Language and power, by Paul Simpson and Andrea Mayr, New York, Routledge, 2010, 256 pp. $36.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-415-46900-5

This book is Paul Simpson's second contribution and Andrea Mayr's first to the Routledge *English Language Introductions*, which cover 11 wide-ranging topics from Grammar and Vocabulary (Jackson Citation2002) to Psycholinguistics (Field Citation2003). The stated aim of this particular text is:

[…] for students using the book to be able to identify the ways in which power is disseminated through language, whether that be through print or broadcast media, through legal or advertising discourse, or through political and other forms of institutional rhetoric. (p. 2)

This book succeeds in its aims by offering a comprehensive survey of how language intersects and connects with the social, cultural and political aspects of power in a very accessible manner. It covers a wide range of approaches, concentrating mostly on critical discourse analysis due to language and power being the area of study. It also examines a number of relevant topics such as racism, gender and institutional power as well as current material on new capitalism and the study of humour as power, using real and relevant texts.

One unique aspect of this book, along with others in the series, is that students can either read the whole text from start to finish or focus on a specific area of study. The idea is by following an area of study or "strand", students are brought up to a level of expertise in their chosen area. The book offers 10 strands (plus an extra strand on the book's accompanying website). Strands listed are the introductory and general topic of "language and power" and then the more specific strands of "the discourse of institutions and organisations", "power and talk", "language and gender", "language and race", "humour, language and power", "language and the law", "language and advertising", "language in the new capitalism", and "language and politics". Together, these provide a wide range of topics for students to become familiar with; strands relevant to the critical study of language and power.

The idea of strands plays a major part in the book, each strand consisting of four parts. Strands start with an introduction to key concepts using a relevant survey of existing research and studies. Concepts are written in simple and sometimes colloquial language, so even the beginner can grasp essential ideas relevant to the book, such as Gramsci's concept of hegemony. This accessibility to concepts through the language chosen by the authors is a major advantage to using this book. The surveys of research and studies are well thought out and relevant. For example, using Stuart Hall (Citation1997) and van Dijk (Citation1997) extensively

in the language and race strand introduction is essential reading for students pursuing this area of study.

Strands continue by developing themes and issues, providing illustrated surveys of major research developments with key analytical models that inform the area of research. Again, these help focus and inform students about their chosen area. Following the language and race strand, van Leeuwen's (Citation1996) representation of social actors is described, being essential reading for students studying this area. Machin and Mayr's (Citation2007) study of the *Leicester Mercury* newspaper is then explained, again a relevant and current example of how social actor analysis is used and race and language is analysed.

Each strand then offers practical exercises. These are particularly useful to get students to consider concepts and ideas introduced in the first two parts of each strand. The guidance given in these "activities" sections are most definitely helpful, allowing students to contextualize their thoughts in order to focus on the given practical exercises. Following the race and language strand again, having students attempt to do a linguistic and visual social actor analysis of an anti-racism campaign text and image produced for the Belfast City council allows students to practically engage with a text that has current resonance.

Each strand finishes with a chosen expert reading. Although the majority of readings are examples of critical discourse analysis such as van Dijk's (Citation1992) "Discourse and the Denial of Racism" and Billig's (Citation2001) "Humour and Hatred: The Racist Jokes of the Ku Klux Klan", other approaches to the analysis of language and power are used such as critical linguistics (Fowler and Kress Citation1979), discourse analysis (Sarangi and Slembrouck Citation1996), conversation analysis along with critical discourse analysis (Haworth Citation2006), feminist linguistics and audience reception studies (Benwell Citation2002) and forensic discourse analysis (Coulthard Citation2002). In fact, Charteris-Black's (Citation2004) contribution is an example of corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis, thereby being an example of critical research employing a quantitative approach. Together, these readings provide a wide range of approaches to the issue of language and power.

The strand structure of the book is a major strength. It allows students, under the guidance of a tutor, to quickly be informed about an area of study they find interesting in a very accessible manner. One minor drawback to this is some students may get distracted by being fed information in a piece by piece fashion. Of course the payback is the reader is quickly and clearly informed about topics of their choice with the added bonus of practical usability in the classroom, advantages quite rare in introductory books I have encountered.

Overall, this book is a wonderful resource for students interested in the analysis of language and power. It successfully introduces some extremely interesting and relevant concepts and issues concerning language and power across a wide range of areas of study in a highly approachable manner. I believe it is essential reading for students of language, media and journalism. It is a very useful resource that students will find easy to work with when guided by a tutor. I intend on using this with my discourse analysis students, the book providing an easily accessible approach to a very difficult and ever-changing subject.

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