

INTRODUCTION TO SOME OTHER QUALITATIVE METHODS

Qualitative Methods

- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
- Discourse Analysis
- Conversation Analysis
- Narrative Analysis
- Grounded Theory Development

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Jonathan Smith (<http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk/about-ipa>):

“IPA is concerned with trying to understand lived experience and with how participants themselves make sense of their experiences. Therefore it is centrally concerned with the meanings which those experiences hold for the participants.”

A type of thematic analysis, but focusing upon subjective **meanings** of personal **experiences**, not just patterns of words

“...an individual’s personal perceptions or account of an event or state” (Smith)

Not an attempt to produce an objective record of the event or state

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Idiographic approach: the focus on the particular/the 'case'

- A commitment to the particular
- How specific people understand a phenomenon, from their perspective, in a particular context

Attention to detail results in a personally unique perspective

Highlights that people experience the world in unique ways

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Hermeneutics: the theory of interpretation

Interpretation is an art – it does not follow mechanical rules

- Opens up notion of subjectivity – purpose of research, wider subject knowledge
- Connections can be made by researcher – larger data set – than participant

‘Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon the... fore-conception’. (Heidegger)

- Interpretation is never pre-suppositionless.

IPA analysis

- **Descriptive comments** - Note key objects, events, people and experiences in the participant's life world – might be positive, negative or neutral
- **Linguistic comments** - How does the transcript reflect the ease in which the content and meaning were presented?
 - e.g. tone, pauses, laughter (is this topic always joked about?) repetition
- **Conceptual comments** - more interpretative - dealing with the transcript at a conceptual level.

Conceptual annotating often shifts the focus:

- Away from explicit claims and statements
- Towards the participant's overarching understanding of the matters they're talking about

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis



REFLECTING ON
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



THE 'HERMENEUTIC
TURN'



FOCUSING ON THE
PARTICULAR

Discourse Analysis

Constructivism: Strong emphasis on constructions as something mental (images) produced through interaction with objects or some features of the external world (e.g. Piaget – ‘little scientist’, Kelly)

Social constructivism: constructions are something mental, but are generated as much through social relations and conversation as through interactions with objects (e.g. Vygotsky, Bruner)

Social constructionism: emphasises discourse as central to the construction of self and the world (e.g. Harrē, Shotter, Gergen)

Discourse Analysis

Distinct tradition of psychological research – discourse is functional – a social practice

Words are performing acts

Potter and Wetherell (1987) 'Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour'

- Social constructionist
- Non-cognitivist
- Re-works topics including self and identity, attitudes, prejudice...

But – not one unified approach – different 'schools' of thought

Discourse Analysis

Potter (1996a)

Constructionism – a practical position

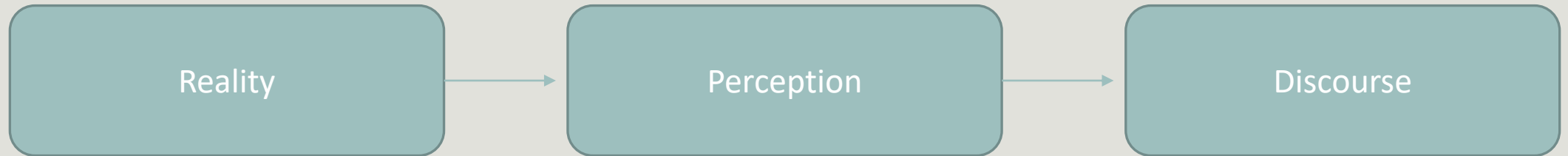
Discourse does not reflect the world – it constructs the world e.g. power relations

Construction – emphasis on activity, not passivity

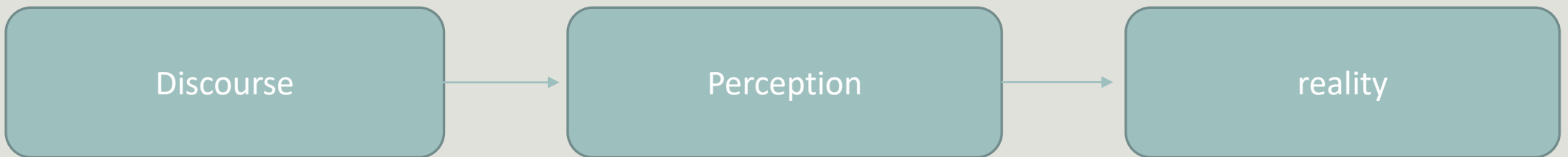
Descriptions, practices, history, conflict, place – inextricably linked

Discourse Analysis

Much traditional psychology assumes a given reality



Discursive psychology assumes reality is constructed through discourse



Conversation Analysis

Sacks & Schegloff 1960s – originally a sociological perspective

– ignores psychological processes e.g. motives, temperaments etc.

Conversations of people consist of organised and coherent talk - irrespective of context

Each utterance, word, partial word, detail of pronunciation is potentially meaningful thus can be analysed

May be planned or unplanned detail

‘...an unconventional but intense, and at the same time respectful, intellectual interest in the actual practices of people in interaction’ (Ten Have, 1999, p.6)

Conversation Analysis

How does **natural** conversation occur?

How are people **doing** a particular conversation?

Emphasis on study of participants methods of:

- Turn-taking – how is this performed/achieved?
- Constructing sequences of sentences across turns
- Identifying and repairing difficulties in conversational flow
- Employing gaze and movement

How conversation works in different conventional settings

The conversation reveals how the situation is being interpreted by the talkers

Turns and Turn-taking
(creation of the interaction)

Adjacency pairs
(set up expectations)

Preference and dispreference
organisation
(e.g. preferred responses to a
question (shorter than dispreferred))

Repairs
(e.g. a correction to make
something more clear)

Opening conversation
(e.g. who should speak first)

Closing conversation
(closing sequences, rituals)

Gaps
(Speaker change or specific
meaning)

Overlaps
(Signal end but continues speaking
or other speaks too soon)

Membership categorisation
device
(member categories that go
together e.g. mother/daughter,
doctor/patient)

Conversation v. Discourse analysis

Conversation Analysis: ordinary language can be analysed to look at **how we perform interpersonal actions and how these actions are organised socially.**

Discourse Analysis: language is a **consequence** - accounts and descriptions cannot be treated as neutral representations of an objective social reality.

Narrative Analysis

NP is focused upon the structure, content and function of stories that we tell each other and ourselves during social interaction

Our world is storied – through stories we...

- Interpret the actions of others and ourselves
- Shape the world and ourselves
- Are shaped through narrative, along with the world – co-construction

‘Autobiography: popular literary genre

Wundt (1832-1920) Father of experimental psychology - Volkerpsychologie – beliefs, myths etc.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative - Means of making sense of the world by connecting events over time through stories

- e.g. Adult lives of ex-miners

Integrates the strange and unknown into the realm of everyday life

“People do not deal with the world event by event or with text sentence by sentence. They frame events and sentences in larger structures” (Bruner, 1990, p.64)

In-depth analysis – how is the participant using language, paralinguistic elements, vocalisations, pauses etc. to present their story?

Narrative Analysis

Some events in our lives do not fit into a coherent form

Difficulty in creating a narrative

Person or community – adrift, uncertain, anxious

Narrative therapy - suggested that people seek therapy when their narrative repertoire does not sufficiently encompass/explain everyday experiences

Narrative Analysis

Narrative researchers: the collection of narrative accounts is at the centre of the interviews

Gives the participant much more central control in shaping the agenda

Narrative interviews asks the participant to identify the major themes

e.g.

‘Would you tell be about your experience with chronic back pain?’

‘What was it like growing up with a seriously depressed parent?’

Narrative Life History Interviews

Aim: obtain a detailed account of a particular broad area of experience

e.g. 'I'd like to hear about your experiences of education, training and work'

Main emphasis: how the participant connects events together

Main goal: a recognisable chronological sequence of events

Narrative Episodic interviews

Increased focus

Structured series of topics

Still seeks detailed narrative accounts – participant's personal experiences

Narrative Interviews

Role of the researcher

Personal storytelling – some objectivity when looking further back in time

Further considerations:

- Socially constructed – situational
- Presentation of Self
- Memory
- Mood
- Linearity of narrative

Narrative Interviewing: Pitfalls

Interviewer may discourage sharing of narratives

- Interruptions – suggest relevance of narrative elements to the researcher
- Strong adherence to interview schedule – aspects the researcher wants to explore
- Responses to particular elements of the narrative indicate how these are valued by the researcher
- Indications regarding socially desirable answers
- Power relations

Reflexivity - Researcher's own role in co-constructing the narrative account

Grounded Theory

Most widely used way of analysing qualitative data - rooted in sociology (Glaser and Strauss, 1967)

- Attempt to introduce more rigour to qualitative methods
- Argues for a close relation between empirical research data and theory building
- The research data must be thoroughly tested and challenged

Validity – respondent validation – the theory developed should make sense to the participants

Has been described as a sophisticated filing system (Potter, 1998)

- Extensive cross-referencing across categories
- A piece of data can be filed under numerous categories

Grounded theory provides a structure to qualitative research

The developed concepts/ideas must be fully developed and understood by the end of the analysis (saturation)

Opposed to grand theorising, which is poorly linked to the data

A theory-creating process, which ties the developing theory closely to the data – hypothesis testing plays a part only in the final stages

GT based on the constant comparison of each stage of the analysis process with earlier stages

Data collection is determined by the needs of a concurrent and continuing analysis of the data

The data are coded according to an emerging scheme and these codings studied so as to identify major categories

Hypotheses are developed to test emerging ideas with the broad aim of developing a more general, data-based theory if possible

Key elements of Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory

1: **Developing a research question** – does not have to be based in the existing literature

- The literature review could be carried out at the end to compare developed theory with previous analyses in the field

2: **Theoretical sampling** – Sampling depends on the ongoing development of theory e.g. might need additional groups of participant to address new theoretical questions

3: **Data collection** – Wide range of 'data' considered e.g. talk with participants, Internet, written materials

4: **Coding/Naming**- Each line of the data examined carefully

Grounded Theory

5: **Category development through comparison** – Categories developed from the codings – must stay true to the original codings

6: **Theoretical sampling** – to test categories and relationships – check theory against the data

7: **Test hypothesis to develop theory based on the present study** – e.g. applying the theory to explain other aspects related to the study focus (e.g. Glaser and Strauss 'Awareness of Dying')

8: **Collect data/perform analysis in other settings to generate formal theory** – Can the theory be applied to other settings

Reading

Howitt, D. (2010). *Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Psychology*. Harlow; Pearson Education Ltd.