



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>



## LANGUAGE AND POWER (SECOND EDITION)

Author: Norman Fairclough

Publisher: Routledge, London & New York, 2013

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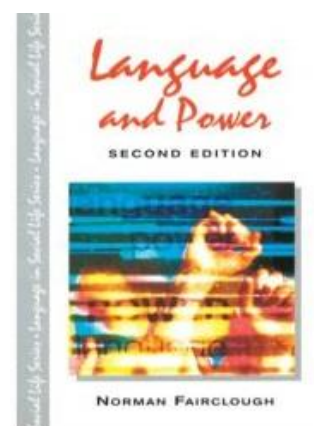
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Received 22 November 2024

Revised 02 January 2025; Accepted 04 February 2025

### 1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is undeniably a significant and diverse area of linguistic education and research. The increasing number of publications and books being published in this field is the evidence of its growing influence and importance. Norman Fairclough, a renowned British linguistics professor, has been highly influential in the language and power domain, and is widely regarded as the pioneer in the field of CDA. *“Language and Power”* (Fairclough, 2013) is a notable addition to the “Language in Social Life” series and highlights the critical role of language in comprehending issues of social and professional concerns. The book is highly valued by those who seek to understand how our ways of communication are both impacted by and impact the structures and forces of contemporary social institutions.



### 2. Contents of the Book

Norman Fairclough’s “Language and Power” (2013), part of a series of 19 books called “Language in Social Life”, is a comprehensive exploration of the interplay between language, power and ideology, structured into ten chapters. The book begins with an introduction to Critical Language Study (CLS), emphasizing its importance in understanding how language operates within social structures, while critiquing approaches such as linguistics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Chapters 2 to 4 establish the theoretical groundwork by

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<https://doi.org/10.63023/2525-2445/jfs.ulis.5422>

examining discourse as social practice, with a focus on the dialectic of structures and practices, the role of ideology in shaping common-sense assumptions and the dual aspects of power: power in discourse and power behind discourse. Chapters 5 and 6 provide a practical framework for conducting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Description-Interpretation-Explanation), offering accessible tools for describing textual features and interpreting their social implications, focusing on experiential, relational, and expressive values. Chapters 7 and 8 center on the dynamic relationship between discourse and societal change, including an analysis of Thatcherism's political discourse and broader trends in capitalist society through the lens of theorists like Habermas and Foucault. The final chapters explore the emancipatory potential of CLS, particularly in education and address how globalization and neoliberalism influence language and power dynamics, inviting readers to critically engage with these themes as active collaborators in the study of discourse.

### **3. Strengths and Contributions**

It is not exaggerated to say that "Language and Power" (2013) is impressive and stands out from other works by Fairclough due to its clarity and practicality. It serves as a tool for readers to critically analyze language and recognize how it is utilized to position them in political and ideological contexts.

Fairclough's integration of theoretical depth with practical guidance is one of the book's greatest strengths. The three-stage CDA framework - Description, Interpretation and Explanation - offers a systematic approach that bridges textual analysis with sociopolitical critique. The model's flexibility has allowed scholars to adapt it across a wide range of disciplines, including media studies, education and political science.

The book's structure enhances its pedagogical value, beginning with foundational theories and progressively moving to practical applications. For instance, Chapters 5 and 6 are particularly useful for readers new to CDA, as they provide clear, step-by-step guidelines for conducting textual analysis. Moreover, the emphasis on specific linguistic features (for instance: vocabulary, grammar and text structure) equips readers with tools to uncover latent ideologies in discourse.

Fairclough's discussion of power and ideology, particularly in Chapters 3 and 4, is both insightful and provocative. The author's distinction between "power in discourse" and "power behind discourse" highlights how power operates not only through explicit language use but also through institutional and societal structures that shape discourse practices. This nuanced perspective remains highly relevant, particularly in understanding the interplay between language, politics and media in the digital age.

### **4. Limitations**

Despite its strengths, "Language and Power" is not without limitations. One notable limitation lies in the book's empirical examples, which predominantly focus on British society during Thatcher's tenure. While these examples were groundbreaking at the time, their datedness may limit the book's immediate relevance to contemporary global contexts, such as the complexities of discourse in multicultural or digital environments. For instance, the analysis could benefit from integrating case studies involving non-Western perspectives or addressing how globalization and digital technologies reshape power dynamics in discourse.

Additionally, the accessibility of the book's theoretical content also varies. While

Chapters 5 and 6 are designed to be user-friendly, earlier chapters on theoretical foundations may be challenging for readers who are unfamiliar with sociolinguistic or critical theory. This might deter readers who lack a background in the relevant disciplines.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, despite limitations, Norman Fairclough's "Language and Power" (2013) remains a cornerstone of CDA and continues to influence contemporary research. The book offers an indispensable resource for understanding the relationship between language and power, specifically the link between language use and unequal power relations. Fairclough aims to address the common underestimation of the role of language in the creation, maintenance and change of social power relations and to increase awareness of how language is used to dominate some individuals or groups by others. While the book's focus on 20th-century Britain may limit its scope, its core principles remain adaptable to diverse contexts and challenges. The book's theoretical rigor and practical guidance make it a valuable reference for linguists, educators and policymakers alike.

## **References**

Fairclough, N. (2013). *Language and Power*. Routledge, London & New York.