced us to all 4 elements, the remainder of the article focuses on just one of these elements – text – and thus textual moments. Textual moments are textual work, or what he refers to as texturing.

Textual practices/textual moments have 3 facets – genres, discourses and styles.

These textual practices are organized into networks which are more or less stable, more or less fluid. These networks articulate together different 1) forms of work (modes of texturing), 2) identities and 3) representations. Building on Bourdieu, Fairclough refers to these networks of practices as fields. Fields are arenas of power and struggle between those who are dominant and those who are dominated.

At the field level these networks of textual practices give a field an order of discourse which can be used to “read” the external boundaries and internal structure of the field, at least in its textual moment.

To make sense of this conceptual soup, I have three slides which attempt to show how some of these concepts link together.

## Work → Genres → Framing

### 1. Analysis entails specifying the genres

- Textual work is accomplished through genres. Genres frame control as one-side or shared, and may be chained together. Genres are relatively fixed yet open to new articulations.
- e.g., The press release is boundary genre, one in a chain of textual work, which aims to produce consent through management and promotion, not dialogue, despite claims to the contrary.

Here I want to focus on the linkages between 1) forms of work, 2) genres as resources for textual, that is, the role of genres in accomplishing textual work, and 3) genres as devices for framing, that is, for controlling work in the textual mode.

Framing may be strong => one-sided/unilateral, or it may be weak => shared/multilateral.

Moreover, genres may be chained together. For example, Fairclough illustrated the generic chaining employed in the discourse of welfare reform.

Finally, while genres are relatively fixed – through recontextualization – that is, literally uprooting textual practices from one field and making use of them in another – genres are also open to new articulations.

This idea that work -> genres -> framing can be seen in the discourse of welfare reform. For example, Fairclough showed how the press releases issued by New Labor are a boundary genre – combining media genre with government/administrative genre. These press releases were part of a larger chain. In the case of New Labor the chain reveals an attempt to produce consent through management and promotion, not political dialogue. This despite claims of wanting a full debate on the issues.

## Visions → Discourses → Classes

### 2. Analysis entails specifying discourses

- Textual representations of the world are accomplished through discourses. Discourses classify people, places, events, and even other discourses. They are *di*-visions of the world.
- e.g., The discourse of welfare reform depicts 1) a world populated by only the Government and welfare claimants; 2) a world where the Government has acts and speaks for claimants, while claimants are passive and acted upon.

Second, there are linkages between 1) representations/visions of the world, 2) discourses which constitute these visions, and 3) classifications or di-visions between entities – including people, places, events, things, and even other discourses.

These are matters first of presence versus absence, and second of voice versus silence.

Through classifications discourses constitute di-visions of the world.

For example, in the case of the discourse of New Labor, the world is depicted as populated by only the government and welfare claimants. Absent are the welfare agencies, doctors, activists and so forth we would expect.

Among those present, there are those who speak and act, and those who are silent and acted upon. In this case the government is the hero and welfare claimants are passive and helpless.

Note the irony. The discourse of “welfare to work” depicts welfare claimants as passive and helpless – that is, not able to work for themselves, even though working is exactly what the government now expects of them.

## Identities → Styles → Positions

### 3. Analysis entails specifying styles

- Textual identities are constructed through styles. Styles reveal positions by specifying social relations between individuals and groups, along with their tendencies and values.
- e.g., The New Labor party (especially Tony Blair) is depicted as youthful, compassionate and tough. Differences of position surface between Field's ethical/moral stance (e.g., genuine need) and Blair's view of welfare as a contract.

Third, I want to look at the linkages between 1) the construction of identities, 2) how different styles attach to different identities, and 3) how these relate to positions. In terms of textual identities it is through styles that these identities are constructed. It is in this way that styles reveal positions by specifying social relations between individuals and groups – along with their tendencies and values.

For example, in the case of New Labor, the discourse's style depicts the party and particularly Tony Blair as youthful, compassionate and tough. The article also discusses how styles can be analyzed to reveal differences of position – for example, Fairclough points out the tension between Field's ethical/moral stance versus Blair's view of welfare as a contract.

## Applying Fairclough (Briefly)

**Genres**            Who has control and how is it framed (unilateral vs. shared)?

**Discourses**      What *di*-visions and classifications are evident?

**Styles**            How are the positions between participants related?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrXkBuWNx88>

If we summarize all these linkages, I think, a very brief application of Fairclough might look something like this.

First is the issue of genre. Most basically, we can ask what type of genre is it? A press release? A speech? Etc. Beyond that what I believe Fairclough is saying is that as analysts we need to look at who has control and how is this control framed.

Second is the issue of discourse. Minimally, there are two questions. Who is present and who is absent? Of those present, who is speaking and who is silenced?

Third, is the issue of styles. How are the positions among participants related.

Next I'm going to show you a clip of the first few minutes of Barack Obama's victory speech from election night.

After the clip, we'll look at a transcript of this speech and apply these three concepts from Fairclough.

- Hello, Chicago.
- If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, who still wonders if the dream of our Founders is alive in our time, who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.
- It's the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen, by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the very first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different, that their voice could be that difference.
- It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled -- Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been just a collection individuals, or a collection of Red States and Blue States. We are, and always will be, the United States of America.
- It's the answer that led those who have been told for so long by so many to be cynical, and fearful, and doubtful of what we can achieve to put their hands on the arc of history and bend it once more toward the hope of a better day.
- It's been a long time coming, but tonight, because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America.

## State of the Union Address

**America needs to secure our borders -- and with your help, my administration is taking steps to do so. We're increasing worksite enforcement, deploying fences and advanced technologies to stop illegal crossings. We've effectively ended the policy of "catch and release" at the border, and by the end of this year, we will have doubled the number of border patrol agents. Yet we also need to acknowledge that we will never fully secure our border until we create a lawful way for foreign workers to come here and support our economy. This will take pressure off the border and allow law enforcement to concentrate on those who mean us harm. We must also find a sensible and humane way to deal with people here illegally. Illegal immigration is complicated, but it can be resolved. And it must be resolved in a way that upholds both our laws and our highest ideals.**

**President George W. Bush  
January 28, 2008**

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/immigration/>

For my second example, I went to The White House website and looked at some of the major policy issues highlighted there.

One that caught my attention was Immigration. The website page started with this excerpt from the 2008 State of the Union Address.

## Applying Fairclough (Briefly)

Who has control and how is it framed?

What *di*-visions and classifications are evident?

How are positions among participants related?

=====

Does Goodwin's "stance" apply here?

What other concepts from previous weeks?

The excerpt from the State of the Union Address was followed by about two pages of text which is being passed around the room.

Let's take a few minutes and read through the text and then apply Fairclough.