DISCOURSE AND MENTAL HEALTH

VOICE, INEQUALITY AND RESISTANCE IN MEDICAL SETTINGS

Juan Eduardo Bonnin

Routledge

Discourse and Mental Health

This book is the result of years of fieldwork at a public hospital located in an immigrant neighbourhood in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It focuses on the relationships between diversity and inequality in access to mental healthcare through the discourse practices, tactics and strategies deployed by patients with widely varying cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds. As an action-research process, it helped change communicative practices at the hospital's outpatient mental healthcare service. The book focuses on the entire process and its outcomes, arguing in favour of a critical, situated perspective on discourse analysis, theoretically and practically oriented to social change.

It also proposes a different approach to doctor-patient communication, usually conducted from an ethnocentric perspective which does not take into account cultural, social and economic diversity. It reviews many topics that are somehow classical in doctor-patient communication analysis, but from a different point of view: issues such as the sequential organization of primary care encounters, diagnostic formulations, asymmetry and accommodation, etc., are now examined from a locally grounded ethnographic perspective. This change is not only theoretical but also political, as it helps understand patient practices of resistance, identity-making and solidarity in contexts of inequality.

Juan Eduardo Bonnin is Researcher at the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) and Professor of Discourse Studies at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSAM). His latest book is *Discurso político y discurso religioso en América Latina* (Buenos Aires, Santiago Arcos, 2013).

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Voice, Inequality and Resistance in Medical Settings
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Discourse and Mental Health

Voice, Inequality and Resistance
in Medical Settings

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Para Maia, Julia y Sole. Las quiero mucho.

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Series foreword

As globalization deepens into the new millennium, human cultures have not become less, but more, divided. On the one hand, America continues to dominate the international order – politically, economically, militarily and in many other respects as well. On the other hand, most developing nations remain underprivileged, excluded or else alienated, and they feel compelled to change the current unfair global system and aspire to re-discover, and where necessary, re-invent, their own voices and identities and to re-claim their own rights. To make matters worse, the American-led West-centrism and consequently the plight of the rest of world have more often than not been smoothed over.

At the same time, as multiculturalism spreads across the globe, the human destiny has not become less, but more, shared, however. Cultural diversification, the Internet and border-crossing have advanced human interaction, information flow and above all socio-economic development. Along with these, too, however, come for mankind all kinds of risks and threats, seen or unexpected. In this one and the same world, peoples' interests in well-being become ever more interconnected, intertwined and interpenetrated. And yet the commonality of human destination is far too often obscured or simply forgotten. Current mainstream discourse and communication studies, despite its theoretical and methodological achievements and beyond, have not been fully conscious and competent to take up common cultural challenges alluded to above. West-centric and binary in the main, it has too often ignored the cultural complexity, competition and commonality of human discourses and as a consequence has not only become an academic monologue in itself but also overshadowed culturally alternative approaches.

It is with issues such as these that the Routledge Cultural Discourse Studies Series concerns itself and endeavours to bring them to the centre stage of discourse and communication research, with a view to forging a culturally conscious, critical and creative form of discourse and communication scholarship. At the meta-theoretical level, this series forays into: (a) how we as academics are to combat West-centrism in society and scholarship, (b) how we are to enable and enhance cultural coexistence, harmony and prosperity and (c) how we are to identify, characterize, explain, interpret and appraise culturally divergent, productive or competing discourses – not only of familiar, privileged and dominant societies, but especially of less known, marginalized or otherwise disadvantaged communities.

There are a few theoretical, methodological and topical characteristics of the series that are worthy of mention here, too. Firstly, it abolishes the conventional and common binary notions of 'text' and 'context', 'discourse' and 'society', 'representation' and 'reality', the 'micro' and the 'macro', and re-unifies them into one of an all-encompassing and dialectic whole. In this way, human discourse becomes a multi-faced but integrated communicative event (or a class there of named activity) in which people accomplish social interaction through linguistic and other symbolic means and mediums in particular historical and cultural relations and moreover is recognized and highlighted as cultural in nature – cultural in the sense that human discourses are not simply differentiated but diversified and, very importantly, divided. Secondly, it is culturally grounded and continuously self-reflexive, its perspectives dialectic and multiple, its data diversified and historical and its conclusions dialogical and temporary. Thirdly, the series has set upon itself the cultural-political tasks of exposing, deconstructing and neutralizing ethnocentrism on the one hand and developing, practising and advocating locally grounded and globally minded principles and strategies of communication research on the other hand.

In sum, this series publishes works that cross linguistic, disciplinary and cultural boundaries and examines social and cultural issues in communication that are of local and global significance. It aspires to be culturally pluralist, whether in authorship, in publication content or in approaches. A cultural-creativity-seeking platform in discourse and communication studies, to be sure, the Routledge Cultural Discourse Studies Series will continue to deconstruct ethnocentrism in the discipline, develop and practice culturally conscious and critical approaches to human discourses, and propel intercultural-intellectual dialogue and debate in favour of research innovation and advancement. Ultimately, it aims to contribute to human cultural coexistence, harmony and prosperity.

Shi-xu

Acknowledgements

Transcription conventions

[indicates the point of overlap onset

]   indicates the point of overlap termination

=   inserted at the end of one speaker's turn and at the beginning of the next speaker's adjacent turn, it indicates that there is no gap at all between the two turns (3.2) an interval between utterances (3 seconds and 2 tenths in this case)

(.)   a very short untimed pause

word underlining indicates speaker emphasis

:::   indicates lengthening of the preceding sound

–   a single dash indicates an abrupt cut-off

?   rising intonation, not necessarily a question

!   an animated or emphatic tone

,   a comma indicates low-rising intonation, suggesting continuation

.   a full stop (period) indicates falling (final) intonation

CAPITALS especially loud sounds relative to surrounding talk

° °   utterances between degree signs are noticeably quieter than surrounding talk

°° °°   considerably quieter than surrounding talk

(())   comments on non-linguistic behaviour

(guess) indicates transcriber doubt about a word

Introduction

This book explores the complex and often contradictory relationship between discourse and inequality in mental healthcare settings. Although the terms invoked here are frequently used in academic research, I will use a slightly different approach from the usual one.

The book also aims to contribute theoretically and methodologically to re-thinking and imagining new problems for discourse analysis – without adjectives or brand-identifications initials – which are no longer in the mainstream agenda. I will argue that intellectual workers from non-European, non-(North) American societies have something new to say, as they have traditionally been passive reproducers of dominant, ethnocentric theories. Latin American Discourse Analysis has developed many voices which have only recently begun to participate as equals in the global scenario of academic research.

Jorge Luis Borges, arguing with traditional nativist writers in Argentina who demanded *gauchos* and *tangos* everywhere, concluded a famous essay on "The Argentine Writer and Tradition" (1951) as follows:

> I repeat that we should not be alarmed and that we should feel that our patrimony is the universe; we should essay all themes, and we cannot limit ourselves to purely Argentine subjects in order to be Argentine; for either being Argentine is an inescapable act of fate – and in that case we shall be so in all events – or being Argentine is a mere affectation, a mask.
>
> I believe that if we surrender ourselves to that voluntary dream which is artistic creation, we shall be Argentine and we shall also be good or tolerable writers.
>
> (Borges 1951/1962: 178)

Just as Borges wrote regarding literature, Latin American researchers too have been nurtured by many traditions; not just one dominant trend of discourse analysis, one system of grammatical description or one "school" of social theory. We have translated, commentated, written and read whatever we have been able to, sometimes from an orthodox and other times from a heterodox standpoint. We have communicated with each other a lot through specialized journals such

as the *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios del Discurso*, *Signo y Seña* and *Discurso y Sociedad*.

   Nowadays we are increasingly participating in the global dialogue of discourse analysis, not as accomplished students of dominant theories, but as researchers with a sense of identity and something new to say regarding language, institutions and – more importantly – speakers. This need to say the unexpected, which we will call an "act of voice", can be traced in the recent work of Latin American researchers in the field of DA.

Discourse analysis in Latin America

We can distinguish two kinds of articulation between Latin America and DA. The first can be described as "Discourse Analysis *in* Latin America" and the second as "Latin American Discourse Analysis". In the former, the region serves as an agenda of topics for DA. It is the geographical region where specific issues, problems and *corpora* are collected to analyze from mainstream perspectives, either "Critical Discourse Analysis" (e.g. Wodak & Meyer 2001) or "French School of Discourse Analysis" (e.g. Maingueneau & Charaudeau 2002). We can say that these works are Latin American in their topics and political motivations but European in their theoretical-methodological approach.

   There are a few available studies in English that review the literature of DA in LA, such as Bolívar (2015, 2018), Pardo (2010, 2016), Carranza (2015) and Arnoux and Bonnin (2015). In the latter paper, we observed that the DA research agenda in our region is intertwined with politics in one of two ways. The first, which we call *analysis of political discourses*, considers a sphere of activity (the exercise of public speech as regulated by institutions which provide a framework for the democratic struggle for power) and the genres, practices and strategies produced within it. The second addresses the ideological orientation of meaning-making through discourse, as it reveals social practices, processes and actors as positioned within a given social field. It is thus political in nature, but not in expression.

   We have called this approach *political analysis of (other) discourses* (Arnoux & Bonnin 2015: 560–561): a perspective on the social use of language which not only inquires into its specificity (such as pedagogical discourse, religious discourse, etc.) but also observes how it deals with conflict, shapes social representations, produces and reproduces identities, regulates the linguistic space or intervenes in shaping, replicating or transforming both political entities and power relationships. From this perspective, every discourse is linked to the dynamics of the field in which it is produced, but also to broader social processes and contextual aspects which are, in one aspect or another, political. We do not distinguish (as in Fairclough 1992) Critical from Non-Critical Discourse Analysis: as every discourse is political, every analysis must be critical to be meaningful. Otherwise, it is just a clever exercise in textual description.

Latin American discourse analysis

The research agenda of DA in LA, briefly outlined in the previous section, is not extensive enough to assume the existence of a Latin American perspective on discourse analysis. On the contrary, as de Melo Resende (2010) states:

> Colonialism of knowledge in Latin America has led to the formation of a body of researchers competent in understanding and applying theories and methods but who are petrified at their own ideas, as they always need to be legitimated by foreign thinkers.
>
> (de Melo Resende 2010: 193)

What defines a Latin American perspective in discourse analysis is not a school, theoretical framework or shared grammar, but an attitude towards data and theory. On the one hand, with regard to theory, we have an unprejudiced view of different trends of discourse analysis, text linguistics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, conversation analysis, pragmatics, etc. Latin American discourse analysts converse with worldwide theories, but do not apply them (Raiter & Zullo 2005; Raiter 2002). Even in cases of apparent application, as is the case of *glottopolitics* (Arnoux 2008), there is a systematic and creative "misreading" of European ideas which achieves *legitimation* among the conservative local academia but also *dares* to create new research agendas and theoretical concepts (de Melo Resende 2010). On the other hand, with regard to data, there is optimism of will despite the pessimism of reason, which prioritizes the singularity of data over the homogeneity and generalization of theory. Bolívar's (2018) qualitative approach to large, multi-genre, broad-dialogical corpora is an example of appreciation of data singularity over theoretical-methodological recipes which recommend homogeneity of data.

Latin American Discourse Analysis is not a theoretical framework but a community. Its influence on the research which led to this book was significantly outside books or journals: it happened at conferences, seminars and bars. In this section I will briefly introduce some of the most influential work in this perspective, not as a systematic theory, but as a climate of ideas and concepts which helped co-conduct the research presented in this book and, incidentally, are not well known to non-Spanish speakers.

Glottopolitics

With an interdisciplinary perspective on discourse analysis and a practical orientation to change situations of inequality in the access to civil rights, E. B. N. de Arnoux embraces critical analysis of linguistic ideologies in grammars, textbooks and other academic genres to define inclusive strategies for secondary and higher education. This articulation of discourse analysis and pedagogical practice, of description and action towards social change, permeates the work of Arnoux

and her colleagues not only in the classical research agenda of DA but also in the definition of a whole new field: *glottopolitics.*

Glottopolitics studies interventions in the linguistic public space and the linguistic ideologies which they activate, insofar as they are a product of social relationships and power structures at different contextual levels: local, national, regional and global. In contrast to classical language policy and planning research, glottopolitics has a broad scope including non-canonical actors and discourse spaces which are cornerstones of the establishment, questioning, replication and transformation of political entities (Arnoux 2011: 162). Data are thus necessarily heterogeneous: from the creation and semiotic organization of cultural institutions (such as the *Museu da Língua Portuguesa* in São Paulo, or the *Museo del libro y de la lengua* in Buenos Aires), to the networks of public-private economic and political interests in the promotion, regulation and commodification of Spanish and Portuguese, including regional systems of legislation and regulation (Bein 2017). From this perspective, linguistic instruments (orthographies, grammars, dictionaries, style manuals and rhetoric treatises), teaching texts and discussions about language are discourses which take part in the process of shaping national and global identities (Arnoux 2016; Arnoux & Lauria 2016; Lauria forthcoming; Rizzo 2016, 2017).

Interactional discourse analysis

Although often quoted, Bakhtin's (1982) interest in dialogism and polyphony is often reduced to the presence of the other's voice represented by only one speaker in his own (written) texts. In this sense, A. Bolívar proposes a change of focus "from text in contexts to people in events" (Bolívar 2010). For the case of political discourse analysis, in addition to the foundational distinction between "us" and them" she proposes the inclusion of "you" as a relationship constitutive to politics that leaves room for cooperation and dialogue.[1]

Bolívar defines *dialogue* as "the primary condition of discourse and human existence" (Bolívar 2010: 218). As a primary difference with other views on dialogue, which draw from Bakthin's (1982) concept of dialogism, Bolívar is not only interested in "theoretical" interaction as an abstract possibility, or in a textualist view of "voices" as represented in one speaker's own texts. Rather, the main focus in her approach to discourse is on the people who produce, introduce or evoke those voices. Dialogue is thus not simply a discursive strategy or a theoretical need but an effective kind of bond between participants. Influenced by P. Freire's (1992) concept of "hope as an ontological need", Bolívar states that "only in dialogue *with* others can we attain autonomy and freedom" (2010: 219).

Her analytical deconstruction of Hugo Chávez' discourse of polarization and its effects in the destitutionalization of democracy gained public attention as a political practice of public criticism and denunciation. Her *interactional discourse analysis* does not intend to be a "school" but a source of inspiration for different kinds of DA in LA. As one of the founders and main promoters of the *Latin American Association of Discourse Studies* (ALED) since 1995, she has taught and

explained DA throughout our continent. She edited the *Latin American Journal of Discourse Studies* (RALED) from 2000 to 2017, thereby participating in the definition of the research agenda, theoretical discussions and methodological innovations in the field (cfr. Shiro 2012, 2014; Bolívar & Shiro 2015).

The epistemology of the known subject

Vasilachis de Gialdino's proposal is to rethink discourse analysis from scratch by criticizing its epistemological basis and methodological biases. Despite mutual differences, Vasilachis de Gialdino (2006, 2009) considers mainstream paradigms in social research as representatives of the same *Epistemology of the Knowing Subject*, which makes an ontological difference between the researcher (the subject who knows) and the researched (the object of study), who is featured as a passive object under scrutiny, whose own assumptions, values and ideas are valid data but not legitimate theory.

Vasilachis de Gialdino's *Epistemology of the Known Subject* uses a different point of departure by drawing an ontological distinction between *essential* and *existential* identity. The former is shared by all human beings as the source of personal dignity, thus guaranteeing equal human dignity to every person. The latter, on the contrary, is distinct to every individual as she/he is conditioned by her/his cultural, social and economic context (Vasilachis de Gialdino 2009: 20).

Although this proposal does not take into account cultural difference between subjects, it enables what Shi-xu (2005) identifies as "aculturalism" to be combatted, because cultural difference is not viewed as a barrier between classes of people but as a constitutive feature of identity in its existential dimension. The other dimension, the essential one, allows for dialogue as an activity between equals, thus avoiding the view of the other as radically different. Vasilachis de Gialdino's discourse analytical practice has therefore focused on recognizing the known subject's dignity through different kinds of methodological strategies: ethnographical interviews with people living in the streets, discourse analysis of written press, laws, juridical and political discourse (Vasilachis de Gialdino 2003, 2007, 2013).

Co-labour research

Despite its success in other social sciences, collaborative research has had little impact on discourse analysis. One sensitive area is multilingualism and education, as research in this field usually seeks to change an unequal state of affairs. V. Unamuno's work with indigenous communities focused on this goal through what she calls "*investigación en colaboro*", "co-labor research" (Ballena & Unamuno 2017). Through this terminological innovation, her proposal is to emphasize the interpersonal commitment among all the social actors committed to the entire research process, based on three principles: 1) every research project is the result of a debate among different actors (scholars, indigenous teachers, community leaders, students, etc.) about why to do the project and what for; 2) teams are formed of different kinds of researchers (academic, non-academic; indigenous,