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Discourse Analysis: A Review in Sociological Fieldwork

Rosila Bee Mohd Hussain

University of Malaya

Abstract

This article discusses how discourse analysis works in a sociological fieldwork setting. Since discourse analysis shares many of the elements found in a wide range of disciplines (anthropology, psychology and ethnography), this article seeks to explain how discourse analysis is used to analyze the observations and recordings of a series of interactions between participants in social events or social settings. However, in discussing discourse analysis here, unlike conversation analysis, which focuses exclusively on verbal communication in interaction, discourse analysis is used to examine all forms of verbal and textual materials. Therefore, this article shows how discourse is seen as a communication of thoughts by words, verbal communication or conversation. Some ideas presented are outlines on how to examine discourse analysis limits, enabling and constraint of what can be said by people involved, at which location and in what situation. This paper concludes with a critical discussion of how expression by itself in discourse can vary across social situations or social settings.

Keywords: discourse analysis, qualitative research method, identity, fieldworks, identity adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Qualitative researchers are more likely to explore processes than outcomes and focus on the meanings of experiences by exploring how people define, describe and metaphorically make sense of these experiences (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009:166), “a qualitative perspective assumes that knowledge is constructed through communication and interactions; as such knowledge is not ‘out there’ but within the perceptions and interpretations of the individual... such that you cannot analyze and understand entirely the entity by analysis of its parts but rather you must examine the larger context in which people and knowledge function. This concept is called the social construction of reality”.

The roots of social construction can be found in sociology (Craig, 1995; Shotter & Gergen, 1994). According to John Shotter and Kenneth Gergen (1994:i), social

1 Senior Lecturer, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.