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Glossary

Analysis

In this book, analysis refers to the close investigation of empirical material (data) as potential evidence for the workings of society. It is therefore a process of exploration with the aim of discovery. The researcher studies the details of data and then considers their wider implications. There are different ways of doing this. Any qualitative analysis, including discourse analysis, tends to be time-consuming. It also generally requires the researcher to develop her own explanation of the relationship between the part (the details of the data) and the whole (the social phenomenon or issue which is being investigated).

Construction

This term is linked to the assumption that language is not a neutral vehicle of communication. To talk, or write, about something, or someone, involves choices about words and perspectives and associations. Alternative versions are always possible. For example, a street could be described in terms of its buildings, or trees and gardens, or the people who live there, or of different activities associated with it. Each description constructs the street differently. Discourse analysts are interested in construction as a process, and in the constructed, and co-constructed, nature of people's accounts, and the implications or effects of particular discursive constructions.

Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) is based on the work of the sociologist Harvey Sacks, and its subsequent development by Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson. It involves the close analysis of talk as interaction, following the principles of ethnomethodology (see Chapter 2). The focus is on details of speakers' utterances and responses within the context of spoken

interaction. Ordinary talk is investigated as a skilled, rule-governed, joint activity in which meanings are established and changed through the minutiae of what is said or not said, and how it is said (e.g., the meanings conferred by pauses or by the talk of two speakers overlapping). Conversation analysts generally work with very detailed transcripts. They focus on the talk itself, excluding background information about the speakers and context unless this is directly invoked in what is said. They regard their analyses as 'technical', that is, as following closely from the evidence of the talk itself, which they contrast with more 'interpretive' analyses by other discourse analysts (see Schegloff, 1997; Wetherell, 2001).

Critical Discourse Analysis

This term refers to an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of talk and texts which considers the workings of power in society and the role of language in establishing and perpetuating dominance. Some of the best-known writers associated with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak. It generally involves analysis on a number of levels, from linguistic features of a text to its location within a larger social context.

Critical discursive psychology

This term was formulated by Margaret Wetherell (1998) to describe the approach she developed following her initial work on discourse analysis in psychology (with Jonathan Potter, 1987). Critical discursive psychology (CDP) focuses particularly on ways in which discursive work in talk is implicated with social inequalities and the exercise and contest of the workings of power within larger social contexts. A key aspect of the approach is the analysis of discursive resources, such as interpretative repertoires (see definition). Wetherell's own research has included studies of masculinity and, more recently, affect. Other researchers whose work is associated with this approach are Nigel Edley and Sarah Seymour-Smith.

Discourse

This is the key term of the book yet also one of the most difficult to define. It can refer to communication, specific language practices and a

complex set or system of meanings which is a resource for language use. As Chapter 2 discusses, many writers have developed definitions of discourse which encompass the foci of different analytic approaches.

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is the close study of language and language use as evidence of aspects of society and social life. It can involve the analysis of language data as communication, practice or selective constructions derived from accrued social meanings.

Discursive psychology

Many of the most influential texts on discourse analysis and related forms of empirical research, such as psychosocial research, have been written by social psychology academics (e.g., Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Discourse analysis has led to the development of a new area of psychology, discursive psychology, sometimes referred to as a sub-discipline. Academics working in this area have drawn on theories of discourse and discourse practice in order to challenge many traditional psychological theories of the person and also the kind of 'mental' activities (such as remembering) which are studied by some other psychologists, such as cognitive psychologists.

Discursive psychology encompasses different assumptions and methods, and many discursive psychologists would no longer refer to themselves as discourse analysts. There are areas of overlap but also some points of dispute, for example, about the 'right' kinds of data or the relationship between 'technical' and 'interpretive' analyses.

Critical discursive psychologists such as Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley are particularly interested in the issues around power which are associated with the work of Michel Foucault. Many other discursive psychologists, including Jonathan Potter, Derek Edwards and Elizabeth Stokoe work more closely in the tradition of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis.

Discursive resource

One point of investigation for discourse analysts can be the implications and consequences of discourses, that is, the ways in which ideas, representations (in various media), words and ways of speaking have effects

in the social world. For example, to call someone a 'good mother' is to invoke a category which is linked to certain words and activities (including what it excludes, that is, all that is associated with *bad* mothering). It is not a neutral categorization but affective, carrying strong emotional associations and potential implications. These meanings are part of the shared knowledge of members of society, largely carried in language, but not exclusively confined to it. By using a term or speaking in a certain way, a particular speaker can draw on all of this shared knowledge; it is a discursive *resource* for a speaker. Part of the purpose of a discourse analytic study can be to investigate discursive resources. Some analysts discuss discourses as resources. Others may focus on a narrower set or clump of words/ideas/ways of speaking, such as a narrative resource or interpretative repertoire.

Identity

Discourse analysis is often employed in research into identities. At its simplest, identity refers to who someone 'is', with all the range of possibilities that can encompass, from the person's name to a detailed description including a biography, to the multiple roles that person takes in different situations and relationships. Social researchers may study major identity categories such as gender, race, age, nationality and also more specific identities associated with particular contexts or issues (see 'subject position'). Discourse analytic research on identities, especially by social psychologists, has addressed some of the major problems of the social sciences, such as how every person is both an individual actor with a unique identity and sense of who she or he is, and at the same time a component of a larger society, sharing identities with many others and apparently shaped by the social environment to be typical of her or his class, generation, nationality and so on.

Identity work

Discourse researchers may study identities in talk, such as the subject positions available to a speaker, or how identities are constructed in talk, for example, when a speaker describes herself or others in a certain way. This kind of talk about identity is often referred to as identity work. The concept is linked to the assumption that identities are partly given by

contexts (or 'situated') but also actively contested, constructed, claimed and taken up in ongoing everyday talk and other life practices and interactions.

Ideological dilemma

The notion of an ideological dilemma (or, more simply, a dilemma) in discursive work comes from the work of Michael Billig and others (Billig et al., 1988). They suggested that commonsense logic is often inherently contradictory, so that speakers may find themselves making claims or arguments which they recognize as inconsistent; they then try to repair the inconsistency or otherwise resolve the problem.

Interpretative repertoire

Another widely discussed discursive resource is an interpretative repertoire. This has been defined as a 'relatively coherent way . . . of talking about objects and events in the world' (Edley, 2001, p. 198) or, in a somewhat broader definition, 'a culturally familiar and habitual link of argument comprised of recognizable themes, commonplaces and tropes' (Wetherell, 1998, p. 400). It is therefore similar to 'a discourse' but is perhaps more specific and particularly associated with the discussion of data. Researchers who discuss interpretative repertoires are often interested in multiple and conflicting resources and their different implications.

Narrative resource

One example of a discursive resource could be an established narrative sequence such as the sequence of stages which supposedly constitute a 'normal' relationship and life course: courtship, coupling, parenting, etc. This is not descriptive, since many or even most people's lives do not unfold like this. However, it is normative because it shapes expectations, biographical accounts and identities (for a fuller discussion, see Reynolds and Taylor, 2005), influencing how people talk about their own lives and the lives of others and reinforcing certain social values, including the positive valuing of heterosexuality (i.e., it is heteronormative). One form of discourse analysis is a narrative analysis (or narrative-discursive analysis; for example, Taylor and Littleton, 2006) of narrative resources.

Rhetorical work

This concept comes from the work of Michael Billig (1987; 1999) who suggests that talk is shaped, sometimes quite subtly, by a wider context of media debates, political discussion and social issues. A speaker's rhetorical work is a reference to this context, perhaps in the form of a response to a challenge or criticism which has not been made in the immediate interaction. For example, a comment which begins 'I'm not a racist but ...' is acknowledging the possibility that what will be said could be heard as racist or prejudiced and that these positions are widely criticized. A comment like this indicates how the speaker is simultaneously situated in multiple overlapping contexts, as a party to the ongoing conversation, a member of the larger society, an audience to current media debates and so on.

Social constructionism

Within psychology, social constructionism refers to the tradition of theory and empirical research which emphasizes how people's understandings of themselves and their worlds are not based on how things 'are' but on ideas and meanings current within the society. This is consistent with some of the premises of discourse analysis, such as the constitutive nature of language.

Subject position

The concept of 'a discourse' carries implications for the nature of the (social) world and also the people within it. For example, a discourse of healthy eating creates certain identities, such as a healthy eater, a bad eater and a good parent who provides a healthy diet for the family. Conversely, the identity of 'bad eater' does not exist without a discourse of healthy eating. The identity associated with a discourse like this is called a subject position. It is a 'position' because it is created by the external framework of the discourse. One possible focus of discourse analysis is the shifting subject positions or positionings which are taken up in talk, often quite subtly, for example, in the way someone speaks (e.g., as an authority) or is spoken to, how a speaker describes herself and so on.

Subjectivity

This term can combine several different ideas. The contrast between the objective and subjective is, roughly, between the outsider and insider

point of view, so that, conventionally, objective knowledge is based on neutral, unemotional observation and subjective knowledge as based on experience, enriched by emotion and personal involvement but perhaps liable to bias. (Most contemporary social scientists would challenge this neat division between the subjective and the objective.) A different notion is of the subject as a person controlled or constrained by larger forces, as in references to a 'political subject' who is in the power of a ruler or government. Social theorists have explored the ways in which people are shaped by, or subject to, the wider socio-historic context. With these associations, subjectivity can refer to the sense and experience of 'who I am' which is produced through a person's position, experience and interactions as a member of society. It has a similar reference to identity but emphasizes the location of a person within larger social systems, subject to the workings of power within those systems. The concept is associated with processes by which ideas and value systems come to be part of people's personal beliefs and morality, that is, from an objective to subjective status. This is sometimes contrasted with 'identity' as the objective, outsider view of the same person, for example, as officially categorized by gender, age, occupation and so on.

Transcription

For the purposes of analysis, discourse researchers generally convert spoken language and other 'lived' interactions into a written form. This can be done by taking notes during the fieldwork or immediately afterwards. Mostly commonly, however, it involves working from an audio- or audiovisual recording to make a detailed record called a 'transcript'. This usually looks rather like the script of a play, listing each speaker and the main words spoken. Other details will be included depending on the researcher's interest and the analytic approach; the same recording can be transcribed in many different ways. Transcription is always time-consuming. It is inevitably selective and is therefore inseparable from the analytic process through which the researcher focuses on and interprets particular features.

Trouble

The concept of 'trouble' is particularly associated with discourse analytic research on identities. Discourse analysis necessarily involves the investigation of complexity, for example, because of the multiplicity of available

discourses and discursive resources and associated subject positions. This complexity gives rise to conflicts and contradictions, for example, between how a speaker positions herself and is positioned by others, or between a positive and negative valuing of the same identity. This kind of trouble prompts discursive repair, for example, through explanations. Trouble in discursive work is interesting for the analyst because it can draw attention to different discursive resources in play and it can also signal the positive and negative values attached to certain identities.