

On the Articulatory Pattern of Discursive Hegemony

Ming Liu¹

¹ The Department of Foreign Languages, Nanchang Normal University, Nanchang, China

Correspondence: Ming Liu, The Department of Foreign Languages, Nanchang Normal University, Nanchang, China. Tel: 86-159-7901-1829. E-mail: jxnulm@126.com

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Abstract

This paper brings forth the articulatory pattern of discursive hegemony, which signifies the organization of hegemonic discourse or the way of how discursive hegemony is symbolically articulated in discourse, from the perspective of textual function and the intertextual context theory (intertextuality). This article briefly analyzes the text of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's address at a Labor Party conference mainly from the perspective of regarding discourse as articulation.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, discursive hegemony, articulation

1. Introduction

Language as a linguistic aspect of social practice can actively reflect social struggle, conditions of social disorder and of social change. Hegemony is at work from the linguistic structures of discourse and deconstructs those forms by which hegemony takes in concrete, for instance, ideological, cultural, political and economic forms. All those kinds of hegemony may be expressed by means of the dissemination of forms of knowledge, which resides in such the discourses of education and the media. Hegemony used in this thesis refers to a certain kind of power by which the dominant or power holders get consent from the dominated. Moreover hegemony in contemporary societies is often realized in discourse, which means that discourse is the carrier of hegemony. It is worthwhile to explore hegemony from the discursive perspective. In this article, we will tackle articulation, which refers to the organization of hegemonic discourse or the way of how discursive hegemony is symbolically articulated in discourse, from the perspective of textual function and the intertextual context theory (intertextuality). For the reason of discourses in contemporary society having interlaced relationship, it is necessary to situate articulation (structural realization of discursive hegemony) in the theory of intertextuality.

2. Discursive Hegemony as Articulation

2.1 Mode of Discourse

Within the theoretical framework of Systemic-Functional Linguistics (hence SFL), mode of discourse as one variable of register is specifically put forward to deal with channel of communication and the particular rhetorical mode in texts. Halliday (1978, p. 110) regards mode as "the symbolic or rhetorical channel". Halliday has characterized mode of discourse as follows:

The mode of discourse refers to what part the language is playing, what it is the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation: the symbolic organization of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, and the like (Halliday & Hasan, 1989, p. 12).

From the quoted words we know that mode plays the role of language during the process of constructing symbolic realities as the totality of elements of social structures acts a part in social realities or practices. According to Martin (1992, p. 508), symbolic reality has the function of constructing social reality, and mode is oriented to both interpersonal and experiential meanings. It means that mode is used to settle the interpersonal space between monologue and dialogue and the experiential space between ancillary and constitutive roles of language. Experiential mode is concerned with the degree to which language is part or constitutive of social process, which means that experiential mode distinguishes the role of language as accompanying social process and constituting social process. From this sense the political speeches after the 11 September given by President

Bush have most degree of constitutive function because those texts re/construct past events or experiences. A typical case in point is that the preceding paragraphs resemble pairs of conversations which are projected rather than directly represented. Therefore it is reasonable to assume that experiential modes of political speeches are constitutive ones which can re/construct the social realities and engraft their beliefs and values in others' minds.

Interpersonal mode is mainly concerned with the way that channels of communication have effect on the interactions between interlocutors. Modern communication modes (such as fax, email, web chat, ICQ, etc) spring up like mushrooms alongside the development of information communication technology. People in traditional societies communicate with each other basically through face-to-face interactions where communicators are co-present and are in the same time-space. People in more complex societies such the contemporary societies, however, are more and more dependent upon multiply of modes of interaction in which communicators are separated in time and space. The emergence of newly ways of communication contributes to the dissemination of knowledge and hegemonic discourse. Contemporary discourses (Note 1) being full of discursive creativity have involved a relative displacement of language in favor of visual image or visual articulations. For instance, the 11 September event has been recorded by journalists through the television images and language, both of which link the spectators with the distant events and involve the spectators in moral practices; that is, visual image has the same function of evoking the spectators' emotions as language itself. Western journalists serving or controlled within the dominant bloc shape the ethical relationship between spectators and the catastrophic event and thus disseminate a specific political disposition. They often structure and organize the event "from within". It is possible to say that such event offers them a unique opportunity to articulate certain moral stances (particular) as universal, which can be associated with the hegemonic project (war on terror). The notion of "pity" as a sociological category is specially put forward by Chouliaraki (2004, 2006) to cope with interpersonal distance between the spectators and distant sufferers. She argues that pity has to act discursively to produce meaning about suffering. In simple words, pity is a concept in organizing the justification and legitimation strategies of political discourse including the 11 September Speech given by President Bush, in which he said "today we've had a national tragedy", and "in an apparently terrorist attack against our country". According to Chouliaraki (2004), those verbal texts condensing the national sentiment and locating the source of evil construct an intertextual link with the crash visuals to evoke the figure of a persecutor and organize the public's feeling.

Thus, by means of coarticulation between verbal texts and the crash visuals, a particular hegemonic discourse (war on terror) has been constructed in those political speeches. Mode of discourse, which is beyond traditional discussion (written, spoken, or complex combination between them), includes the element of visual images which is the main theme of multimodal discourse analysis (MDA). According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006, p. 17), most text in newspapers, advertisements, websites or other informational materials of all kind now involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic or sound elements, designed as coherent entities by means of layout. Therefore visual mode (called in this thesis) compared with spoken mode and written mode is another way to explore discourses as well as the hegemonic elements (including their effects in the public) in discourses.

2.2 Textual Features and Medium

When we look at language from the textual metafunction, we are trying to see how speakers construct their messages in a way which makes them fit smoothly into the unfolding language event. Thematic structure, an analytic tool that belongs to the textual metafunction, looks at the organization of information within a clause. The positioning of a piece of information in a clause is indicative of the kind of prominence or foregrounding the writer wishes to attribute to it. The theme of a clause is simply the first constituent of the sentence. Thompson (1996, p. 118) also points out that, in choosing the starting-point for a clause—the constituent which appears in first position, speakers select something which will make it easier for their hearers to "hook" this clause onto the earlier clauses, to see immediately how the information that will come in the remainder of the clause is likely to fit in with what has already been said. Probing into the reasons behind the motivation of organizing information in a certain way can therefore provide a glimpse into the non-discursive meaning embedded within a text.

Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (1979) studied the news coverage in the British press of racial disturbances in London. They found that the ideology of newspapers showed in the ways the participants of varying power were realized at the grammatical level as active agents, which were placed in first subject position, and as absent actors, which were put in later positions in passive clauses. They found that when the authorities are associated with negative acts, they tend to be placed in later positions, or simply left out of the clause. Conversely, minorities, who are usually in later, dependent syntactic positions, typically occupy first subject positions as soon as they are negative actors. In this way, the negative characteristics of "us" or may be downgraded and those of "them" emphasized. In the Statement given by President Bush in his address to the Nation, most of clauses begin

with the nouns or pronouns such as we, I, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom, a great people, and our first priority which belong to “us”. And there are only several clauses in which Theme, as the element which serves as “the starting-point” for the message, has been taken by negative nouns such as there acts of mass murder, they, terrorist attacks, these acts. Those nouns are put in the position of Theme for emphasizing the deliberate acts of terror performed by terrorists. In addition, the thematic structure generally determines the way of constitution of grammatical items and is related to information structure: Given + New. The Theme is often chosen from within a chunk of Given information and the Rheme is often correspondent with New information. The unmarked correspondence can be seen from the Statement in which the nouns (deliberate and deadly terrorist acts; evil despicable acts of terror; disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger; chaos and retreat; further attacks) expressing “them” or “their” acts and playing the role of Rheme in Thematic structures are treated as New information which is put in the final parts of the clauses.

Apart from the Thematic structure and information focus which are two textual tools in exploring the way of how implied meanings are articulated in discourses, cohesion system is another one in the process of dealing with textual meanings. The three textual factors are subtypes of semantic systems of the textual metafunction. Textual function engenders resources for presenting interpersonal and ideational meanings as information organized into text that can be ongoingly exchanged between speaker and listener. This involves transitions in the development of text (conjunctive relations) and the assignment of different textual statuses (thematicity, newsworthiness, continuity and contrast, recoverability). These transitions and statuses enable the exchange of information. In simple words, the speaker is linguistically guiding the listener in interpreting the unfolding text, which means that the dominant re/articulate their beliefs and values into discourses according to their representation of the world and social events (manipulation) and identification of social roles and relationship (persuasion).

However, in most cases, the production of manipulation and persuasion is not confined to textual articulation, and can be taken effect across space and time by means of media. Media refers to the medium or channel through which the language is produced. Meanings can be symbolically produced, distributed, and consumed by means of mass communication. Three meanings (medium, media, and mediation) of media has been given in Graham (2004), in which a mediation perspective is constructed for understanding the role that media plays in the inculcation, maintenance, and change of meanings. In this thesis, the concept “media” is generally used to discuss the process of disseminating or articulating discursive meanings as well as non-discursive meanings.

According to Graham (2004), mediation includes the production, movement, and transformation of meanings within and between social contexts, across space and time. In fact, the theory of mediation is not newly one; the transformation of meanings across space and time has been discussed within the context theory in the name of heteroglossia (Martin, 1992), various forms of semogenesis including logogenesis, ontogenesis and phylogenesis (Martin, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2003), and genre hybridity (Eggins, 2004; Fairclough, 2003). All of those technical terms have more or less discussed the movement and transformation of meanings across space and time. In this thesis, however, the shift of meanings is one dimensional; that is the transition from the power holders to the public in terms of disseminating knowledge or information which has been filtered out by power holders. In other words, the dominant, after unidirectionally representing certain social events and identifying their own status in the social structure, re/articulate their interpretations of social events in discourses in order to shape the public’s perceptions of reality. In the process of shaping, media is a key channel for reaching the public and conveying the chosen perspective on social events though there is a case in which the public have opportunities to directly contact with social events (such as the event of September 11) (see Figure 1). It is proper to say that media works on the behalf of the dominant who disseminate a limited view of the world. Conversely, the public or audiences are constrained to accept the view of the world offered by the dominant. In this sense, media plays a key role in re/articulating or reinforcing the representation of social events (manipulation) and the identification of social relationships (persuasion).

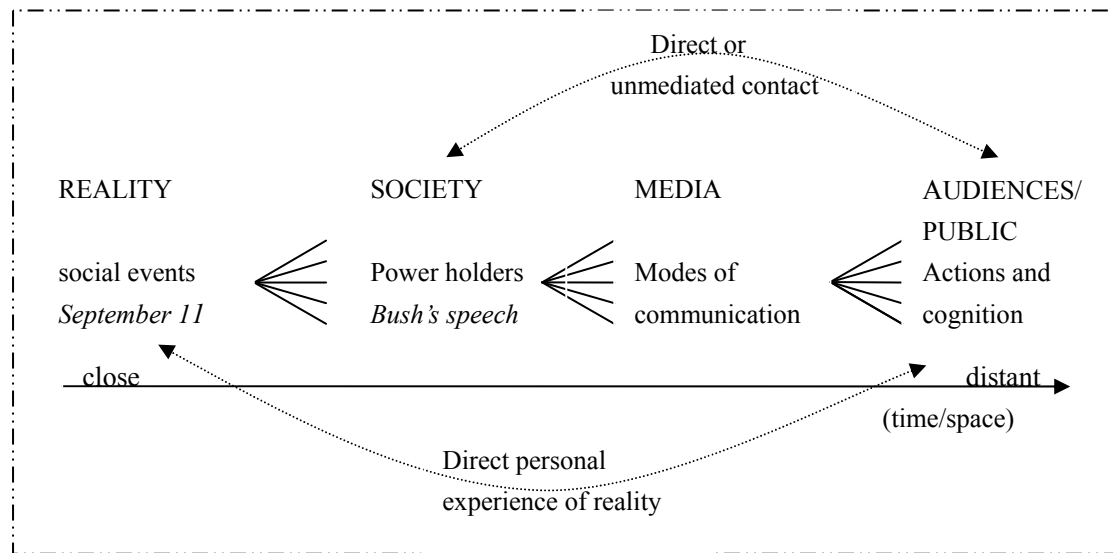


Figure 1. A Frame of media and society: Media interpose between personal experience and more distant events

In the following subsection, the articulation of those two forms of discursive hegemony (manipulation and persuasion) will be tackled alongside intertextuality which also involves the shift of meanings, the movement of meanings from one text to another.

2.3 Discursive Hegemony and Intertextuality

The relation among the social factors, for instance one between the dominant and the dominated, comes into its counterpart—discourse, the process of which is called articulation by Laclau and Mouffe. “We will call articulation any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse” (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 105).

In this article, articulation is used in the sense of systematically/organizationally expressing certain belief or value and coordinating manipulation and persuasion in practical discourses. For instance, the discourse “the war on terror” is emerging out of a series of discursive practices including variety of political speeches and has won widespread acceptance throughout the world. Articulation providing a beneficial connection between discursive and non-discursive facets of the social is a rich resource for analyzing the link between hegemony and language. The concept of articulation applies to different facets of the social and helps us to see their interconnection, not to mention hegemony and discourse. A case in point is that the articulatory change in discourse changes the language resource and meaning potential by means of offering new expressions or styles. For instance, Tony Blair’s speech following the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 2001 is formulated as a mimical conversation in which speaker appears to be democratic towards others’ ideas, especially those of the counterparts. It shows the fact that political discourse in contemporary society is undergoing changes. In some way, language (especially one in the political speeches) seems to be unified enough, coherent enough, to yield strong discourses for restraining the discourses of the counterparts. A particular discourse containing certain belief and value would be constructed from one text to another text, which means that there is inherent relationship among texts. Texts are inevitably dialogical in the sense that “any utterance is a link in very complexly organized chain of other utterances” with which it “enters into one kind of relation or another” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69). Therefore it is of great help to explore articulation by means of discursive changes and intertextuality schematized in Figure 2.

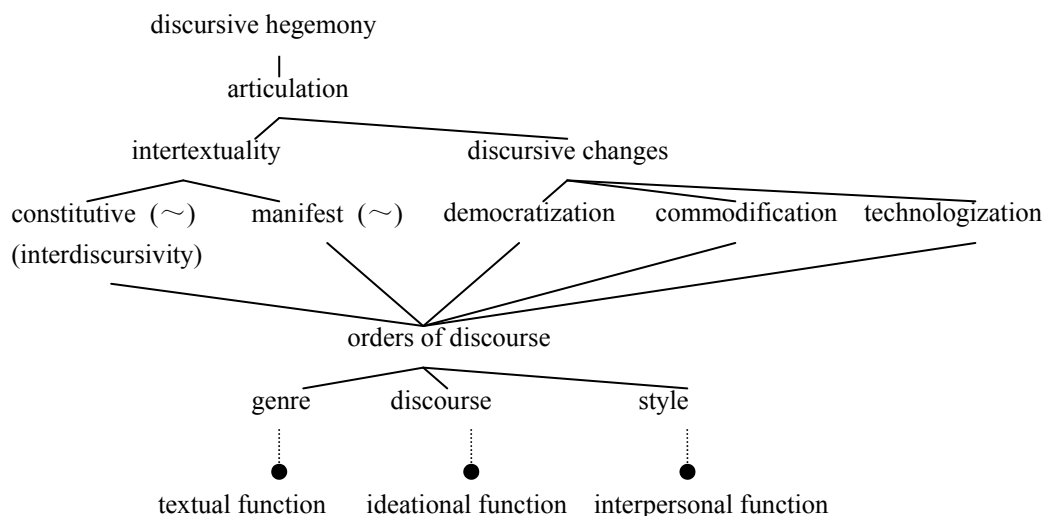


Figure 2. Strategies for doing articulation

The term “intertextuality” was coined by Kristeva in the late 1960s in her influential accounts for western audiences of the work of Bakhtin. Kristeva (1986, p. 39) observes that intertextuality implies the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history. Kristeva points out that the insertion of history into a text lies in two senses. On the one hand, it involves the text absorbs and is built out of texts from the past. On the other hand, it means that the text responds to, reemphasizes and reworks past texts in order to help to make history and contribute to wider processes of change as well as anticipate and try to shape subsequent texts. For Fairclough, intertextuality can be used as a general term covering both manifest and constitutive intertextuality when there is no need to make a distinction. If the distinction is necessary, he (1995, p. 47) holds that I shall draw a distinction between “intertextuality”, relations between texts, and “interdiscursivity”, relations between discursive formations or more loosely between different types of discourse. Interdiscursivity refers to the complex interdependent configuration of discursive formations, in other words, the combination of genres and discourse types, or mixed genres. Intertextuality places emphasis upon the way in which texts are re/articulated on the basis of existing discursive conventions. In the theoretical sense, language users have plenty of possibilities of creativity in discursive practice in terms of the concept “intertextuality”. However the creativity may be more or less restrained by a certain stable discourse, discursive genre and style, namely orders of discourse (Note 2) consisting of discourse, genre, and style.

Fairclough (1992, p. 103) holds that the theory of intertextuality cannot itself account for these social limitations, so it needs to be combined with a theory of power relations and how they shape (and are shaped by) social structures and practices. Accordingly, Fairclough evidently expresses his viewpoint that intertextuality is closely linked with ideology and power relations. The form and content of intertextual texts do bear the traces of ideological processes and structures. The intertextual dialogues surely reflect the change of ideology and power relations between participants. Chouliaraki and Fairclough pointed out that:

An articulatory change in discourse changes the formal potential within a particular social space (for example, within the political field) and hence its semantic potential by opening up new combinations of forms (for example, it might combine the forms of political discourse with the forms of conversation and of journalism) (1999, p. 101).

The relationship between social change and discursive change in social context has been explored in Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003), in which the three dimensional framework mentioned above is mainly constructed for reading social change from language itself, for instance, commodification, discursive technologization, marketization, conversationalization, democratization, etc. Change in language use is an important part of wider social and cultural changes in terms of the significance of language in contemporary social life. According to Fairclough, change is concerned with “forms of transgression, crossing boundaries” (1992, p. 96), which means that the current conventions in language or other non-discursive elements can be changed for adapting to new situation. A typical case in point is the study of the conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Michael

Charlton in a longer interview taking place on BBC Radio 3. By using the method of textual analysis, Fairclough described the linguistic features of Thatcher from contents, relations and subjects, and explained the link between linguistic changes and social changes through situating MT's discourse at the institutional and societal levels. Thatcher's political discourse can be interpreted as a rearticulation of the existing order of political discourse, in which authoritative elements coexist with democratic ones. Discursive changes including democratization, commodification and technologization can be interpreted from levels of abstraction within society: social structure, social practices and social events, which are in turn linguistically realized in concrete language. Orders of discourse used in this thesis are the linguistic manifestation which mainly comprises changes in discourses (contents), genres, and styles. As mentioned above, the three elements of orders of discourse can be uncovered through the three metafunctions of SFL, which is to be empirically testified in the following section.

3. A Case Study

The section will briefly analyze the text of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's address at a Labor Party conference mainly from the perspective of regarding discourse as articulation. As mentioned above, hegemonic discourse works on the behalf of the dominant, which can be seen from the speech.

Discursive personalization is a trend in contemporary political discourse, which is obviously seen from Blair's speech. The pronoun "I" appears seventeen times in the speech (e.g., I say to the Taliban: surrender the terrorists, or surrender power; I realize why people protest against globalization (Blair, 2001)), which shows that Prime Minister Blair appears to speak for himself rather than on behalf of governments. The way of language use is useful to reduce social inequality and distance, and construct solidarity with the public, which is called conversationalization of discourse by Fairclough. He proposes that "conversationalization is a striking and pervasive feature of contemporary orders of discourse" (1995, p. 138). In contemporary societies, political leaders tend to perform the public discourse by appropriating the public discourse. In the text, Blair gives political speech in the public occasion by means of simulating person-to-person communication. Tony Blair attempts to promote his speech and cater for the audiences' taste, through which his particular beliefs and values are easier to be inculcated into others' minds, which is partly realized by simulating a dialogue. For instance, [1] Don't overreact some say. We aren't. [2] Don't kill innocent people. We are not the ones who waged war on the innocent. We seek the guilty. [3] Look for a diplomatic solution. There is no diplomacy with Bin Laden or the Taliban regime. [4] State an ultimatum and get their response. We stated the ultimatum; they haven't responded. [5] Understand the causes of terror. Yes, we should try, but let there be no moral ambiguity about this: nothing could ever justify the events of 11 September, and it is to turn justice on its head to pretend it could. (Blair 2001)), the preceding clauses resemble pairs of conversations which are projected rather than directly represented. The simulated dialogue projecting others' voices or values is used to justify in declaring war on terror and also persuade the public into accepting the bloc's particular viewpoint and belief. Hereby it is reasonable to assume that experiential mode of the political speech is constitutive one which can re/construct the social realities and engraft the dominant's beliefs and values in others' minds. In addition, the role of others is vaguely expressed by the word "some", which ambiguously or indirectly presents the view and belief held by an imaginary group. The view and belief is set up as the target of criticizing in an attempt to justify the actions performed by the authorities. In other words, the text employs the intertextual skill because the speech itself implies the assertion elsewhere that terror may be justified by some causes. The so-called reasonable causes being in favor of the imaginary group are criticized respectively. With no doubt, two voices are created out of the simulated dialogue, which is also correspondent to the argument held by Volosinov (1973). He assumes that when the speech or writing or thought of another is reported, two different texts or voices are brought into dialogue, and potentially two different perspectives, objectives, interests and so forth. From the form of language, the text is not highly intertextual for the lack of direct reporting. However, the way of simulating dialogue is an effective one in which one's own particular view and ideology or understanding of social world is universally represented in order to persuade others into accept the universalization of social events.

Therefore the genre (simulated conversation or dialogue), style (personalization by using the pronoun "I"), and discourse (particular representation of "war on terror") are interwoven together and form a newly order of discourse.

4. Conclusion

The way of how discursive hegemony is symbolically articulated in discourse has been explored from the perspective of textual function and the intertextual context theory. We constructed the articulatory pattern of discursive hegemony which is related to discursive changes and intertextuality, which can be in turn explored by

means of genre, discourse, and style. From the political text, the speaker is linguistically guiding the listener in interpreting the unfolding text, which means that the dominant re/articulate their beliefs and values into discourses according to their representation of the world and social events and identification of social roles and relationship.

Notes

Note 1. Discourse here refers to semiotic elements of social practices and includes language (written, spoken, and combination of written and spoken), non-verbal communication, and visual images (photographs, film, etc.).

Note 2. The term, order of discourse, which originally comes from Michel Foucault, refers to in this thesis a particular combination of discourses, genres, and styles which can be respectively realized by ideational, textual, and interpersonal function at the language level.

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