Aditi Bhatia, *Discursive illusions in public discourse: Theory and practice*.
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As the title suggests, Aditi Bhatia's volume analyses ideological discursive
constructions and their role in society. The book is positioned within the literature
on ideology and public discourse, defined, following Harbermas (1991), as the
meaning produced in discussions, debates and arguments in the public domain.
The study's theoretical framework draws on the thought and construct of a
range of intellectuals such as Kant and Gramsci, who emphasise how people's
minds contribute actively to the construction of reality, Bourdieu's notion of
habitus as the sum of our dispositions and beliefs, Berger & Luckmann's (1966)
social construction of reality, as well as Foucault's work and Wodak's critical
historical approaches to discourse. In particular, due homage is paid to the Italian
Marxist philosopher Gramsci, in that the study views ideology as pertaining
to the personal sphere as much as to the collectivity. Moreover, following
Gramsci, ideology is not understood as the reserve of powerful groups, rather
it is taken as a dynamic phenomenon and the site of power struggles that sustain
or resist dominant forces. Bhatia emphasises how '[a]uthority, power struggles,
hegemony and subordination play a large part in the objectifying of a particular
representation of reality [and how] the material means (e.g. choice of language)
used in conjunction with control of the modality through which the message is
passed help achieve collective agreement' (9). And yet, if Bhatia's book were
simply another study of how ideology offers a particular representation of social
reality, it would add little to the already vast literature on the topic. Instead,
with her attention to the concept of 'illusion', Bhatia attempts something new
and ambitious. She captures the crucial moment in which a collectivity's (rather
than an individual's) subjective/partial representation is 'mistakenly' presented as
actual reality and 'acted on', which produces decision making, categorising and
planning of future actions (10). If illusion still sounds close to ideology defined as
false consciousness in a Marxist tradition, Bhatia insists that this is not the case.
She maintains that because objectivity in reality is not accessible, what we all
deal with are 'representations' of various kinds that lead to discursive illusions.
Such discursive illusions are easily 'discernible' as those that occur in a situation
of contestation between different representations (17). The examples of illusions
provided by Bhatia are the constructs of globalisation, diversity and change, but
also those like marketing and advertising, in which the illusionary element is
harder to discern due to the 'stability of the discursive construct' (17).

 To reflect on how the '[i]llusions originating from our subjective realities
become the basis of our everyday interactions and belief systems' (11), Bhatia

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investigates the linguistic realisations of three complex yet elusive socio-political constructs in the public sphere: terrorism, the Arab Spring and climate change. Needless to say, this timely choice of topics contributes to the value of the volume. At this stage, Cialdini's (1997) notion of collective illusions is discussed in conjunction with the semantic work of Charteris-Black (2005), both pointing to the role of persuasion in public discourse, which Bhatia sees as an essential part of the illusionary construction, together with the element of 'authority and expertise-based legitimacy' (14).

The study proposes a multidimensional approach in terms of the analytical concepts and tools adopted. Following Wodak (2002), the role of the historical dimension and the consideration of the changes in the socio-political contexts impacting the illusionary constructs have already been pointed out. Another theoretical and methodological perspective is provided by the concept of 'structured immediacy' (Leudar & Nekvapil 2011), defined as the 'unconscious and conscious reconceptualization of historical antecedents in an attempt to situate and present specific instances of current reality, often in relation to the future' (52). Critical Metaphor Analysis, for example through the use of personification, depersonification or reification, is another tool in Bhatia's study which contributes to identify the ideology in language use. Membership Categorisation Analysis (Jayyusi 1984) is equally central to the investigation of the three areas of public discourse, as it provides the model through which Bhatia analyses how people within a particular illusionary construct categorise the world and the people and groups in it. Crucial to Bhatia's analysis are strategies of criminalisation and '(e)vilification', a term indicating the denigration of particular individuals through their association with evil, through which some groups are portrayed along the good–evil dichotomy. An illustration is President Bush's metaphoric representation of America's fight against terrorism as the 'axis of evil'. Due attention is also paid to how groups and their actions are framed or coherently presented and how such 'situation definitions' (Linell & Thunqvist 2003) encourage a representation of a particular kind. Once again, the example of America's enemies illustrates the point: within the frame 'evil' a mass of individuals are categorised as 'evil' and 'essentialized and imagined as homogeneous' (Gal & Irvine 1995: 975). Similarly, the justification for the attack on the East, in the case for instance of the Iraq war, lies in the construction of a strategic frame. According to 2003 White House reports, for instance 'Freedom and fear are at war', a personalisation of concepts in the Iraq war age produced a precise socio-political agenda. In this context, self-defence is 'legitimised and distinguished from terrorism' (79), as the White House states in 2003:

> <u>Defend</u> the United States, <u>our</u> citizens, and <u>our</u> interests at home and abroad by both <u>proactively</u> protecting <u>our</u> homeland and extending <u>our</u> defences to ensure <u>we identify and neutralize the threat</u> as early as possible (79, emphasis in original).

As for the analytical tools, the study relies on attention to the lexicon at the micro level of individual words and phrases (e.g. 'triumph', 'securing', 'havoc', 'take action against' or 'shape a free world') and to the macro plane of whole texts (e.g. British Prime Minister Tony Blair's 2002 Weapons of Mass Destruction Dossier, WMDD) as well as attention to the semantic-pragmatic dimension. The result is clearly illustrative of the kinds of spoken and written discursive constructions that support a given ideology in the three areas of public discourse that Bhatia investigates.

The choice of the discourse of terrorism, that of the Arab Spring and the discursive constructions relating to climate change that occupy Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the book is justified by Bhatia as an attempt to offer an opportunity to demonstrate the suitability of a 'comprehensive framework' that can convincingly address the multifaceted nature of such manifestations of public discourse (32). Beyond such a general rationale, specific motivations are offered for the choice of each data set. The discourses of terrorism comprise various voices that draw in particular on key documents of the Bush administration, the White House anti-terrorism policy, Blair's WMDD, Bush's speeches, and his and Blair's press conferences. The aim is not solely to capture the lexical and semantic-pragmatic patterns characterising such discourses, but also to capture the change in the perceptions of the US administration relating to such concepts as terrorism. Bhatia's concern is with the creation of illusionary discourses revolving around narratives of evil terror against which the good world has to fight, and based on such oppositions as attack versus defence or law versus lawlessness. The chapter on the Arab Spring appears to take a different perspective, but it still focuses on hegemonic discourse (albeit of a positive nature) and thus falls within the general aim of the book: Bhatia is concerned with how the activist discourse during the first year of the 2011 Egyptian revolution was appropriated by the media and turned into a proper discourse of illusion of freedom and equality realised by the activists' insistence on such words as 'justice', change' or 'dignity' in Twitter and Facebook posts. Phrases such as the following attest to such a discourse: 'The Friday of Redemption and Departure' (Tahrir Documents, February 2011), 'The Second Friday of Anger' (Tahrir documents, June 2011) or 'Friday of Restoring the Revolution to its Revolutionary, Consensual, Patriotic, and Civilian Path' (Arab Democratic Nasserist Party, September 2011). Such illusion results in particular from the media treatment of a number of revolutionary accounts; these were gladly offered by the activists who thus experienced a sense of ownership and recognition of their role in the uprising, while those who were not fighting created their own accounts drawing on digital information (tweets and blogs) of the revolutionary events. Both accounts contributed to 'a master narrative of the Egyptian revolution on the "digital Arab street"' (110).

Finally, the chapter on climate change explores the great variety of interpretations and readings of this phenomenon as encouraged by corporations and businesses. The various illusionary interpretations of the state of our planet resulting from the big corporations' vested interests are framed within the individual

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cultural context of such corporations. Therefore, India and China have a duty of care for the environment that stems from their tradition of spirituality, while the US has no mandatory corporate practices in the realm of climate. Therefore while Exxon insists on calling itself 'the world's largest publicly traded integrated petroleum and natural gas company', the Bank of China's mission statement highlights its commitment to the environment: 'As well as striving to minimise the environmental impact of its own operations, the Bank also played an active role in promoting environmental protection among the general public' (138).

In all three cases explored by Bhatia's study, the analysis is supported coherently by the methodological framework, which encompasses (a) the historicity component, (b) the linguistic and semiotic aspect, and (c) the social impact resulting from the construction of an illusionary discourse through the categorisation of particular groups. Concerning the linguistic analysis in particular, the three chapters on terrorism, the Arab Spring and climate change provide a wealth of information on how individuals, political events and (un)natural phenomena are constructed in public discourse. Selections from crucial texts clearly conjure up the construction of the imaginary discourse Bhatia is concerned with. The reader is guided by the author's accurate comments on the linguistic indicators that make that discourse of illusion credible and legitimate, with special attention paid to the particular context and field in which such hegemonic discourse promoting a certain version of reality is constructed.

Although the theoretical framework of the study is sound and inspiring, it is a shame that on the specific methodological level the criteria according to which the author identifies relevant linguistic elements in the excerpts used are not clearly described. As readers, we are not told how the author arrives at the text examples chosen as indicative of or leading to particular representations, or with what tools the investigation of the three distinct massive corpora is carried out. Given the size of the data collection, these questions are crucial for the study to be fully understood, appreciated and replicated. These shortcomings, however, do not detract from the value of Bhatia's volume and her novel perspective on the construction of hegemonic discourse.

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San Duanmu, *A theory of phonological features* (Oxford Linguistics). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. vii + 178.

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One of the great achievements of linguistic study in the twentieth century is the awareness and development of the idea that speech sounds are decomposable into smaller properties – variously referred to as FEATURES (e.g. Chomsky & Halle 1968), ELEMENTS (e.g. Kaye, Lowenstamm & Vergnaud 1985, Harris 1994, Backley 2011), COMPONENTS (e.g. Anderson & Ewen 1987), PARTICLES (e.g. Schane 1984) and GESTURES (e.g. Anderson & Ewen 1987, Browman & Goldstein 1989). All these terms have been used to identify properties generally considered to be primitives, which form part of the phonological module of the language faculty. Furthermore, recent phonological theories take the position that it is these properties which function as the minimal units of phonological contrast, and regard each primitive as a category associated with its own stable phonetic signature.

What is common to all scientific pursuits, however, is the inevitability of theoretical disagreement. And in the case of phonology, disagreement exists over the number and kinds of primitives that are assumed to be psychologically real. According to San Duanmu in his book *A Theory of Phonological Features*, this stems from two issues: (i) no existing theory has yet proposed a system of primitives which is based on a sufficient amount of data, such as those which are available from established sound inventory databases; and (ii) the data available in the phonology literature and from databases contain a substantial amount of phonetically vague (and not necessarily phonological) information, together with occasional clerical errors, which has led scholars to make bad choices when building a systematic model of primitives. To address (i), Duanmu closely examines two databases of transcribed sound inventories, UPSID (UCLA Phonological Segment Inventory Database; 451 inventories, 13,966 phoneme tokens; Maddieson 1984, Maddieson & Precoda 1990) and P-base (628 inventories, 19,959 phoneme tokens; Mielke 2004–2007). With regard to (ii), as a

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