

Ideology and semiotic choice

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What is ideology?

1. A set of ideas (e.g. van Dijk)
2. A set of ideas that work in the favour of the powerful (e.g. Thompson 1984; Fairclough)
3. A set of ideas that appear 'natural' or commonsense (Barthes)

‘the ways in which meaning (or
signification) serves to sustain relations
of domination’

J.B. Thompson 1984

Premise

*Linguistic differences between texts **may** be ideologically significant*

Linguistic differences between texts may be ideologically significant

Certainly, they may represent events in different ways

And these differences in representation may be more or less in the interests of the powerful

discourse [non-count noun] – language (or semiosis) in use (e.g. Coulthard 1985; Gee 2001)

Discourse [count noun] – way of representing the world (Gee 2001; Fairclough 2003; van Leeuwen 2008)

Ideology – way of representing the world (or making other kinds of meaning) in interests of power

Racism and anti-Racism

differences in discourse

different Discourses

but only the former *ideological*

whenever we want to put things in words
(‘make’ discourse)

we contribute to and draw on ways of
representing the world
(Discourses)

always a selective, *biased*, process

but not *necessarily* an ideological one

Fairclough (2003)

Internal relations
semiotic features of a text

Discourse level
what existing ways of representing etc. a text draws
on

External relations
how text fits into social practice, structure
(at this level a text can be ideological)