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BOOK REVIEWS

Fox, R. and Fox, J. Organizational Discourse: A Language-Ideology-Power Perspective (2004), Westport, Conn.: Praeger, ISBN 1-56720-605-0, 221 pp.

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The book *Organizational Discourse: A Language-Ideology-Power Perspective* is an exploration into what the authors refer to as corporate public discourse (CPD); which is a predominantly written communication of corporations addressing stakeholders.

The most typical examples of CPD are corporation mission statements which are, in fact, statements of business principles, corporate media advertisements (revealing a corporation's media literacy) and corporation annual reports. Organisation, the authors explain, implies order and order implies the practise of power. In contemporary society the only acceptable practise of power is through consent which has to be attained through forms of legitimisation founded on cultural processes such as language. The fundamental question Fox and Fox aspire to answer is: how does corporate management use CPD strategically to gain legitimacy and to practise power through consent?

Possible answers lie in the book which is divided into seven parts (Introduction, The corporation, Corporate management, Media of CPD, Quantitative Analysis, Specific Research Perspectives, Postscript), which are further subdivided into nineteen chapters. Each chapter is built upon attested examples of CPD taken from leading corporations such as, for instance, Wal-Mart, IBM and Patek Philippe.

The Introduction outlines the notion of CPD and explains what is meant by a language-ideology-power perspective. It sets out too the book's aim: to describe CPD, to contribute to the creation of a theory of CPD, and to establish a path for the future research into CPD. Part two defines CPD, its nomenclature and its value to a corporation. In part three, CPD is related to corporate management and the idea of a "corporate management discourse community" is introduced. The medium of writing and what it means to CPD is discussed in part four. This part also includes a discussion on mass media. An interesting turn in the book is offered in part five which presents a quantitative analysis of some CPD genres. Under Specific Research Perspectives, in part six, the authors offer research into the corporate metaphor, globalisation, gender, the CEO's media interview and the promotionalisation of CPD. Finally, in the conclusion, the authors consolidate their views on CPD and call for a true interdisciplinary research into the language of organisations as social action.

The book is written in a clear expository style, making appropriate reference to relevant studies. The description of real-life experiences of a number of CEOs, for example, Craig Weatherup, Jack Welch and

Carleton Fiorina, smoothes the reader's progress through the book. The glossary of key terms is a welcome addition.

What we have in his book is an interdisciplinary approach, par excellence, drawing from several fields of study. In order to describe the structures and functions of CPD, the authors borrow from theoretical linguistics, as the basic discipline dealing with "the power of words". To analyse CPD as social action, or more specifically, as a means by which corporations and corporate management establish social relations (for example, solidarity and power), social networks and social identity, the authors borrow from sociolinguistics. Methods of critical interpretation of CPD the authors borrow from the methodology of critical discourse analysis. To understand culture-related patterns of CPD, the authors borrow from the ethnography of communication. To provide theoretical access to the relationship between a corporation's social representation and its CPD, the authors borrow from the theory of ideology. To explain the nature of CPD's publicness, the authors borrow from media theory. Finally, to relate a corporation as an organisation to CPD, the authors borrow from a number of theories within organisational studies.

Central to this book is the concept of *CPD* which is analysed as both a linguistic system and a sociolinguistic system. As a linguistic system CPD is determined by its components (the corporate communicative event, the corporate genre). As a sociolinguistic system CPD is determined by its social meanings in the context of use. Treating CPD as both a linguistic and a sociolinguistic entity, the book attempts to realise the sociolinguistic enterprise through, to use Stubbs' (1996: 58) formulation of many years back, "finding explanations for human behaviour and formulating a theory of social action". In this vein the book describes a landscape of multiple structured social relationships (among others, patterns of belief systems and social statuses) between corporations/management and society, corporations/management and CPD, and CPD and society. Structured social relations, as the authors explain, are important because they are largely non-individualistic and non-subjective and, in this sense, give the social world an independence. Thus, the authors argue, structured social relations represent social, symbolic, cultural and economic capital through which corporations and corporate management can use to secure "positions of possibility".

Although decidedly academic, the book is not tiring. On the contrary, through the many well-worked examples of CPD presented in each chapter one might find oneself "caught" in the "text-world model" of corporations and corporate managers, since it is possible to experience the import of the "need for power and achievement . . . to obtain and exercise control over others . . . to translate intention into reality" (p. 167). What is happening here of course, as the authors make clear, is that as a linguistic artefact CPD is the product of the engagement of corporate management with language. As text, however, CPD is irreducible to these elements (corporate management, language): it possesses traits which have a life of their own and becomes a force "that organises both social practices and people's perceptions of those practices" (p. 32). Perhaps, as rather dramatically put by the authors, "Eventually it is CPD, not the corporation or the corporate management discourse community, that defines stakeholders' understandings of a corporation and the corporate management discourse community. With time corporate management – the creator of the corporate world – is made an epiphenomenon of that world" (49).

Sections of the book which particularly caught my attention were chapter four (CPD's Nomenclature), chapter six (The Corporate Management Discourse Community) and part five (Quantitative Analysis). Eventually, I see the material offered in the quantitative analysis as having a potential for teaching corporate communicative intentions in general and in the English language in management courses. CPD's nomenclature, founded on the corporate communicative event and corporate genre, would provide a very neat framework for this purpose. In conclusion, I commend this book as a work of sound scholarship and synthesis. It enables us to see the most important elements of, and interrelationship between, corporate visibility and corporate vision. It offers new insights into the lastingly relevant issues of the relation between language and society interesting to the corporate managing professionals, linguists and other scholars and students of management and organisational studies.

References
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