
Book Review

Jeffries, Lesley. (2010). *Critical stylistics: The power of English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. [202 pp; ISBN: 978-0-333-96449-1 (paperback)].

Lesley Jeffries's¹ *Critical Stylistics: The Power of English* is concerned with the power of English text and talk—indeed primarily with text as the bulk of examples in the book suggest. The author draws on a wide array of examples covering newspaper, corporate, political and legal registers as well as conventional language use and even invented examples in order to explicate the construction of ideological content in different types of text. The book is intended for an audience of students and beginning critical stylistics analysts and aims to provide them with “specific tools of analysis to get a clear sense of how texts may influence the ideological outlook of their recipients” (p. 6, [original emphasis]). Jeffries argues that ideological content, innocent as well as manipulative, is threaded through linguistic structure and in this book she offers her audience a set of analytical tools to help them discover where ideology lies. She is quick to warn, however, that this is not a quick guide to textual ideology and acknowledges the role of background schemata in informing the impact of the text on the reader.

Jeffries' exploration of the language-power is in fact an extension of a research orientation initiated by Fowler et al. (1979). What Jeffries claims to be adding to this growing body of literature is a “set of tool” different from the “more traditional tools such as transitivity and modality” (p. 15). The attempt to provide a set of tools to expose insidious ideological content is not altogether new (cf., Fairclough, 1989; Fowler, 1991; Simpson, 1993). Jeffries places her attempt well in this tradition and argues that her book fills a methodological void in the literature. Fairclough's list of tools is selective, “incomplete” and therefore falls short of providing a coherent methodology (p. 12). Fowler' five-tool list is “supposed to be a methodology” (p. 12) but is

¹ Lesley Jeffries, a former Chair of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA), has a PhD in stylistics from Leeds University. She has authored six books in linguistics and co-authored three others since 1993. Her most prominent contributions to the area of stylistics include *Stylistics* (2010) and *Teaching Stylistics* (2011), both co-authored with Dan McIntyre, and of course the book under review.

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