A Critical Discourse Analysis of a College Faculty Recruitment Brochure

Dennis R. Brooks

Abstract: Norman Fairclough presents his version of Critical Discourse Analysis with a five stage analytical framework (Yates, Taylor and Wetherell, 2001: 236). Central to this macro frame is to identify the social problem that has a semiotic aspect (Stage 1), the obstacles (Stage 2), whether the problem is needed (Stage 3), resolutions to the problem (Stage 4), and how the researcher’s interpretation can “contribute to emancipatory change” (Stage 5) (Yates, Taylor and Wetherell, 2001: 239). The purpose in this paper is to illustrate how a critical analysis of a text generated by an educational institution encodes the values of that institution and that these values “are assembled out of diverse features, “on the spot,” as we speak, listen, and act” (Gee, 1999: 46). It is also the purpose to identify conflicted values embedded in the text as part of the broader discourse.

Introduction

Johan Galtung, father of the Peace Studies discipline, defines violence broadly; “that which increases the distance between the … potential and the actual condition” (Galtung & International Peace Research Institute Oslo, 1996). Fairclough’s (Yates, Taylor, & Wetherell, 2001) use of the term, “hegemony”, to refer to the struggle to establish and maintain “common sense” interpretations of social relations complements Galtung’s concept of “structural violence”. This type of violence is socially obscured as part of the common sense realities of life. A person’s “potential condition” in relation to the “actual condition” changes with society’s standards of accountability. Today there are greater expectations as to what is the content of the sense, common to our society. Galtung and Fairclough (Chouliarakis and Fairclough, 1999: 34) emphasize the importance of an effective public sphere to establish what society reasonably expects from its members.

Galtung’s structural violence is indirect violence where the actor is not evident. There may be no intent or motive to act violently yet this may not diminish the level of violence experienced. Violence may be latent or manifest; latent in that it does not exist at the moment but might easily be created. The stone (or word) thrown may be the catalyst for a manifest escalation (Cochrane, 2001: 233). Fairclough presents his version of Critical Discourse Analysis with a five stage analytical framework (Yates, Taylor and Wetherell, 2001: 236). Central to this macro frame is to identify the social problem that has a semiotic aspect (Stage 1), the obstacles (Stage 2), whether the problem is needed (Stage 3), resolutions to the problem (Stage 4), and how the researcher’s interpretation can “contribute to emancipatory change” (Stage 5) (Yates, Taylor and Wetherell, 2001: 239)

Purpose

It is the purpose in this paper to illustrate how a critical analysis of a text generated by an educational institution encodes textually the values of that institution and that these values “are assembled out of diverse features, “on the spot,” as we speak, listen, and act (Gee, 1999: 46). These “assemblies” when repeated without opposition and enshrined in print become the common sense. In the institution’s self-perceived task of creating “Civil Society”, Gramsci’s definition of hegemonic power (Chouliarakis and Fairclough, 1999: 229) as power by consent or acquiescence may inadvertently put under gird a Galtungian form of latent violence.

It is also the purpose to identify conflicted values embedded in the discourse. Fairclough calls for using the term “ideology” critically in relation to power rather than in a neutral way, which is covered, by the term “worldview” (Fairclough, 1995: 17). Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) places this level of critique in the “social semiotic space;” the culture, the background for the semiotic space where meaning is built (Yamaguchi, 2001). The use of the SFL phrase “values in conflict” or “conflicting values” is preferred to be more precise in focusing on issues of ideology.

Definitions

Text: For the purpose of this discussion, the text is a written linguistic example. Although the brochure under investigation includes visual features and is part of a broader social practice, the object of this analysis is limited to the written aspect only. However, “text”, as defined is connected to other prior texts. In this usage of “text”, Fairclough is more broadly being followed, “where a text may be either written or spoken…” (Fairclough, 1995: 4).

Discourse: This paper follows Fairclough’s view on discourse:

“My view is that "discourse" is the use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice. Such analysis requires attention to textual form, structure and organization at all levels; phonological, grammatical, lexical (vocabulary) and higher levels of textual organization in terms of exchange systems (the distribution of speaking terms), structures of argumentation, and generic (activity type) structures” (Fairclough 1995: 7).

Thus, this project is the analysis of a text (in this case a written piece). But in doing so it provides an explanation
of the discourse of which it is a part (recruitment of faculty members) and is thus an analysis of that discourse. Textual analysis is a kind of discourse analysis.

Analysis: Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the joining of critical social research and the analysis of discourse. In this paper, a brochure, as a singular textual exemplar of a social practice (recruiting of faculty among others), is analyzed structurally and semantically, i.e. what do the structures mean? This requires reference beyond the text to the broader discourse in which it is embedded. There is dialog between the structure of the text and its relation to the social practice that gives it meaning. It is “critical” following the “explanatory critique” (five stages defined herein) adapted from critical realism (Choulilari and Fairclough, 1999: 33). The purpose for joining critical social research and the analysis of discourse is motivated by the belief that critical awareness of language is central to effective democratic dialog.

Text Situation

The 600 word text is found in a twelve-page high print quality promotional brochure artistically designed with the purpose to recruit North American teaching staff for a North American style Christian English-medium liberal arts college located in Eastern Europe (Refer to Appendix 1 for text). This liberal arts college model has at its center a relational purpose rather than a programmatic center. Therefore, emphasis is placed on character formation rather than research; subjective discovery is emphasized over objective research although the latter is present in subordinated forms (e.g. secondary research as an exercise, senior theses).

METHOD and APPROACH

In the approach to this text the order of presentation will be to describe, interpret and explain (Fairclough, 1995: 97). In so doing, the first stage of Fairclough’s framework, “Focus upon a social problem that has a semiotic aspect” will develop during the interpretation of the analysis. However, the five stages will be addressed in this analysis in the final summary.

Because of the length of this paper, three methods of unfolding the riches of this text will be briefly focused upon: Larsen’s model of textual analysis, Biber’s Multi-dimensional analytical method and Web-based corpus analysis of key text collocation. At times, terminology from Halliday’s SFL is used.

Active debate on what is appropriate to an academic style is ongoing. The use of the active voice and first person has been eliminated at the request of the editors. Avoidance of jargon, excessive normalization of process and the use of the passive voice has been unsuccessful but it is a hope to work into academic style a more accessible and honest expression of what is unavoidably a subjective activity.

INTERACTIONAL ANALYSIS – Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic analysis

Syntagmatically - How is it structured? (Linguistic analysis)

DESCRIPTION - Whole-text and clause combinations

Analysis of the text is accomplished using the model exemplified in the text, Meaning-based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence (Larson, 1984). Genre, prominent themes and thematic roles are identified as well as patterns of cohesion.

Larson uses a model of analysis designed to help translators achieve cross-equivalency between texts of different languages. First, the semantic functions of words are identified.

Table 1. Semantic Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS</th>
<th>Things</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The “unskewed” lexical items (concepts) are rebuilt into propositions (phrases/clauses). Relations within Event propositions (clauses) are identified (case role), as well as, state propositions. It is here one would address coherence, prominence and topic marking. Communication Relations are identified among the propositions; addition and support relations, orientation, clarification relations, logical relations and stimulus-response roles. These proposition clusters then group hierarchically to form various text genres (narrative, procedural, expository, descriptive, hortatory, drama).

Interpretation

For example, the clause (surface structure) from our text “...liberating the mind is more than a ten-year process” encodes more than one notion of proposition.

Although “liberating” is acting in the grammatical role of a noun it is an EVENT as is “process”. It may be necessary to look more closely at the word “mind” depending on how the target language in a translation project might understand this word. Is it a THING (a brain, present in my head) or an EVENT (someone THINKS something)? “is more than” encodes a RELATION and “ten-year”, an ATTRIBUTE of time.

To unskeew these concepts one could write:
1a. Something (absent AGENT) liberates 1b.
1b. Someone (absent BENEFICIARY) thinks
2. “is (TIME) more than” encodes a comparative relationship
3. Something (absent AGENT) does something (absent AFFECTED) for 10 years (TIME)

The inter-propositional relations are identified:

Here is a clarification by nonrestatement. 1a and 1b is the HEAD (main proposition) in a contrast-HEAD relationship where someone doing something for 10 years is in contrast with something liberating someone who thinks.

What is noteworthy in this sentence is that the agents, beneficiaries and affected are all absent. The “unskeewing” makes this plain.

With this method the entire text can be analyzed for its semantic structure up to the level of its genre.
Explanation

As an expository text it consists of one major ground, which is the entire text with the exception of the final sentence. The final sentence is the theme of the text. Within the grounds is a means-RESULT. The capitalized word indicates the HEAD of the cluster. Therefore by following the HEAD propositions down to the text, grounds can be stated briefly as in Table 2.

Table 2 Expository Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>RESULT 1</th>
<th>RESULT 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>…liberating the mind is more than a 10-year process. (7)</td>
<td>Create an educational experience...” (9)</td>
<td>“Alumni who can transform society.” (31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paraphrase: “Because liberating the mind is more than a 10-year process, create an education experience which results in alumni who can transform society”.

This grounds then supports the THEME: “(THE COLLEGE) seeks to transform people...” (41-42) This is the core message of the text.

This is an expository text. Within it is a sub-genre of hortatory text (the means to the RESULT of the grounds for this exposition) where a voice commands “Create an educational experience where future leaders can explore what it means to be free”. (9) We are left to assume this voice is that of the founders and likely those who are producing this recruitment brochure. The RESULT component within the grounds consists of a type of procedural text. The step leading to the goal is “(THE COLLEGE) provides qualified faculty and staff” (11) with the GOAL of “Alumni who can transform society”. (41) In addition, Narrative sub-genres are used to amplify the RESULT found in the grounds.

The author suggests that in the wider discourse this brochure is really a covert call to action, a hortatory tool to recommend the institution or even call potential staff to action as modelled by the subordinated exhortation, “Create!” Thus at a higher level, the exhortation is supported by the visual text of the brochure and the manner in which the brochure is presented and distributed to potential faculty members. (the visual is addressed in another unpublished paper based on the work of Kress and Leeuwen (1996). Together with the text, the visuals create a new dynamic for presentation of values and conflict not completely captured by the text alone.)

Paradigmatic (Corpus) Analysis – Interdiscursivity

DESCRIPTION – Multi-dimensional analysis

Biber’s Multi-dimensional analytical method (Conrad & Biber, 2001) provides a very general description of the register’s into which the written text falls. What is taking place, what are you talking about, who is doing it and in what textual way (Egginus, 1994)?

Douglas Biber in a 1988 study of English speech and writing identified seven dimensions (five primary) of register variation (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998) based on the quantification of 67 linguistic features in a corpus of 500 texts or one million words.

Biber and others have applied this method to many texts. It is possible to now compare any text once analyzed by the method to those already analyzed to determine in what ways the new text is similar in register variation to others.

INTERPRETATION AND EXPLANATION – Multi-dimensional analysis

Our text is expository. The two stages are grounds and THEME.

The grounds stage of the text, nearly all of it (5-39), is predominately in the register characteristic of a professional letter (the elaborated end of Biber’s Dimension 3 as opposed to the situation dependent end) or prepared speech. The Theme stage of this text, which consists of just one final sentence, shifts to a register comparable to academic prose.

Following, HEAD phrases are listed in each of the two stages of this expository text as representative of the whole:

First there is a hortatory sub-genre within the grounds stage that is typical of the register of professional letter or prepared speech:

Table 3. Expository Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The MEANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The RESULT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the linguistic features generally support a professional letter or prepared speech there are elements that stand apart from the general linguistic flow. The implied question, “The result?” is not typical of this register. It marks a break in the flow of the document to this point. It is typical of the “involved” pole of Dimension 1 rather than the informational. The text asks the reader to respond. The answer follows with additional “involved” features: pronoun “it” and the use of the infinitive, “It is the chance to rebuild...,” characteristic of conversation. This switch is not foreign to professional letters but is found in them to reframe or invite response. You will notice this movement provides a cohesive transition from
Student to Alumni in focus (Line 31) and brings to closure the Grounds Stage of this expository text in preparation for the concluding Theme.

Second, comes the Theme of the expository text. It consists of the final sentence.

(THE COLLEGE) seeks to transform young people like Vaidas into agents of transformation; into leaders who will rebuild, recreate and reweave society (41-42).

You will notice the high usage of nouns, complex words, many prepositions, high type/token ratio (Dimension 1 - Informational); also the use of Who- relative clause on subject position, phrasal coordination and nominalizations (Dimension 3 - Elaborated) and an infinitive and a predictive modal (Dimension 4 - overt expression of argumentation). This is the register of academic prose although still within the variation of a professional letter.

DESCRIPTION – WWW-based collocation analysis

Next, by using a web search engine, key textual phrases and collocations were tested. Genre is understood to be the “socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity” (Fairclough, 1995). What are you trying to get done? How are you interacting? What are the stages? Within the genre, though, may be the activation of several discourses, triggered by as little as a unique word or collocation.

A dimensional analysis of register variation tells us that the speaker is approaching the reader with the voice of a professional and an academician and is being persuasive. However, what kinds of discourse, what kinds of social activities is the author attempting to “trigger” in the reader’s mind?

Thirty-three phrases were selected from this text. The advanced search functions of the Internet search engine, Google (Page & Brin, 2001), were then used. An exact match was required for each phrase. Google.com does not recognize common words (function words) in an exact match. Each search was configured to provide up to 100 hits. Each search result was saved, printed out and manually reviewed. The context provided on each search page was considered sufficient. However, in many cases there was insufficient context to ascertain the type of discourse associated with the site. The purpose in this exercise was to collect a “quick and dirty” confirmation of what kinds of discourse these phrases might be found within.

The general discourse of education was predictably well represented. However, future researchers in this area may want to divide this category into general education, college, post-graduate and so on. The phrases within “education” were most often in the area of general education and secondly in college discourse.

The second type most commonly represented was that of “spiritual”. In here, any religious discourse regardless of type was included.

In a third grouping, discourse commonly associated with non-governmental organizations (people trying to help people or the environment) was found then media (news providers) and business (motivational, educational).

Interpretation

There is a great deal of overlap in these discourses. This is particularly true of non-governmental organizations (NGO) that tend to be a mix of education, business and spiritual interests.

This is particularly noteworthy in the types of overlap among the categories of “NGO and Education”, “Education and Spiritual”, “Education and Business”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. NGO &amp; Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;transform/ing society&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;seeks to transform&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;agents of transformation&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;liberating the mind&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;changing society&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;rebuild their communities&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;develop character&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These phrases are all characteristic of the kind of discourse that NGO’s and educational institutes engage in. However, many of these educational websites are more closely identified with NGOs than with universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Education and the Spiritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;transform/ing society&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;liberating the mind&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;practical wisdom&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;testament to the transformation&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;engage and equip&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;pursue truth&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;faith and leadership&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;agents of transformation&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Education and Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;transforming society&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;seeks to transform&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;various work environments&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;catalyst for change&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phrase “catalyst for change” is strongly represented in the discourse of education, media and business.

The odd phrase “global components of the Eastern European region” produced hints primarily on the phrase “global components” which is a technical term used in mechanical/electronic discourses. When found in education it is generally referring to things (components of a curriculum) not people. The use of the phrase in the brochure is in the context of alumni rebuilding a damaged society and the metaphor is technical and may be appealing to a technically oriented humanitarian.

What begins to arise from this superficial analysis is that there are phrases that could key an entire discourse in the mind of the reader depending on the cultural frame.

It must be assumed that the reader is an educationalist of some type since that is the target audience of this text. The humanitarian educator will be familiar with the NGO
discourse and if that person is motivated by his/her humanitarian goals then this discourse opens up the document. This is true for the business-oriented reader. There is sufficient discourse in the document to appeal to anyone familiar with media or government/non-governmental dialogue. However, there is a strong line of spiritual discourse. Although there is a bit of specifically theological discourse, "explore faith in Jesus Christ... Christian world-view" (20-21) and the odd negative phrase "post-millenial hype" (31) the remainder of the discourse, that can be found in spiritual discourse, could appeal to any humanitarian without any connection specifically to the Christian character of the institution.

Table 7. Humanitarian Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transforming society</th>
<th>people are valued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>liberating the mind</td>
<td>transform society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engage and equip</td>
<td>pursue truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open and interactive</td>
<td>use my gifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practical wisdom</td>
<td>faith and leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authentic caring</td>
<td>seeks to transform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationships</td>
<td>agents of transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testament to the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The phrases found at business websites are generally the kind of discourse in the service sector and thus have overlap in other humanitarian discourses:

Table 8. Business and Humanitarian Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>engage and equip</th>
<th>people are valued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>open and interactive</td>
<td>various work environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catalysts for change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanation

The document primarily engages the discourse of an educator who has general humanitarian/spiritual interests. Yet the specifically theological discourse "explore faith in Jesus Christ... Christian world-view" and perhaps the jargon term "post-millennial" could trigger in the professional Christian educator a discourse that would integrate all the spiritual, NGO and education discourses into that discourse. A complete analysis of the brochure must take into account the visual presentation as it also includes spiritual themes. The educator who may be a nominal Christian (or not at all) could interpret the entire document from the humanitarian viewpoint based on the formative education/spiritual/NGO discourse. The reference to Jesus Christ and a Christian world-view is structured where the staff member is backgrounded.

"Meeting faculty members... gives students an opportunity to explore faith in Jesus Christ... These conversations open the door for students to ask how a Christian world-view can influence their choices..." (19-21).

Here the faculty member is the patient of an action of which the modality is possibility — "students can meet faculty; students can explore". In the second sentence students are the agent, modality is still possibility and the patient (presumably the faculty member) is absent — "students ask someone about...".

There is no obligation implied toward the faculty member although there is the assumption that students may want to explore Christian faith (presumably because it is a Christian liberal arts college) and that opportunity is possible. The responsibility lies on the student to initiate and the object of this enquiry is not overtly stated. It could be easily the case that in the second sentence that the students may (possibility) ask other students, themselves or the faculty member about a Christian world-view. The reader is informed that if students want to ask about a Christian world-view and if faculty members want to be available to engage students in this topic, the possibility exists.

With this singular low-key reference to the Christian aspect of the institute and the high usage of discourse from general humanitarian vocabulary, it may be that we see a value here — "We are humanitarians from a Christian tradition" or we could see the nip of a value in conflict (ideology) — "We are Christians (who by definition are humanitarian) but if we say this too overtly we may limit the pool of faculty available for recruitment".

Description

Here we find 5 major social actors: The College, the faculty, the students, the alumni and non-college locals.

1. We are first and finally exposed in the text to the Non-college locals. We are first introduced to "people in Eastern Europe" and lexical chain continues with structural ellipse "(%) fearing the alternative... liberating the mind" (9%)... How can a liberal arts college help (%)?"

The chain continues with a loose semantic cohesion with reference to the "Baltics", "student's home environment".

Then, there is hypernym, where one feature represents the whole - a student upon coming to LCC "leaves behind the pessimism..." "...on the streets".

Also we encounter semantic links, "village boy", "high school teachers", "society", "their communities", "global components of the Eastern European region", "anti-corruption conference in Vilnius", "Lithuania Free Market Institute", "other cultures, personalities and opinions", "work environments", "East", "past", and finally with "society".

2. The College coheres primarily by use of lexical and semantic links and a couple structural links (pro-form and ellipsis).

3. Faculty - (lexical and pronominal cohesion).
4. Students - (lexical and pronominal cohesion).
5. Alumni - (lexical and pronominal cohesion).

Student and faculty reference ends when alumni begin. The college extends over the course of the text but slightly less so than for the non-college locals.
Interpretation

Students are generally not agents and are often beneficiaries. Alumni are agents. The college and faculty are often agents. The modal auxiliary “can” is used 9 times in the text and is generally referring to possibilities afforded by students and alumni. There is a strong sense of possibility by way of this institution. What becomes clear immediately in looking at both cohesive and modal devices is that the non-college local identity is not only loosely cohering but of the 9 modals none are afforded this identity of possibility apart from (THE COLLEGE).

The college and the non-college locals are cohesively constructed with greater variety then the other three actors. The non-college locals are constructed with the greatest range of semantic and structural devices and cohere the most loosely (a confederation of features).

The text creates a stringent divide between non-college locals and those social actors associated with the college (college, faculty, students and alumni). This includes the use of the modal of possibility/ability “can” and other words of this modality such as “chance” and “opportunity”. References to the non-college local social actor are either absent or negative in connotation.

A dichotomy is established early in the text.

Table 9. Oppositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
<td>future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-college locals</td>
<td>The College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The term “West” is being used to mean the nations of Western Europe, United States and Canada. Although much of the culture and values of the “West” are the same as for Eastern Europe, the “West” represents wealth and power to which the NIS aspire).

In the first paragraph EAST is defined (Table 10).

Table 10. The East

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East is communist experiment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East is smothered freedom to develop ideals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East is people obeying the Soviet regime.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East is people fearing exile.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East is not a liberated mind.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

East is “East, all the non-college locals, and past”. This is then further embellished. By reviewing the features of cohesion for non-college locals, one finds they stand in negative contrast to the “West, (THE COLLEGE) and future”.

Explanation

Here we find a value, “West is best”. There is one exception.

“They (faculty and staff) come to Lithuania from Western Europe, North America and the Baltics with practical wisdom…” (11-12)

This is the only instance that the word “staff” (and one pronominal connection, “They”) appears in the text. Generally, “staff” refers to non-teaching employees. Throughout the text, there has been clear separation in the cohesion of the 5 actors. In this instance, someone comes to Lithuania from the Baltics who is in the “West, future, (THE COLLEGE)” category. Someone in the East-West binary was crossed over. We may infer from the singular occurrence of “staff” that the writer of this document is connecting “staff” to those who come from the Baltics.

Here we have identified a potential value in conflict (ideology). West is best but then some of the best are not from the West. At least, the writer senses a need to recognize the ambiguous contribution from the Baltics.

West is best and East is past. The picture is binarily established; East-West with (THE COLLEGE)/faculty as the mediators (primary agents) and the student-alumni binary representing beneficiaries of (THE COLLEGE) and agents in the local setting respectively.

Summary (Overall Interpretation and Explanation)

Finally, the total process of production of this text in relation to its intended interpretation will be analyzed and provide an explanation of what kinds of values arise from the text and what, if any, conflicted values (ideologies) are evident. This explanation will be positioned in the context of Fairclough’s five stages of analysis. It is believed by the author that the critical approach to the analysis of texts can be a positive tool for disarming catalysts of conflict. Such an analysis could also create conflict in hegemony where everyone has de facto agreed to not disagreed.

STAGE 1 – “Focus on a social problem that has a semiotic aspect” – From the analysis of the brochure, one receives a glimpse into the values of the institution. At least, a potential for value conflict is suggested. Two values identified are:

a. We are Christian. The problem is how to communicate this to a general Christian audience in a sensitive but forthright manner.

b. West is best. The problem is that it is not a given that West is best as implied by the mixed message in the text.

Summary – Looking at one brochure can hardly establish the nature of an institution’s values. The greater value conflict reflected in the brochure may be stated as a conflict between local cultural values and North American cultural values as the two fractions negotiate a long-term identity, moving from a North American driven model to one that is prominently informed by “Eastern” local values.

STAGE 2 – “Identify obstacles to the social problem being tackled”.

The presence of a hortatory call for faculty suggests an obstacle. The text is an exposition set upon a sub-exhortation given to the founders to “Create”. We do not know the source of this call (God, Society, Conscience…) but the call to join (THE COLLEGE) in its task is a call to transform the past to the future and all that that means. In addition, the call is for faculty who are sponsored rather
than paid. This is not indicated in the text but is explanatory of the need for a higher call and the establishment of a clear need for Westerners in order to recruit unpaid faculty. The sponsorship model may be an obstacle to resolution of the problem, in that, if a Christian identity is too strongly stated textually the pool of recruits will be reduced and if it is not stated strongly enough another part of the pool may be lost. In addition, if it is not clear that help from North America (or the “West”) is required (as established in the East/West binary in the text) there may not be sufficient incentive to “volunteer”. If the need for Western help is overemphasized (text down tones this binary with the use of “staff” and “Baltics”) then the growing local commitments may be offended.

STAGE 3 – “Does the social order need the problem?”

The potential problem appears to be needed as long as the institution is dependent on externally sponsored Western faculty. However, there is no evidence that the two abrogated values listed in Stage 1 have negative effect on recruitment.

STAGE 4 – Identify possible ways past the obstacles.

Both of the two conflicted values provide a leverage point to look more closely at what is happening.

The East/West binary has a chink. There are people (at least “staff”) committed to the institution from the “Baltics”. Here is an opening to explore the binary. Is there a way to identify the strengths the West have to offer the East while not diminishing the values shared by East and West, past and future or the values the East has to offer to the West through this institution? There is a presence of a sense of calling and sensitivity in the text. One might infer a willingness to listen.

The Christian values expressed have only a potential conflict if in fact the institution wants to express a different value to its supporters than that of Christian humanism.

STAGE 5 – “Reflect critically on the analysis”.

Validity - Gee simplifies the issue of validity in textual analysis by listing four main foci (Gee, 1999).

1. Convergence – Do a wide range of features converge to support the conclusions? Gee lists 18 questions to be asked of the analysis.

2. Agreement - Do others speaking the “same native language” agree with the conclusions using the same tools? Here “native language” speakers reference those who understand the methodological procedures in use.

3. Coverage - Do similar conclusions arise from other similar data? Can the procedure be applied to other related data thus confirming or shaping the conclusions?

4. Linguistic Details - Are the conclusions tied to the linguistic details?

For the scope of this microanalysis, validity is in question. Additional supporting research would need to be completed to meet the conditions of point 1 and 3. Point 2 will remain to be discovered as this paper is reviewed and discussed. Point 4 tentatively validates the research assuming that the interpretation of the analysis supports the conclusion.

A further step to take in validating the material is for the institution’s administrative and support personnel to review the material and respond. How do they view the conclusions? Can they see similar observations in the broader social network? Are they willing to permit broader research?

I sense a strong tendency for critical discourse analysts to rely on intuition as much as on analysis to determine register, genre and how a text coheres. In the Conversational Analysis/CDA debate one argument against the claim that CA is “straightforward” as opposed to CDA in that much analysis is based on native speaker’s implicit knowledge about the language and society (Mey, 2001). This argument can be made of CDA as well. Although there seems to be a suspicion of quantitative methods by some (See a defense of quantitative approaches in language research in Leech, 1998), it is clear to me that quantitative research can support or correct researcher intuition. Thus advances in Corpus Linguistics can service register and genre identity as well as the Linguistic analysis in general. Of course, its interpretation will remain to be verified within the limitations of qualitative analysis.

Wider Applications

It must be recognized that this brochure represents a singular text within a discourse practice. This practice includes other texts (in its broader sense) that are part of the process and interpretation of the total practice. Further that practice is part of a wider sociocultural practice within the educational institution that produced it and within its hybrid society of cultures in which it is consumed. A fuller analysis will require a close reading of a wider range of texts within the order (collection) of discourse, a look at how the text was produced and how it is interpreted within its situational context. The intention would be that such a critical exploration raises awareness both within and without the institution of which the text is a part and increase the effectiveness of democratic dialogue.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Brochure Text

Little did Gestołovskiy know that the weight of a communist experiment would be another the freedom to develop these ideals. For seventeen years, most people in Eastern Europe obeyed the Soviet regime, fearing the alternative—exile to Siberia. A decade of independence brought freedom, but LIBERATING THE MIND is more than a ten-year process. How can a Christian liberal arts college help?

Create an educational experience where future leaders can explore what it means to be free.

To engage and equip students effectively, LCC provides qualified faculty and staff. They come to Lithuania from Western Europe, North America, and the Baltics, so the students of practical wisdom can immediately apply to their home environment. They create open and interactive classrooms where students feel safe to ask questions.

Dr. Dorothy West, LCC’s Sociology Department Chair, comments on the result of a trusting atmosphere: “One student said to me that when LCC’s door closes behind him he feels he enters a new world of hope. He leaves behind the pessimism he heard on the streets. He can dress and plan for a promising future. I’m encouraged to hear the students find LCC a safe place to explore opportunities and ideas.”

Throughout mentoring, the college also provides authentic caring relationships outside the classroom. Meeting faculty members over coffee gives students an opportunity to explore faith in Jesus Christ. These conversations OPEN THE DOOR for students to ask how a Christian worldview can influence their choices in a changing society. Valdis Zilins, class of 2009, is a testament to the TRANSFORMATION that can take place in people Where people are valued. “As first, the idea of going to LCC was scary for a village boy like me,” he says. “I didn’t think I could become the leader the college talked about developing. My high school teachers would say to me, ‘You don’t pass your exam,’ or ‘You make so many mistakes.’ But the approach of the faculty at LCC has helped me break the limits I had set for myself. They kept lifting the bar higher but still believe that I can get over it. This year, I was elected to Student Council. It gave me the opportunity to view myself differently and to learn about a different kind of leader—one who serves others and takes responsibility for actions.”

Mutual respect between faculty and students allows professors to CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO THINK FOR THEMSELVES.

The result? Alumni who can transform society. For LCC students, this is more than post-millennial hype—it is the chance to rebuild their communities into vital global components of the Eastern European region.

Graduate Nomeda Aksaite (1999) prepared for an international anti-corruption conference in Vilnius. As a development officer for the Lithuanian Free Market Institute, she drew from her years at LCC. “Besides a huge store of academic knowledge,” she says, “LCC has given me the opportunity to DEVELOP CHARACTER AND PURSUE TRUTH. It helped me comprehend the concepts of freedom and responsibility, and inspired me to use my gifts for the benefit of those around me. I learned to develop tolerance— to appreciate variety in other cultures, personalities and opinions.’’ Like Nomeda, other alumni achieve distinction in their various work environments. They discover that their strength of character combines with their FAITH AND LEADERSHIP ability to make a difference.

LCC serves as a bridge between East and West, between past and future. Acting as a catalyst for change, LCC seeks to transform young people like Vaieds into agents of transformation into leaders who will rebuild, renovate and renew society.