

Chapter 10: Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Glossary

Action orientation: how participants use discursive resources and with what effects; a concern with how participants manage issues of stake and interest; a concern with the function of discourses

Agency: the degree to which a speaker can be conceived as an active agent in the use of discursive strategies.

Counter-discourse: alternative constructions that emerge, particularly those in relation to 'common-sense' or dominant discourse

Critical realism: an epistemological position; data can tell us something about what is going on in the 'real' world but it does not do so in a self-evident, unmediated fashion – data needs to be interpreted to unpack underlying structures or hidden aspects

Discourse: the different ways in which a discursive object may be constructed

Discursive objects: that which is the focus of study, for example, 'love', 'illness'

Epistemological relativism: knowledge of the world is necessarily mediated by, constructed through, language; a perspective aligned with critical realism

Foucauldian discourse analysis: an approach influenced by the work of Michel Foucault; concerned with the discursive resources that are available to people, and the ways in which discourse constructs subjectivity, selfhood and power relations; concerned with language and its role in the constitution of social and psychological life.

Institutional practices: the ways of organizing, regulating and administering social life.

Ontological realism: there are underlying structures and mechanisms that generate phenomena, versions of which we then construct through language; a perspective aligned with critical realism

Positioning: the act of a subject being positioned within an available discourse

Relativism: an epistemological position; a view that there is no such thing as 'pure experience' and that the aim of research ought to be an exploration of the ways in which cultural and discursive resources are used in order to construct different versions of an experience or reality

Social constructionist orientations: aiming to explore the social construction of 'knowledge' itself and how people construct versions of reality through the use of language; investigating the process of constructing knowledge about a phenomenon and often involving the study of discourses

Subject positions: the available positions in a discourse which a subject may adopt; subject positions have implications for subjectivity and experience; they offer discursive locations from which to speak and act.

Subjectivity: a sense of self, including intentionality, self-awareness and autobiographical memories; what can be felt, thought and experienced from within various subject positions.

'Text': within Foucauldian discourse analysis 'text' has a wide meaning; anything that contains networks of meaning that construct social and psychological realities.