Introduction

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Discourse analysis is a rapidly expanding field of research and theorizing. The growing interest in this field of research reflects a threefold linguistic turn in the social sciences. First, there has been a developing appreciation among social scientists of the central role of discursive practices in social life. The conception of language as a mere technical means of communication has been superseded. Language has been re-conceptualized as social activity. As a consequence, the traditional boundaries between linguistics and the social sciences have become blurred. To fully understand contemporary social life, researchers have had to turn their attention to a diverse range of new phenomena. These include, for instance, the large-scale discursive practices that make up postmodern reflexive culture and the small-scale organization of talk in the call centers of the new service economies, the formulation of social policy and the detail of social interaction. The study of discourse is inseparable from the study of society.

Second and more generally, the concept of discourse has produced new and fruitful angles on the old themes of the social sciences such as the nature of power and the construction of social identities. Many recent theoretical debates and controversies within the social sciences are concerned with the way the notion of discourse is used, and its potentialities and limits. Third, there has been a growing recognition that social research is itself a discursive practice. Scientists' discourse emerged as a research topic for discourse analysts at the beginning of the 1980s. Nigel Gilbert and Michael Mulkay (1984), for example, in one of the first studies of this kind, explored the variability of the accounts biochemists used in different situations for their research practice. Along with these studies of the accounting devices used in scientists' discourse, it has become apparent that even the so-called "hard facts" of social research are discursive in nature. The empirical data of social research are predominantly products of specific discursive practices.

All three of these moments of the linguistic turn (discourse as topic, as theory/epistemology, and as reflexive exploration) are illustrated in this book. The book itself is the product of an unusual collaboration

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coordinated by Harry van den Berg and Hanneke Houtkoop-Steenstra. A group of discourse scholars from a range of different perspectives and geographical locations (North America, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands) were brought together and asked to focus their attention on a common set of materials. All agreed to study three interviews independently and then to report their findings. The interviews (conducted by Margaret Wetherell) came from a large-scale project on racist discourse and were relatively informal and open-ended in nature. (They are reproduced for the reader in the appendix.)

The range of perspectives shared by the group included conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, cognitive linguistics, Goffman's frame analysis, critical sociolinguistics, discursive psychology, and Foucauldian-influenced styles of critical discourse analysis. In working with the interviews, our contributors became interested in a huge range of phenomena. These included reported voices, the formulation of the mind/world relationship in talk, absurdity and laughter, and the cultural resources comprising "common sense." Contributors looked at contradictions and their functions and effects, the development of categories and representations of agency, the interviewer's actions and the kinds of frames these created for those being interviewed, along with the subtle coordination of talk.

The chapters in this volume illustrate some of the key methods and approaches available in social science and linguistics for investigating discursive practices. The shared empirical ground allows the reader to compare different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches and to evaluate the process of making inferences. It has been a fascinating exercise to see how each discourse scholar has dealt with these interviews. Research data are not neutral, and empirical data are always constructed within a specific research practice. Our contributors had to work with material that was not their own, but in each case they good humoredly set about locating it and defining it as the kind of object they could analyze. In the process they demonstrated their typical working assumptions, preferred research questions, and procedures for producing knowledge. The empirical material in this respect proved to be both negotiable and non-negotiable. It metamorphosed into a different kind of data with exposure to each new act of scrutiny, yet it also remained "relatively autonomous," and thus dialogue and communication became possible between different theoretical and methodological positions.

The contributors report a number of new empirical findings on the rhetorical organization of discourse about issues of race, and, more generally, on the organization of talk on "controversial issues" and interaction in interviews. They also discuss some current live theoretical debates.

Should, for instance, discourse be understood as social action and/or as a product or expression of the (individual or collective) mind? Should discourse analysis be "emic" or "etic" in approach? Should discourse analysts, in other words, restrict themselves to the categories used by the participants, or should analysts also use theoretical categories to understand the discourse in question? How relevant is the wider social and institutional context? Is it relevant at all? Where do discourses end and the rest of "the social" begin? Should discourse analysts take a critical stance? Should discourse analysis, for example, be primarily oriented to the production of knowledge, or should it take into account political goals, such as supporting groups in their struggle for liberation and social equality?

As it turned out, this collaborative exercise has perhaps revealed most about the third twist of the linguistic turn noted above – the application of discourse theory and method to understand the discursive practices of social science itself. What interested many of the contributors were not the topics but the organization of the interviews as a research activity. (Indeed, it is difficult to comment on content with such a small sample and where the context was unfamiliar.) This focus is valuable. It has been estimated that over 90% of social research is based on interview data (Brenner 1981). Social research, whatever discipline or approach taken, relies heavily on interviewing people about their experiences, opinions, hopes, fears, reactions, and expectations. The research interview is a discursive act. It is jointly produced by the participants, and the interviewer is as involved in this production as the interviewees. It is highly appropriate, therefore, that the methods and theories of discourse analysis are applied to this practice. In the remainder of this introduction, we want to comment more generally on this central theme before introducing the structure and organization of the book as a whole.

The research interview: instrument or topic?

Many social scientists treat the research interview as an instrument for developing the empirical foundations of social scientific knowledge. Opinion polls based on survey interviews are often presented as windows onto the world of what people believe and want. In the field of qualitative research, terms such as "in-depth interview" and "open interview" suggest that it is possible to go beyond the superficial style of standardized survey interviews to unravel a deeper or more essential reality. Indeed, a crucial assumption of much qualitative as well as quantitative research practice is that it is possible to make inferences from the information produced in interviews that go beyond the specific context of those interviews. This assumption is very often taken for granted.

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As a consequence it is common to find that qualitative researchers, just like their quantitative colleagues, neglect the constructed nature of their data. Interviewees' answers are interpreted without taking into account their local construction or the ways in which they are produced by the joint effort of the interviewer and interviewee within a highly specific context. Although there is an awareness of the active role of the interviewer, often presented as the problem of "reactivity of measurement," in mainstream methodological texts on interviewing, the presupposition remains that the ultimate ideal for interviewing is to obtain answers that are not "disturbed" by the interviewer's behavior. The misleading metaphor of "data collection" is still dominant, in other words, in the way the interview process is framed.

The interviewee is approached as a vessel of pre-given data, and interviewing strategies or styles are conceptualized as ways to open the vessel to "collect" the data without transforming them (cf. Holstein and Gubrium 1995). This metaphor provides some common ground for mainstream qualitative and mainstream quantitative research, although these approaches differ substantially in their views on how to "open up" the interviewee. Standardizing the behavior of the interviewer, neutrality, and detachment are the central methodological guidelines for survey interviewing, while flexibility of interviewer-behavior, empathy, and openness are the central methodological guidelines for qualitative interviewing (cf. Rubin and Rubin 1995). Notwithstanding these differences, in both cases, the "logic in use" (Kaplan 1964) of interviewing promises an entrance to the "real" experiences, attitudes, opinions, and emotions of the interviewee.

This view of the interview as an instrument for empirical research is a contested one. Scholars working within related research traditions such as ethnomethodology, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, and discursive psychology have demonstrated the constructed nature of interview data (for example: Cicourel 1964; Briggs 1986; Pomerantz 1988; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991; Houtkoop-Steenstra 1996, 1997, 2000; Baker 1997). From this approach comes the notion that a research interview has to be understood as a specific social context (defined and redefined during the interaction between interviewer and interviewee) within which answers are locally constructed. Answers should be analyzed as the product of a joint effort of interviewer and interviewee. Research interviews are thus viewed as an interesting research topic in their own right because they constitute a specific category of institutional talk that can be studied in itself.

This recognition of the discursive character of the empirical data produced in social research has far-reaching implications for the traditional

"logic in use" found in survey research, as well as in qualitative social research. Both strands of social research neglect and underestimate the effect of context, for example. Interviewees typically articulate opinions that do not necessarily correspond with those articulated in other conversational situations, such as in conversations with friends or neighbors and conversations in the workplace. This variability, which is such a problem for the instrumental view of interviewing, is grist to the mill for those who study interviews as discursive acts.

The research community in which interviews are viewed and used as a more-or-less reliable and valid research instrument, and the research community in which interviews are regarded as a research topic have up until now formed two different cultures. There has been very little debate between these research communities. Very often their positions are presented as incompatible and opposing alternatives. Nevertheless, there are initiatives oriented toward bridging the gap. There have been attempts to use the knowledge produced by research on interviews as social events for social research based on interviews as a method of data collection. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) have developed an ethnographic approach, for example, with reflexivity as a cornerstone, that doesn't fall into the trap of naturalism or positivism. This approach recognizes the ways in which the researcher is part of the social world he/she wants to investigate and the necessity of taking into account the role the researcher plays in producing the outcome of ethnographic research.

Reflections on the implications of the constructed character of interview data have produced profound insights into the interview as a social practice. In qualitative research, Holstein and Gubrium (1995) have advocated the concept of the "active interview" to underline their perspective on the research interview as a process in which both the interviewer and the interviewee play a creative role. Within the tradition of standardized survey interviews, authors like Schuman (1982) have argued for an approach in which reactivity is not viewed as a methodological problem but as an opportunity. It is not seen as something that needs to be solved in order to avoid a supposed "bias of measurement"; instead it is viewed as relevant information about the context dependency of an interviewee's behavior. The common denominator here is the methodological conviction that social research should avoid the trap of decontextualizing the interviewee's discourse, which is still characteristic of the "logic in use" of much mainstream qualitative and quantitative research. This methodological conviction stresses the importance of studying interview discourse as a social activity, thereby creating common ground to discuss the potential applications of discourse analysis to the interviewing practice of social research. One of the principal contributions of this book is

to further open up this possibility. The contributors have extended the systematic study of the research interview in ways that can only be helpful for researchers collecting data through this method.

The materials for analysis

As noted earlier, an unusual and unique feature of the collaborative exercise underpinning this book is that every contributor was invited to analyze the same textual data. Every author received transcripts of three research interviews. These interviews had been re-transcribed in fine detail to make them suitable for as diverse a range of styles of analysis as possible. The interviews were part of a large-scale research project conducted by Margaret Wetherell in the mid-1980s on racism and race relations in New Zealand. (The project and the main findings are summarized in detail in Wetherell and Potter 1992.) Although racism and race relations was the main focus, the interviews covered other matters such as economic relations with Australia, and New Zealand's relation with Britain as the former colonial power still linked through the Commonwealth of Nations.

In line with the focus on racism and race relations, the interviews covered three main controversial issues in New Zealand in the 1980s. First, the events and protest around the South African (Springbok) rugby tours of New Zealand in the 1970s and early 1980s were targeted. These tours defined relations between New Zealand and the then apartheid government of South Africa and were a recent source of major social upheaval and civil disturbance. Second, the interviews focused on relations between the two main ethnic groups in New Zealand – the indigenous minority, the Maori people, and the majority group, white New Zealanders of European descent (frequently described as Pakeha New Zealanders). Specific themes here included the government's multicultural policy and emphasis on New Zealand as "one nation, one people," and recent Maori campaigns over land rights, language issues, and affirmative action policies. Finally, the interviews usually also focused on immigration issues, in relation particularly to migrants from the Polynesian Islands. From a corpus of over eighty interviews, three of the "most memorable" interviews were selected for our contributors to examine. More detail on the interviewing strategy and approach can be found in the chapter from Margaret Wetherell that follows this introduction.

The choice of interviews on race relations for the collaborative exercise was not accidental. Open-ended interviews on sensitive and controversial topics such as prejudice, ethnocentrism, ethnic categorization, and stereotyping are difficult to interpret. These interviews very often produce

many ambiguous statements. Traditional (qualitative as well as quantitative) research on the fields of ethnicity, racism and nationalism, and gender and sexism has encountered severe difficulties in coping with the ambiguities and contradictions within interview discourse on these topics. The turn to discourse, in contrast, opens up ways of analyzing these ambiguities and contradictions in terms of the situational dependencies of discourse, giving full attention to the flexibility of accounting practices. For example, discourse analysis draws attention to the possibility that the interviewee may switch between different ways of framing the question topic, and may use different interpretative repertoires in answering questions about a topic considered to be controversial. Ambiguities may be due to changes in the way the interview situation, the relation between interviewer and interviewee, and the general research goal are framed during the course of the interview (Van den Berg 1996). The outcome of these framing activities can be crucial for the unfolding discourse between interviewer and interviewee and the strategies used by each. The analysis of such interviews is seldom straightforward in other words, and presented a considerable test or challenge to our contributors and their methodology.

The complete transcripts are included in the appendix. An important function of this appendix is to give readers the opportunity to "check" the interpretations developed by the authors and to facilitate the comparison of different approaches to discourse analysis. It is possible, for example, for the reader to reanalyze the fragments selected by the authors within the context of the transcribed interview as a whole and to compare the selected fragments with other parts of the interview. Note, however, that readers should seek permission (see details given in the appendix) before making any other use of the interview material.

The structure of the book

In the first chapter, Margaret Wetherell sketches the broader background to the research interviews used in this exercise. She describes the general research aims of her project and the discourse analytic procedures used in analyzing the interviews. Attention is especially focused on the general methodological/theoretical aspects of the relationship between discourse and context. Following the discussion a few years ago in *Discourse and Society*, Wetherell outlines her approach, perhaps best described as "critical discursive social psychology" (Wetherell 1998; Schegloff 1997, 1998, 1999a, 1999b; Billig 1999a, 1999b).

In chapters 2 and 3, two further general theoretical/methodological positions are presented and illustrated by exemplary analysis of the selected

interviews. In chapter 2, a discursive psychological perspective strongly influenced by conversation analysis is outlined by Derek Edwards. Edwards takes a more fine-grained approach to discursive psychology and examines the ways in which the participants in the interviews constructed and used various versions of mind/world relationships. In chapter 3, David Lee presents a view from cognitive linguistics on how categorizations and agency are constructed in interview discourse. In chapter 4, the critical sociolinguist, Srikant Sarangi, approaches the interviews as a specific form of talk, which he characterizes as "hybrid." He demonstrates that, in addition to the institutional frames normally guiding interviewer- and interviewee-role identities, other frames are used, such as professional frames and life-world frames.

Chapters 5 and 6 primarily focus on some of the specific devices used by the interviewees in presenting their accounts of race relations and ethnicity. In chapter 5, Charles Antaki analyzes the function of absurdity in interviewees' discourse. Why did those interviewed produce such colorful descriptions at certain points of the interview? What functions does this "color" serve? In addition to the use of absurdity in expressing views, attention is also given to the use of caricature in descriptions of "others" and some of its possible effects. In chapter 6, Richard Buttny focuses on the use of "voice" in discourse on race. He examines the use of reported speech in constructing the (racialized) other as deficient and ascribing unreasonable political positions to this "other."

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 take up further substantive aspects of the discourse, focusing on the (ethnic/racial) categorization and stereotyping (co)produced in the course of the interview. In chapter 7, Harry van den Berg analyzes different types of contradictions in interviewee's discourse and looks at how these inconsistencies are constructed. In chapter 8, Maykel Verkuyten analyzes how the notion of happiness features in interviewees' discourse and the ideological functions these constructions fulfill. His emphasis, as in Chapter 1, is on the interpretative or cultural resources participants draw upon to construct their versions of events. In Chapter 9, Titus Ensink illustrates the value of concepts taken from Goffman's work. He explores the "footing" of the interview participants in particular and how they categorize themselves and the world they live in.

Following this emphasis on more substantive aspects, chapters 10, 11, and 12 turn back again to one of the main themes of this book: the characteristics of the interaction between interviewers and interviewees. These chapters focus on the role of the interviewer. In chapter 10, Tom Koole develops a fine-grained analysis of the tightrope walk interviewers take between conflicting interactional goals such as affiliation and detachment.

The analysis focuses on the different types of answer receipts used by the interviewer and their functions in relation to these broader goals. In chapter 11, Tony Hak focuses on interviewer laughter in the context of instances of racist talk produced by the interviewee. Why does the interviewer laugh at these points? What might it signify for the general process of interviewing? In the last chapter, Anita Pomerantz and Alan Zemel conclude the book through their examination of the ways in which perspectives and frameworks are constructed in interviewer's queries. They look at how adjustments are made when there are different perspectives between interviewer and interviewee and draw attention to the implications of their study for the practice of researchers who use the interview as an instrument or research tool.

Here then is a fascinating range of attempts to analyze the interview as a discursive practice. The chapters in this book showcase different styles of discourse analysis, and we believe that they offer considerable insight into the social situation of the interview.

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