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# Introduction: Newspaper Discourse

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This book is aimed at producing more critical language users. In it, I introduce an approach to the critical analysis of the language of journalism, with the aim of encouraging you to engage with and criticise newspaper discourse. Journalistic discourse has some very specific textual characteristics, some very specific methods of text production and consumption, and is defined by a particular set of relationships between itself and other agencies of symbolic and material power. These three sets of characteristics – that is, the language of journalism, its production and consumption and the relations of journalism to social ideas and institutions – are clearly inter-related and sometimes difficult to disentangle. In other words, ‘they are different elements but not discrete, fully separate elements’ (Fairclough, 2000: 122). Specifically: the sourcing and construct of the news is intimately linked with the actions and opinions of (usually powerful) social groups; it is impossible to select and compose news without a conception of the target or intended audience; and, while *possible*, I believe that it is flawed to consider issues such as contemporary democratic politics, social values and the continuing existence of prejudice and social inequalities without reference to the formative influence of journalism. Each of these three points represents key themes of this book that I will revisit when discussing the structures, functions and power of journalism.

This book represents an analysis of newspapers from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is a perspective on critical scholarship: a theory and a method of analysing the way that individuals and institutions *use* language. Critical discourse analysts focus ‘on social problems, and especially the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination’ (van Dijk, 2001: 96). CDA starts by identifying a social problem, ‘chooses

the perspective of those who suffer most, and critically analyses those in power, those who are responsible and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems' (van Dijk, 1996, cited in Wodak, 2001: 1). In response to social inequality and the abuse of power, CDA demands 'politically involved research with an emancipatory requirement' (Titscher *et al.*, 2000: 147). Such an approach inevitably means that CDA takes an overt moral and political position with regard to the social problem analysed – a characteristic of CDA that some scholars (particularly within the more descriptive tradition of Conversation Analysis) have objected to. However, we should recognise that all scholarly discourse is produced in social interaction, is part of a social structure and context, and hence is socio-politically situated whether we like it or not: research which takes a neutral or impartial approach to social injustice does not solve the problem, indeed it could be argued that academic neutrality contributes to the perpetuation of such injustice.

Given the power and significance of news journalism to contemporary society, it should come as no surprise that the discourse of newspapers has been, and continues to be, scrutinised (Fairclough, 1995a; Fowler *et al.*, 1979; Fowler, 1991; Richardson, 2001a, 2004; Richardson and Franklin, 2004; van Dijk, 1991). In line with the three characteristics of newspaper discourse referred to above, I argue that the analysis of how newspapers may (re)produce iniquitous social relations needs to be focused at three levels: on the material realities of society in general; on the practices of journalism; and on the character and function of journalistic language more specifically. Clearly, each of these three levels of analysis is enormous, attracting the attention of many, many scholars; hence I could not hope to attempt to portray them fully. It is nonetheless necessary at this stage to briefly introduce a number of key assumptions that this book makes of each of these three subjects.

### **This book's view of society**

The contemporary world is characterised by the pre-eminence of capitalism; there are very few, if any, places in the world that are not affected by capitalist social relations. Certainly, capitalism affects different parts of the world in different ways. To this extent, I agree with Blommaert's (2005: 36) argument that CDA has been rather slow to recognise that the way late modernity has taken shape

'in First-World societies is very particular, and a majority of the people in the world live in conditions closer to those of villagers in Central Tanzania than to those of inhabitants of Manchester or Vienna'. However, I would nevertheless argue that the social relations that characterise both contemporary Manchester and Central Tanzania are similarly the product of the structuring influence of capitalism.

To say that a society is capitalist is to make a claim about the mode of production and the division of society into classes who are defined by their relationship to the mode of production. In essence, 'a class society is structured in such a way as to enable one set of people to live off the labour of others' (Shaikh, 1986: 73). Under a capitalist mode of production, workers are paid less for their labour than it is worth. As we are all aware, workers are rewarded for their labour (insofar as they are paid a wage) but only for *part* of the working day; for the rest of the working day 'labour is working free for capital' (Wayne, 2003: 11). To take a simplistic example: workers from the 'village in Central Tanzania' referred to above (see Blommaert 2005: 36) may carve a soapstone figurine and be paid 50p for a day's labour; the owner of the company they work for may then sell this figurine to a distribution company for £2; this means that the worker, in effect, worked three quarters of a day for free.<sup>1</sup> This is referred to as surplus labour, since (from a Marxist perspective) it is viewed as labour in addition to that which the labour force needs to survive. Surplus labour forms the basis of capitalist profit. The surplus (£1.50 in the case of our Tanzanian example) is appropriated by those who own the means of production – the company – which, in turn, 'keeps the capitalist class willing and able to re-employ workers' (Shaikh, 1986: 74). By Marx's (1998: 25) great turn of phrase, in a capitalist system 'those who work do not gain and those who gain do not work'.

In a little more detail, from a Marxist perspective, 'classes are defined by their social relations of production' – and the 'social' aspect of this relation needs to be stressed (Wayne, 2003: 17). Economically, there are only three classes: those who buy labour power (the bourgeoisie), those who sell their own labour power (the proletariat) and small-scale craftsmen/women and entrepreneurs (the petit bourgeoisie) who either create a product themselves or purchase a commodity and re-sell it for a profit. However within the proletariat, there are wide disparities in the *social* relation to the means of production – in other words, between those who have a degree of labour autonomy and those who do not, between those who have social control over the labour of others (managers, 'teamleaders',

foremen, etc.) and those who do not. The middle classes are a special case within this social formation, being those groups within the proletariat 'who sell their labour power and therefore effectively cede control over the production apparatus *as a whole* to capital, while at the same time retaining some real if limited and variable control over their *own* labour' (ibid.). Take journalists as an example: journalists sell their labour to news organisations – a relation that places them in the proletariat class, an identical economic relation as cleaners who do the same. However the journalist's *social* relation to capital is clearly not the same as the cleaner: their labour is more profitable (produces a higher surplus value) and hence they are paid more; and they (historically at least) have a greater degree of autonomy over their labour. Depending on their professional status, journalists may be able to leave the office, talk to others, eat when they want, write and file their copy from outside the office and not be watched or directly supervised for much of their working day. The same cannot be said of the cleaner, who will have to turn up at a given time, perform the same chores, will often be supervised and as a result feels a greater sense of alienation from their labour. These material differences have significant effects on class subjectivities – that is, middle- and working-class perceptions of capitalism and their social position within a capitalist system. In short, the middle-class journalist may have a more positive view of capitalism because he or she is better insulated from the more obvious injuries of class experienced by the working classes.

Defenders of capitalism often claim that the exchange of labour for a wage is acceptable since both parties enter into the contract freely: both the worker and the owner are free to withdraw from the exchange, both gain from the contract (in the form of a wage or profit) and hence the system is acceptable. McNair (2005: 155), for instance, defends capitalism by arguing that inequality is no longer a factor in advanced capitalist societies, 'where living standards for the great majority have improved steadily since the Second World War'. However, workers and owners do not benefit equally from the system, in terms of wealth, health or 'free time' (i.e. time spent getting ready to go to work, returning from work or recovering from work). The 'trickle down theory' of McNair's argument, in which inequality is taken to be tempered because the wealth of the richest is imagined to permeate down and enrich the poorest, belies a more significant truth: that in a capitalist system, as the wealth of the worker increases, the wealth of the owner increases *exponentially*. This is an economic reality that even the *Washington Post* has recently

acknowledged. An editorial from this paper, published 12 March 2006, read:

In the 25 years from 1980 to 2004, a period during which U.S. gross domestic product per person grew by almost two-thirds, the wages of the typical worker actually fell slightly after accounting for inflation. [...] Between 1980 and 2003, total after-tax income for the bottom fifth of households rose 8 percent, and the second-bottom fifth gained 17 percent; in other words, all boats did rise, albeit by less than 1 percent per year. But it's hard to celebrate such modest gains when the top fifth advanced 59 percent over the 24-year period. [...] after a quarter-century of disappointment, the struggles of Americans in the bottom half of the income distribution cannot be viewed as temporary.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the editorial drew back from the necessary conclusion that systemic change is required, not piecemeal measures. Indeed the newspaper's misunderstanding of capitalism was revealed by its stated desire for a policy on class poverty that 'would reduce inequality without damaging growth'. Under a capitalist system, as profits and the wealth of the owners (or shareholders) increase, the *comparative* wealth of the workers must necessarily *decrease*, because the wealth of the bourgeoisie is taken directly from the labour of the proletariat. This relation is true as much of national labour markets as it is of international trade and labour markets (see Hubbard and Miller, 2005). What this therefore means is that *capitalism is inherently exploitative*.

However, this system is neither permanent nor, as some have claimed, the best and final method of organising and administering society (Fukayama, 1992). In fact, *capitalism is inherently unstable*. People do not appreciate being exploited and hence there is always the potential that the working classes will become conscious of the nature of their relation to the means of production and revolt. Therefore, the capitalist class who benefit from *their* relation to the means of production have to fight to conceal the true nature of capitalism from the workers that they exploit. As Chomsky (2005: 19) puts it, the concentrated power centres of capital

[...] realise that the system of domination is fragile, that it relies on disciplining the population by one or another means. There is a desperate search for such means: in recent years, Communism, crime, drugs, terrorism, and others. Pretexts change, policies remain rather stable.

The methods of ‘disciplining’ the working classes are many and varied, but essentially they fit into one of two inter-related techniques: *misguiding* the proletariat into accepting current social relations as natural, necessary or even enjoyable and *marginalising* and subduing dissent. While material in focus and effect, each of these techniques may be conceptualised as a discourse process achieved communicatively. The language used in newspapers is one key site in this naturalisation of inequality and neutralisation of dissent.

As stated above, CDA is an approach to language use that aims to *explore* and *expose* the roles that discourse plays in reproducing (or resisting) social inequalities. Given this objective, and the fact that ‘class remains a fundamental structuring principle of every aspect of life in late capitalism’ (Murdock, 2000: 7–8), it is strange that the discursive reproduction of class inequalities remains an under-developed issue for CDA. While previous CDA has examined ‘marketising’ economic discourse (Fairclough, 1995b) and globalisation (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999), it has yet to analyse the role that newspaper discourse plays in indexing and (re)producing class inequality. This book aims to tackle this deficiency, discussing such issues at greater length in Chapter 2 and especially Chapter 5.

### **This book’s view of journalism**

The following question lies at the heart of all analysis and critique of journalism: *What is journalism for?* How we answer this will, in turn, shape the kind of additional questions we ask of journalism, and specifically the ways that we test journalism to see if it is ‘measuring up’ to the roles we think it ought to be fulfilling. Some may feel that journalism exists to entertain us – indeed that it is simply part of the ‘entertainment industry’. Such a view is highly simplistic. While journalism displays features common to many forms of entertainment – comedy, novels and popular music to name but three – it is different to all of them. If journalism were comparable to these ‘other’ forms of entertainment, then why do governments and other powerful sections of society place so much stock in trying to control the work of journalists? Why are journalists manipulated, bullied and killed simply for attempting to do their job?

Alternatively, some have argued that journalism exists to disseminate – literally to broadcast and propagate – the views of the powerful. Again, I disagree. The circulation and promotion of the views of the powerful is better described as propaganda, and while

journalism is often shaped by the agenda of such propagandists, it remains distinct and separate from them. Indeed, there is sometimes considerable resistance to the work of PR within journalism. That such resistance is not always successful is an unfortunate outcome of this ‘dance’ between journalism and its sources, not a foregone conclusion. Third, many have argued that journalism is a business, that newspapers exist purely to make profit and this single observation explains their contents. Of course this is true up to a point – newspapers are businesses that must make money in order to continue to exist. But what does this observation actually solve? The film industry must also ‘make money in order to continue to exist’, but it is clearly different (in focus and scope) to journalism. Does concluding that ‘newspapers need to make money’ get to the bottom of the differences between journalistic genres (or between, say, *The Times* and the *Guardian*) or of the structure of news or, indeed, the influence of journalism? In the words of Murdock and Golding (1977: 18):

It is not sufficient simply to assert that the capitalistic base of the ‘culture industry’ necessarily results in the production of cultural forms which are consonant with the dominant ideology. It is also necessary to demonstrate how this process of reproduction actually works by showing in detail how economic relations structure both the overall strategies of the cultural entrepreneurs and the concrete activities of the people who actually make the products the ‘culture industry’ sells.

In short, detecting that newspapers are businesses should only ever be the starting point of analysis, not the conclusion.

Each of these critiques of journalism, I think, misses the bigger picture. This book is founded on the assumption that *journalism exists to enable citizens to better understand their lives and their position(s) in the world*. Journalism’s success or failure – in other words, the degree to which it is doing what it should or is letting us down – rests on the extent to which it achieves this fiduciary role: does journalism help you to better understand the world and your position within it? At this point we can reintroduce the three different approaches to journalism listed above: journalism as entertainment, as a loudhailer for the powerful and privileged and as a commodity produced by profit-seeking businesses. It is evident to all that journalism is often entertaining, it regularly reproduces the opinions of the powerful and (with the exception of a handful of outlets) is a saleable commodity.

In fact, one could argue that each of these three functions – reporting the actions and activities of the powerful and doing so in a form that is entertaining and readily consumable – are necessary to fulfilling the informational needs of the citizen. But when the work of journalists emphasises entertainment, or the activities and opinions of the powerful, or the pursuit of profit *in themselves* or *above* the primary function of journalism – to help citizens to understand the world and their positions within it – *it stops being journalism*.

Of course, this argument is still partial. Other genres of communication, for instance the novel, music, feature films, can also help us to understand the world (though I recognise that they are predominantly fictional and therefore do so in a completely different way to the predominantly factual stories of journalism). In addition to questioning the *function* of journalism, we also need to ask questions about the *form* and *content* of the messages that journalism conveys, and the discourse processes through which such messages are produced and consumed. Most of us can identify the meanings of texts, the meaning of a news report or what the journalist may be trying to make us think. But identifying exactly *how* this occurs is a little more difficult. If we take a relatively straightforward example: how do you tell the difference between different forms of writing? It is immediately obvious that there are certain differences: ‘Sports commentary, for example, will predictably be different from the language used in an interview, and the language of advertising will be different from the language of [news reporting]. This much is obvious. Given this observation, however, it is not always easy to [...] pin down what makes a text of a particular type identifiable as such’, nor is it always easy to pin down exactly ‘how it achieves its purpose’ (Delin, 2000: 2).

If we take a rather complex example – the issue of bias. Most of us think we can identify biases in news, or those instances when the journalist seems to have an agenda that they’re pushing. It is much harder to be able to identify exactly *why* you come to this conclusion; *why* you think that a particular article is biased. Take this excerpt from an interview, for example, which analysed interviews with television viewers about the way in which they deconstructed TV news broadcasts:

*Barb*: . . . there was that story about the Muslims and about how they were holding neighbourhood watches or something. . . and people do that all the time and they’re telling about how these people, they turn violent, but they’re really stressing that these

people are Muslim, and it was like because these people are Muslim they were doing this and I don't know, I didn't see the connection about, like, what liberty do they have in making the connection that these people were violent because they were Muslim? Or that these people are wrong because they are Muslim?

*Res:* okay, did you see the news making that connection?

*Barb:* yeah

*Res:* okay, how were they making that connection?

*Barb:* well, it was like in, every time they referred to these people, and what they did it was because they were, it was just like, Muslim, and these Muslim people live in, it just seemed like they were making that connection. Like between the people group, and the, everyone that is like that act that way. (Hacker *et al.*, 1991, cited in Fairclough, 1992: 193)

Hacker *et al.* suggest that this extract shows that although 'Barb' could identify some aspect of a news story that she disagreed with – she could identify what she thought was bias or an objectionable agenda of some kind – she still found it difficult to explain *how* she came to this opinion. The second passage, in which Barb tries to explain exactly *how* the journalist is making a connection between 'being Muslim' and 'being violent', is noticeably less fluent, less confident than the first, in which she suggests that there is a connection. In essence, what she is saying is:

[*Barb:* the reporter suggests there is a link between violence and being Muslim]

[*Res:* how is this connection made?]

[*Barb:* I don't know, it just seems there's a connection]

This book doesn't just cover that 'what' of the messages communicated by newspapers – for instance, *what* journalists write about the working class, *what* journalists write about war or write about Muslims – it also covers the 'how' of newspaper communication. In other words, *how* journalistic discourse is produced; *how* journalistic texts function; *how* arguments are made and convincingly supported; and *how* newspaper texts may be implicated in the production and reproduction of social inequalities. In doing so, it'll hopefully provide you with a vocabulary for describing and accounting for language and methods of analysis and critique, which will enable you to become more critical of newspaper discourse. These issues and others are

discussed in greater length in Chapter 4 on the discursive practices of journalism and Chapter 6 on argumentation and readers' letters.

### **This book's view of language**

This book examines the language use – or discourse – of newspapers, and is based on five fundamental assumptions about language. First, language is *social*. Language is central to human activity; indeed it is one of the things that make us human. It is through the use of language that we grant meaning to our actions; equally, it is through our use of language that we can attempt to remove meaning from our actions. As Blommaert (2005: 10–11) puts it:

[...] there is no such thing as 'non-social' language [...] Any utterance produced by people will be, for instance, an instance of oral speech, spoken with a particular accent, gendered and reflective of age and social position, tied to a particular situation or domain, and produced in a certain stylistically or generically identifiable format.

Language use exists in a kind of dialogue with society: language is produced by society and (through the effect of language use on people) it goes on to help recreate it. Language *first* represents social realities and *second* contributes to the production and *reproduction* of social reality or social life. This 'social-ness' of language is revealed in a number of ways: for example, the way in which people speak to each other is in part a product of social context. You wouldn't speak to someone in a pub the same way as you would in a court of law (unless you wanted to be found in contempt). As well as the physical and the institutional setting, language use reflects 'speakers' identities, expectations as to what speakers intend to accomplish in a particular act of communication, elements of the wider social structure in which speakers are caught, and so on' (ibid.: 11). And language use doesn't just reflect 'the way things are done'; it goes on to recreate these social and sometimes institutional expectations – expectations that we all have when we pick up a newspaper or a magazine, that it will be written in a particular way.

In addition, those involved in a conversation, or any kind of communicative act, don't just hold these large-scale expectations about the general nature of the interaction (e.g. how to speak in an

interview or how to speak in court); they also hold assumptions and presuppositions about the world, that are drawn upon in conversation. Take arguments, for instance, which for the moment I'll rather loosely define as the expression of opinions and reasoning within a context of disagreement. A lot of arguments draw on presuppositions that the audience are required to fill in themselves in order for the argument to seem plausible. For example, take this two sentence readers' letter printed in *Time* magazine (November 1997):

It was clear from last time that Saddam Hussein wouldn't back down. Now is the time to put an end to all this.

There are so many assumptions in this argument that I hardly know where to begin: What happened last time? What was it that Saddam Hussein didn't back down from? Why was it *clear* that he wouldn't back down? What is the 'all this' that the arguer wants to 'put an end to'? What does the arguer mean by 'ending' it? And so on, and so on. These are all assumptions that you, the reader, would have to provide yourself in order to make this argument coherent. If you didn't think that the above argument was coherent when you first read it (i.e. you didn't understand it), this is most probably because you lacked the required assumed background knowledge.

Related to the belief that language is social is this book's second assumption: language use enacts *identity*. What this means is that people project themselves as a certain type of person, and that the identity that a person projects relates, in part, to the activities that they're attempting to accomplish. For instance, you probably wouldn't speak to your parents in the same way as you would to your friends, and this relates, in part, to the way that your parents and friends see you and the way you *want* them to see you. Equally, the way I talk to students in a classroom is different to the way I talk to them should I see them in a pub or out socially.<sup>3</sup> The meanings of an utterance, an argument, a newspaper text or whatever are intimately related to the identity of the producer responsible for its content and the context of its articulation. Therefore in order to fully appreciate communication you have to recognise these identities and the activities that are being acted out. Put another way, our understanding of a communicative act is shaped, in part, by who is speaking/writing and the context in which this occurs. While this may appear straightforward, these aspects of communication can be open to a certain degree of interpretation (which is what makes them interesting). For instance, I might read a readers' letter and describe

it as ‘Mr X’s opinion on public services’, but you, having a little more knowledge about this kind of thing, may describe it as ‘the opinion of Conservative Party election campaigners on public services, just with Mr X’s name at the bottom’. Here we’re debating *who* is actually responsible for the text and therefore the way that we should interpret it. Given the widespread public distrust of politicians, using the ostensibly non-partisan views of members in the general public (in this case, Mr X) is an ideal way for political parties to disseminate their arguments. Assumed authorship (in this case of a readers’ letter) has a profound impact on the implicit meanings communicated by the text – either as the view of a non-aligned member of the public or the self-interested electioneering of a political party (see Richardson and Franklin, 2004). Relating to assigning context to communication: imagine an article on the website for the British National Party (BNP), where the Party accuse Ariel Sharon of being a war criminal responsible for killing Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Shatila. I might say ‘this is the BNP sticking up for Palestinian refugees’, but you again having a little more knowledge about this kind of thing, may say ‘no, this is the BNP being anti-Semitic. They’ve used this incident to attack Sharon and make a wider point about a Jewish conspiracy which ensured he has gone unpunished.’ Here we’re debating the context of the communicative act: *what* the BNP is speaking *on* and perhaps *why*. In this case, these speculations relate directly to the Party’s identity – specifically their identity as the largest neo-fascist party in the UK whose leader at the time (Nick Griffin) had a previous criminal conviction for anti-Semitic racial hatred.

This example brings me onto this book’s third assumption about language and perhaps the most important one to grasp: language use is always *active*; it is always directed at *doing* something; and the way in which language achieves this activity is always related to the context in which it is being used. For instance, journalists may use language to *inform* us of an event, or to *expose* wrongdoing, or to *argue* for or against something. Each of these verbs – inform, expose and argue for – demonstrates the active nature of communication in these cases. Going back to the last example, which actually *was* taken from a real article on the BNP’s website, we may say that the overall function, or *global speech act*, of their argument was either *supporting* refugees or *attacking* Sharon. Hence, language use is not just talk; language use should be regarded as an activity or as a *social action*.

Related to this is this book’s fourth assumption: language use has *power*. However, the power of language use isn’t flat or democratic

in the way that it operates. Clearly, some people's speech is more powerful than others; the opinion of certain people is taken to be more credible and authoritative than the opinion of others; why and how this is achieved is a matter of keen academic and social interest. Equally, some *ways* of speaking or communicating have more power than others; certain genres of communication have more potential effects on social life than other forms of communication do – in terms of both positive and negative effects. Journalism is precisely such a powerful genre of communication. The power of journalistic language to *do* things and the way that social power is indexed and represented *in* journalistic language are particularly important to bear in mind when studying the discourse of journalism. Journalism has social effects: through its power to shape issue agendas and public discourse, it can reinforce beliefs; it can shape people's opinions not only of the world but also of their *place* and *role* in the world; or, if not shape your opinions on a particular matter, it can at the very least influence *what* you have opinions on; in sum, it can help shape social reality by shaping our *views* of social reality. For these reasons, and many more, the language of the news media needs to be taken very seriously.

Taking this point a little further, this book's fifth assumption is that language use is *political*. This is perhaps the logical outcome of assuming that language use is social and has power – there isn't any way that language use couldn't be political, given the combination of these two assumptions. However, there is still a prevailing assumption that language is 'clear' and acts as a neutral window on the world, and that the objects and structures of a language exist as a kind of an apolitical structure, like numbers do for mathematics. Such a view of language also meshes quite well with prevailing assumptions about journalism: that it is neutral and 'factual'. These assumptions need to be contested because they can be quite dangerous. Orwell (2004 [1946]) demonstrated this in his classic essay 'Politics and the English Language'. In this essay, he argues two basic points: first, that ugly or offensive thoughts corrupt language; and second, that language can corrupt thought. Being a socialist, Orwell does not suggest that language *in itself* can shape material reality; on the contrary, 'the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes' (p. 102). Hence, language is an instrument that is shaped according to material circumstances and the purpose that we want it to serve. However, 'an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form' (ibid.). Thus, language is a medium of power that can be used

to sediment inequalities of power and legitimate iniquitous social relations. In one frequently quoted section of this essay, Orwell wrote

political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population* or *rectification of frontiers*. [. . .] All issues are political issues, and [. . .] When the general [political] atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. (Ibid.: 114–116)

The relevance of this argument for contemporary politics, characterised by euphemism, dishonesty and the outright debasement of terms such as ‘democracy’, ‘freedom’ and ‘human rights’ (see Collins and Glover, 2002; O’Byrne, 2003) cannot be denied. As Cox (2004: 312) puts it, under current political discourse, the ‘terms ‘democracy’ and ‘liberation’ have become transformed to mean open markets and military occupation’. Such debasement, and their horrendous political consequences, need to be resisted.

These assumptions provide us with a starting point for the analysis of the language of journalism. Each of them – that language is social, that it enacts identity, that it is active, that it has power and that language is political – raise a significant number of subsequent questions and provide us with interesting avenues of research and investigation. In addition, these insights into the way language functions provide a set of *tools* to apply to the study of journalism that I discuss at greater length in Chapters 2 and 3.

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*Note:* Where Tables or Figures appear on pages unconnected with their subject matter they are indicated by an italic page reference.

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