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Abstract

In Analyzing Talk in the Social Sciences: Narrative, Conversation & Discourse Strategies, Katherine Bischoping and Amber Gazso introduce three analytical approaches to talk data: narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. Taking a sociological perspective, the authors engage in critical dialogue on research that employs these approaches, and provide step-by-step guide to analyzing talk data, using these strategies. They expand on introductory qualitative research concepts by taking up the complex interrelationships among epistemological, ontological, paradigmatical, and theoretical lenses that guide these analytical strategies. Through examples from a wide range of studies and their own research and advising experiences, Bischoping and Gazso articulate various analytical approaches to talk data to demonstrate the strength of these strategies in qualitative inquiry. Despite its minor shortcomings, such as its narrow focus on three analytical approaches and prevalent focus on talk data elicited in interviews, this book offers insights and strategies for students, faculty, and researchers interested in fine-tuning approaches guided by narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis.

Keywords

Narrative Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis

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Demystifying the Analysis Process of Talk Data: A Review of *Analyzing Talk in the Social Sciences: Narrative, Conversation & Discourse Strategies*

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In Analyzing Talk in the Social Sciences: Narrative, Conversation & Discourse Strategies, Katherine Bischoping and Amber Gazso introduce three analytical approaches to talk data: narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. Taking a sociological perspective, the authors engage in critical dialogue on research that employs these approaches, and provide step-by-step guide to analyzing talk data, using these strategies. They expand on introductory qualitative research concepts by taking up the complex interrelationships among epistemological, ontological, paradigmatical, and theoretical lenses that guide these analytical strategies. Through examples from a wide range of studies and their own research and advising experiences, Bischoping and Gazso articulate various analytical approaches to talk data to demonstrate the strength of these strategies in qualitative inquiry. Despite its minor shortcomings, such as its narrow focus on three analytical approaches and prevalent focus on talk data elicited in interviews, this book offers insights and strategies for students, faculty, and researchers interested in fine-tuning approaches guided by narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. *Keywords: Narrative Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis*

When I was invited to discuss my dissertation proposal a couple of weeks ago at a graduate-level qualitative research course, I noticed some students grappled with the eclectic theoretical framework and layered approach to analysis in my research. In my work, I combine the discourse analytical approach of positioning with the ethnographic method of Photovoice, informed by poststructuralist views on second language learning and social identity theory (Norton, 2013). This emergent and complex process between epistemological, ontological, theoretical, and methodological lenses was unsettling to students who aimed for a clear cut path from theory to method.

In the academic research community there is a need to contextualize available research methods at our disposal. For students and faculty in search of understanding the relationship among social scientific paradigms that inform qualitative research methods, *Analyzing Talk in the Social Sciences: Narrative, Conversation & Discourse Strategies*, provides guidelines to make connections between larger concepts and individual work. The authors, Katherine Bischoping and Amber Gazso, Associate Professors of Sociology at York University, offer a close examination of narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis from a sociologist viewpoint, by clarifying the interrelationships and differences among these approaches. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this work is the contextualization of the research project in relation to the epistemological, ontological, paradigmatical, and theoretical stances selected to examine a question, an alignment that perhaps novice researchers grapple to understand.

Bischoping and Gazso adopt a broad definition of talk or discourse, "as encompassing naturally occurring, scripted talk, text, practices, ideology, and power" (p. 5). In their book, they explain analytical strategies with particular focus on talk data. Emergent between two

parties in scripted interviews or natural conversation, talk data includes oral histories, including testimonio, life history, or life course interviews, narratives about turning points, everyday conversations, such as, interactions during play and announcement of news, and institutional talk, such as doctor-patient interactions, emergency calls, and qualitative research interviews.

Analyzing Talk in the Social Sciences includes three parts and 13 chapters: Analyzing Narratives (chapters two through four); Analyzing Talk-in-interaction (chapters five through eight); and Analyzing Discourse (chapters nine through 12). In each part, the authors present an overview of a method and devote a chapter to discuss strategies related to analyzing talk data in interview, a common data collection method.

The book opens with a section about the authors and acknowledgements. Chapter one provides an overview, definitions of key terms, such as talk data, ontology, and epistemology, and a brief overview of the differences between the three research methods. The first part (chapters two through four) centers on narrative analysis, a method that privileges the individual perspective. Bischoping and Gazso define story or narrative and narrative analysis and outline fine-grained analysis strategies that pertain to the story and narrator, such as time and sequence, related ideas, particular stories, settings, plots, and characters narrators chose to describe and evaluate, and positioning strategies through the narrator's use of pronouns, verbs, reported speech, and figurative language. The analysis of the narrators' choice of pronouns, verbs, metaphors, key phrases, proverbs, rhythm, parallel structures, silences, and repetitions can reveal the tellers' perspective, identity, agency, and evaluations. In chapter four, the authors emphasize the value of being mindful of the researcher's positionality, power, privilege ontology, epistemology, and social status— concepts implicated in knowledge construction in research. Involving participants in various stages of the research, such as data analysis, representation, reflecting on silences, gaze, and gestures in interviews, and adopting creative strategies, such as poetry to represent multiple voices are recommended to decenter power structures in research.

In the second part, Bischoping and Gazso turn attention to conversation analysis, an approach to study social order in talk, formulated by Sacks, Schlegloff, and Jefferson. To study the organization of talk, the authors recommend careful consideration to detailed transcription and grounding analysis in the data as opposed to relying on the researcher' prior knowledge. In addition to identifying turn construction units, turn design, adjacency pairs, repairs, extended sequences, the analysis can be expanded to non-verbal elements, such as gestures, posture, facial expressions, and gaze. The authors present membership categorization analysis, a conversation analysis method that examines teller's use of categories or membership categorization devices (Sacks, 1992) to define their social roles, claim identities, make moral claims, and draw moral inferences in ordinary conversations (chapter six) and institutional talk-in-interaction (chapter seven). Using a conversation analysis of an interview extract from Speer (2002; textbox 8.2 on p. 117), Bischoping and Gazso point out how the use of visuals from newspapers and magazines in interviews, considered a participant-centered data collection method in feminist research, was driven by the researcher' agenda, as opposed to participants' voices. Compared to assessing talk data through thematic analysis, through conversation analysis, the researcher can interrogate power dynamics in research with a focus on the tellers' strategies to establish common communicative ground and orient to the topic and researcher (Speer, 2002).

In the third part, the authors transition to discourse analysis, an analytic strategy that examines how power structures shape social identities in interactions. They introduce discourse analysis through influential scholars and theorists, such as Foucault, and key concepts of power, knowledge, and discourse followed by Critical Analysis (chapter nine) and garden-variety approaches (chapter 10), two major strands in discourse analysis and a

discussion about reflexivity in research interviews in chapter 12. The authors recommend strategies to contextualize the interaction within the macro level of discourses, assess how discourses enable or constrain knowledge construction. Strategies for examining how ideologies shape discursive identity constitution include exploring what discourses marginalize certain groups and deconstructing talk to explore implicit discourses that underlie how people make meaning. The final chapter summarizes characteristics of talk data related to narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis and revisits the scenarios posed in the introductory chapter. It concludes with a list of references and index.

Analyzing Talk in the Social Sciences is not an introductory text to analytic strategies to talk data. As the authors point out in the introduction, it intends to demystify the analysis process for students interested in refining approaches to talk data, drawing on interdisciplinary research, the authors' experiences, and discussions with graduate students. This book was a rewarding read as it crystallizes the differences and similarities among three popular approaches to analyzing talk data; it synthesizes key terminology, assumptions, relevant studies, intellectual traditions, and theoretical developments from a variety of fields, such as sociology, education, language teaching and learning, social work, and women's studies. To tackle the relationship among these strategies, the authors address ontological, epistemological, paradigmatical, and theoretical concerns, shared assumptions, and schools of thought in relation to methodological approaches, and provide guidelines to data collection and analysis, using accessible language. These stimulating and informative discussions challenged me to understand how to differentiate among these strategies, by examining the epistemological and ontological paradigms that lie behind them. They also guided me toward a strategy that aligns with my worldview, research questions, and data collection.

In addition to covering a range of studies, Bischoping and Gazso review various analytic strategies, drawing on data provided by students and excerpts from various research. For example, through Mollie's worst job, an interview excerpt (textbox 3.2 on p. 31), the authors provide a step-by-step analysis of linguistic forms, such as pronouns, verb choices, voice of verbs, nominalization, vivid details, figures of speech, and other elements, such as rhythm, parallel structures, silences, and repetitions that index the tellers' identity and agency. Researchers engaged in exploring identity and agency through narrative analysis and poetic forms of data representations will find the first part valuable.

Another strength of the book is its organization and presentation of information. In each part, the authors discuss in detail tenets of a particular analytic method, advancements by leading theorists and researchers, and several strategies, marked in italics, and key terms, marked in bold. Interview excerpts and summaries of various strategies, visually represented in text boxes, and chapter summaries at the end of the chapters are helpful for readers. Aside for the detailed analyses and example excerpts, a series of exercises and discussions at the end of chapters or online companion website would have extended the learning opportunities.

As suggested by the title of this book, talk data is the focus of analysis. For each method, the authors devote a chapter analyzing interview talk through a particular lens. For example, in part two, after the concepts of face, identity, indexicality, intersubjectivity, and corpus are contextualized through a conversation analytic lens, using Sacks, Schlegoff, and Jefferson's turn-taking model, the authors recommend various strategies for reflexively exploring member orientations to the interview, topics, and questions in chapter eight.

Compared talk data elicited in interviews, a popular data collection method, other methods, such as photo prompted interviews (e.g., Ingrey, 2012; Speer, 2002) and various multimodal and multilingual data sources remain marginally discussed. Since individuals rely on linguistic and nonlinguistic resources and various modalities to recount stories about their experiences, including studies that combine visual methods and discourse analytic approaches, such as content and linguistic analysis (e.g., Nikula & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2008) and

critical discourse analysis and social semiotics (e.g., Honeyford, 2014) would have enriched the discussion about analytical strategies in this book. In addition to its data collection limited to talk data or "big story" elicited in interviews, naturally occurring data remained relatively underexplored. For instance, the authors briefly address Georgakopoulou's (2006) concept of small story in part two (chapter five). In contrast to autobiographies and interviews that adhere to the Labovian chronological linearity, non-canonical small stories, such as brief tellings of experiences and discussions of common experiences, are of interest because they reveal the fleeing identity constitutions in everyday conversations.

A particular strength of the book is that it operationalizes terminology, such as talk or discourse, identity, agency, and reflexivity through various analytical lenses. Each part presents a particular strategy, narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis within the context of discrepancies and similarities among these strategies. Because the chapters are thematically organized, they can be read separately. Researchers interested in exploring how social order is produced in interaction will find part two useful. The ethnomethodological methods of membership categorization analysis (chapter six) are applicable for inquiry on gender, race, social class, and other categories in talk data. Critical Discourse Analysis in part three (chapter ten) appeal to readers interested in how social power is enacted in and through language.

The concepts of position, subjectivity, and reflexivity are reexamined through several chapters. Throughout the book, the authors emphasize that data collection is socially constructed, thus it requires reflection. Several chapters feature reflexivity as focused on the participant's orality or print literacy (chapter two), translation challenges (chapter three), the knowledge constructed in interviews (chapter four, eight, and 10), the researcher' ideological and political stances (chapter 10), and research identity performance (chapter 12). For example, the authors reflect on the challenges related to working with various participants, such as interviewing non-native target language speakers, among them asylum seekers with low second language proficiency and literacy skills, and discuss translation and interpretation issues (chapter three) that complicate the production and analysis of talk data (e.g., Blommaert, 2001). I found the reflection by Selom Chapman-Nyaho (textbox 12.4, p. 177), a graduate student researcher, particularly evocative to how he performed, constituted, and sometimes struggled to negotiate race in his research interviews with police officers and in a focus group with white teachers. His account is noteworthy for researchers less familiar with reflexivity during research interviews.

Other topics include repair or correction in everyday talk (chapter five), devices for identity work (chapter six), marginalization of sensitive topics (chapter seven), and the relevancy of certain topics to participants (chapter eight) in conversation. In addition to these diverse topics, the authors discuss major strands, such as membership categorization analysis (chapter six), critical discourse analysis (chapter ten), and garden variety discourse analysis that draws on eclectic analytic approaches (chapter 11), emphasizing the value of these strategies in interdisciplinary research.

Aside from the many positive, some minor oversights of this book include its limited scope to three analytical approaches to talk data, and lack of guiding questions, exercises, and activities. Despite these oversights, this book will provide essential analytical skills and resources for faculty advising research guided by narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis and readers curious about these analytical approaches.

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