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RESEARCHING IDENTITY IN WRITTEN AND SPOKEN DISCOURSE

Abstract. The following article is devoted to the review and reflection on the main researched areas of discourse analysis. Apart from the summary of readings completed, the gained information will be contextualised in the areas of future research or professional experience. Subsequently, I will explore the fields of study that have become of major importance and interest to me and

reflect on the acquired knowledge and its contribution to my professional and communicative practice.

Key words: professional identity, discourse analysis, indexicality principle, deceptive identity, computer-mediated discourse, community of practice

The following article is devoted to the review and reflection on the main researched areas of discourse analysis. The article includes the ways of identity implementation in written and spoken discourse, the sociolinguistic approach to identity description and classification. The aim of the article is to contextualise identity within areas of discourse analysis and reflect on its contribution to communicative practice.

Discourse and Identity

Due to the notion that every individual possesses his or her unique identity, it can be represented in the form of an onion. The metaphorical understanding ‘identity is an onion’ represents an approach of ‘a private, pre-discursive and stable identity’ [Benwell & Stokoe 2006, 3]. The other approach suggests interpreting an identity through the shape of a diamond. The metaphor of a complex and multidimensional diamond refers to constructing personality through its interpretation by other people. Thus, rather than understanding identity as a stable notion of private-self reflecting in discourse, an alternative approach suggests that it is *constituted* in discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This approach is explored in detail by M. Bucholtz and K. Hall (2005). According to them, identity is a social and cultural phenomenon constructed in linguistic interaction. In order to define identity construction across a wide variety of discourse contexts, M. Bucholtz and K. Hall propose a framework consisting of five major principles. Emergence and positionality principles describe the essence of identity: social categories and context on which it is based. Indexicality principle reflects the process of identity creation, such as labelling or evaluation; it evolves into relationality and partialness principles. This sociolinguistic approach reflects on identity representation in linguistic interaction. In order to research identity implementation in professional practice, we aim to give a brief overview of how teacher identity is constituted partially using the framework proposed by M. Bucholtz and K. Hall.

Teacher's identity

In TESOL field of study this framework can be applied to exploring teacher identities in classroom interaction. Using conversation analysis and ethnography, G. C. Johnson (2006) investigates teacher identity construction in a research interview. As teacher identity gets shaped and reshaped in professional context (Mead, 1934), the research reflects the shift of indexicality, relationality and partialness principles.

Exploring this field of study within discourse enables teacher's awareness of his or her identity. As teacher's identity immensely affects learning environment, researching it will improve teacher's skills of positioning him or herself with learners of different age. Apart from that, the ability to control and consciously construct professional identity will positively affect the teacher's implementation of various techniques and strategies, thus, enhancing students' learning.

These observations made us question how personal and professional identities correlate. Do they reflect each other? Can one's identity be easily traced through the other? Considering the peculiarities of teaching as a profession, we have aligned ourselves with the notion that both identities are mirror images of one another (Wenger, 1998). According to this, we have found the framework proposed by A. Lauriala & M. Kukkonen (2005) the most relevant. They suggest three dimensions of a teacher's identity: the actual self, the ought self and the ideal self. The notion of ideal self tends to be of major importance due to the teacher's desire for constant professional development, perfectionism and life-long learning.

Deceptive identity

However, identity can be constructed not only in face-to-face communication, but also in computer-mediated communication. In computer-mediated discourse this phenomenon is defined as a by-product of the interaction between other users represented by the written language on the screen (Newon, 2011). Going deeper into the aspect of self-presentation in virtual reality, we have explored the marketplace metaphor applied to the online dating scene (Lagore, 2016; Heino et al, 2010) and people as experience goods (Frost et al, 2008). As a result, we came to the conclusion that the value of a person cannot truly be represented by his or her social profile.

Apart from that, due to the diverse nature of social contexts, the social constructionist approach to identity suggests that human beings can have multiple identities (Omoniyi & White, 2006). Thus, the creation of biased and fictional identity can be intentional and used for deceptive or even manipulating purposes. Due to this, discourse analysis may be used to analyse how people deceive and how to detect deception (Burgoon & Buller, 2002). The discourse of deception is highly influenced by the mode of communication as the utilised linguistic strategies vary. C. L. Toma & J.T. Hancock (2012), L. Zhou & D. Zhang (2008) research their usage in computer-mediated communication in detail.

Discourse and Community

Identity can be treated not only as an individual characteristic, but also as a part of person's self that comes from the groups to which that person belongs (Kroskrity, 2000). Thus, introducing the social identity theory, H. Tajfel & J.C. Turner (1986) propose that people tend to identify themselves with a particular 'in-group', simultaneously confronting other 'out-groups'. This approach correlates with the concept of a community of practice (a CofP) that can be defined 'simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages' [Eckert & McConnel-Ginet 1992, 464].

In conclusion, we can say that we have presented the results of researching identity's construction in written and spoken discourse through studying identity in social and professional communities of practice and in the sphere of computer-mediated communication. The provided research proves that identity could not be considered as a stable notion, it is constituted in discourse.

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