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Disablism at Work. A Critical Discourse and Biographical Narrative Study of Blind and Partially Sighted People's Professional Identities in the UK and Germany

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Disablism at Work. A Critical Discourse and Biographical Narrative Study of Blind and Partially Sighted People's Professional Identities in the UK and Germany

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Abstract

The thesis presents an investigation of blind and partially sighted people's professional identities by analysing biographical narrative accounts of 23 participants from the United Kingdom and Germany. A Critical Discourse Studies approach is combined with a disability studies perspective. The study offers a novel angle for CDS insofar as the language use of so-called less powerful social actors is concerned that are considered part of the counter-discourse about disability and impairment. First-person narratives as well as disability have not been explored to a great extent in CDS, and participant-focused studies have received little intention in disability studies. Similarly, the role of the body has not been in the purview of most narrative study analyses.

The narrative interview data is analysed through the lens of evaluation to explore people's emotions, the judgments of social actors and appreciations. Furthermore, it is demonstrated how the use of active and passive voice constructions contribute to a sense of agency and narrative ownership versus affectedness. Rhetorical strategies reveal what kind of discourse models the stories endorse, whether they comply with, rationalise or resist dominant reasoning. While these analytical categories draw on pre-existing frameworks, the actual lexico-grammatical and rhetorical strategies and discourse models were developed bottom-up and therefore represent a major contribution of the study. Hegemonic discourses and societal views of disability are discussed by drawing on findings from sociological studies, representations of disabled people in the mass media and a comparative corpus analysis of words related to blindness and visual impairment. The attention to linguistic detail provided here reveals noteworthy connections both between different linguistic means and rhetorical domains and between people's personal, psycho-emotional experience and structural forms of disablism.

The results indicate that mainstream employers are often seen as unable to provide a fully supportive work environment. Managers' negative attitudes range from open hostility to ignorance. Although not all employers harbour manifest disablist attitudes, it is argued that lack of knowledge and disinterest are systemic consequences of disablist thinking. This exposes disablism as a harmful yet latent ideology in the workplace. I argue that language has the power to inspire negative feelings such as fear and destructive reasoning in the form of self-blame. Overall, emotions turned out to play a key role in both employers' reasoning, as far as they are reflected in the stories, and in the argumentative positions taken up by participants. On a more positive note, this research can help us understand how an individual's economic security can contribute to their personal wellbeing and provide a sense of accomplishment.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 12 June 2015.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 89,395.

Gerrit Kotzur

22 October 2018

1   Introduction

Almost two million people in the UK live with a form of (severe) visual impairment (ACCESS ECONOMICS 2009). Sixty-six percent of those registered as visually impaired (henceforth VI people) of working age in the UK are not in employment (DOUGLAS et al. 2006) compared to about six percent unemployed adults in the general population.[1] One explanation for the high number of unemployed VI people is the prevalence of stereotypes and misconceptions: in a survey, nine out of ten employers rated blind and partially sighted people either 'difficult' or 'impossible' to employ (DWP 2004) – even though modern technology and software such as screen readers, magnifiers and adjustable monitors have increased the potential for blind and partially sighted people to participate in the labour force. A study of a representative sample of the over 2.5 million businesses in the US found that 62 percent of the companies cited costs of reasonable adjustments as the primary reason for not hiring a disabled person (ODEP 2012), although most workplace adjustments require relatively simple, low-cost modifications (GOLD et al. 2012: 33). According to the NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY of the Commonwelath of Australia (2011: 39) work "is essential to an individual's economic security and is important to achieving social inclusion. Employment contributes to physical and mental health, personal wellbeing and a sense of identity." I will expand on these points in the next section. For now, I will posit that work and professional contexts present an area where segregation between disabled and so-called able-bodied people is still commonplace.

The superordinate aim of the thesis is to explore blind and partially sighted people's employment experience from their own perspective. More specifically, I will examine their conceptualisations of self, their employment biographies and professional identities through biographical narrative accounts using analytical tools from Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), especially in the fashion of Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical approach (e.g. WODAK 2001). I conducted a total of 23 biographical narrative interviews with VI people from the UK (17 participants) and Germany (six participants). The study therefore also offers a comparative aspect. The epistemic direction of the thesis is strongly influenced by a

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[1] Only ten to twenty percent of people registered as legally blind are without any visual perception at all (KLEEGE 2013: 453). An even smaller number of those are congenitally blind. Employment levels among disabled people with other types of impairments is even lower, for instance people with learning disabilities or mental health problems (ROULSTONE 2014).

Critical Discourse as well as a disability studies perspective. Both stress the importance of investigating structural barriers in society. As LINTON states,

> For instance, rather than assume that disabled people are the most vulnerable among us, why not consider the mechanisms that society uses to make disabled people economically vulnerable, powerless, and isolated, and consider what the use of those mechanisms says about a society.
>
> (LINTON 1998: 122)

The long-term aims of such a study align with SWAIN et al.'s objectives for creating a more inclusive society that works to increase knowledge about the active role that disabled people play in communities and how this can be supported, "develop a greater understanding of the experiences and situation of disabled people *from their own perspective*" (my emphasis) and further an "understanding of citizenship and empowerment" (SWAIN et al. 2014: xviii). Looking at the broader context, this kind of research can shed light on our understanding of the relationship between language, identity and discrimination in the context of blind and partially sighted people. These points will be discussed further below.

In the literature review chapter, I will highlight more similarities between the Critical Discourse and disability studies perspectives and show how they can be combined to provide answers to my set of research questions. To do so, I will draw on definitions from the fields of sociology and disability studies to support the formulation of the project's core assumptions on identity, disability, discrimination, stereotypes and oppression. With this research I eventually want to contribute to an understanding of and respectful approach to visual impairment by exploring which aspects of their professional identities the participants of my study attach importance to and how they want others, especially employers, to approach them. Combining informed linguistic analysis and a critical approach with concepts of identity from disability studies and sociology, I intend to do pioneering work in this specific combination of fields. The results of this research can feed back into application processes and working with VI people in businesses and organisations and thereby contribute to more support, integration and equal opportunities. Disability and career advisors in general can also benefit from this research. Finally, the findings might also help charities to improve their workshops and training.

The context and background of disablism will be expanded in Chapter 4 where I discuss socio-historical developments and findings from studies in the fields of sociology of work and disability studies that have investigated the employment prospects of disabled people in general and VI people in particular. This serves as a form of triangulation: By

incorporating empirical data from other studies, we can transcend the purely linguistic dimension. In the next section, I will start to trace the research gap in this specific context and suggest how a participant-centred mixed-method study can address the related research questions.

1.1　Theoretical Background and Research Questions

At the beginning of this section, I will point to the gaps in disability studies before I continue with the potential contribution of the thesis to my original field of expertise in Critical Discourse Studies and linguistic inquiry.

An emancipatory research paradigm puts the views and experiences of its participants at the centre of the scientific enquiry (BARNES 2014). DUCKETT and PRATT (2001) and BACH (2011) state that so far only very few studies in the context of disability and employment have utilised such a practical, action-oriented and participant-focused perspective where disabled people are the experts of their own experience. Furthermore, little is known "about the differences in work discrimination between the different types of disability" (LINDSAY 2011: 1342) or the "sociological interpretations of patterns of disability discrimination in the workplace" (BARNES & MERCER 2005). In comparison to the UK and the US, the whole field of disability studies in Germany is dubbed a *terra incognita* by BACH (2011: 11). This explains why there are fewer studies to draw on than in the English-speaking literature canon. However, as I will point out during the analysis part of the thesis, the socio-economic context of VI people in Germany is comparable: Findings from the two subsets of data often converge and participant's experiences are very similar. Disparities were mainly found between unemployed and employed as well as male and female participants (see, for instance, Sections 7.1 and 9.1).

As VAN DIJK (2008: 99) has noted, there is a gap between linguistically oriented studies and research in social sciences. My own study benefits from both research angles. It is crucial to combine these approaches because discourse, power and identity are intimately connected (AINSWORTH & HARDY 2004). What links the identity aspect with the critical discourse perspective is the fact that identity politics is always a politics of creating difference, and the negotiation of identity and difference is the political problem facing democracies on a global scale (WODAK et al. 2009: 2 f.).

A problem-oriented approach is compatible with both a disability and the CDS perspective: Critical Discourse Studies as a form of explanatory and normative social critique start with a social problem rather than the more conventional research question, which "accords with the critical intent of this approach – to produce knowledge which can lead to emancipatory change" and facilitate human wellbeing (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 209, FAIRCLOUGH & FAIRCLOUGH 2012: 64, 79). It has been pointed out that a diverse set of methodologies and disciplines is required to address issues of such problem-oriented rather than discipline- or method-oriented research (VAN LEEUWEN 2005: 8, 10). Problem orientation means addressing an issue with the means best suited to explore it and selecting appropriate theories. In other words, we start with identifying a "problem" and then explore what methodology or methodologies and theories are suitable to handle it rather than let preconception drive the choice of methodology before any exploration of the field of investigation has been undertaken. Problem orientation "serves not only to focus research efforts, it also provides a means to assess the contributions made through interdisciplinary research" (KATONA & CURTIN 1980: 45).

A CDS approach is especially rewarding because it can uncover the hidden ideologies and taken-for-granted assumptions strewn throughout the discourse: While power structures are always present, they are not always visible (MARTIN & NAKAYAMA 2008: 48) because most of what makes discourse meaningful goes beyond text, involving "concepts and propositions construed on the basis of our knowledge" (VAN DIJK 2011: 30). A CDS perspective adds an "interpretation of suspicion" (JOSSELSON 2004, KIM 2016) to the analysis to decode and demystify such implicit meanings in the narratives that often go unnoticed. Specifically, I will analyse the precise linguistic means, narrative choices and rhetorical strategies that blind and partially sighted people employ to construct their professional identities. Recent studies situated at the intersection of (socio)linguistics and narratology (for instance, DE FINA 2006, GEORGAKOPOULOU 2007, among others) have emphasised that an analysis of narrators' linguistic resources are imperative when trying to understand identity work in narratives.

Concerning my contribution to the field of CDS, I see two vital aspects. The first is the topic of disability and disabled people's identities, an area which has been underestimated (and understudied) in Critical Discourse Studies. This is not to say that CDS researchers should not also investigate racism, sexism and xenophobia, but as I will explore in the literature review, the disability studies perspective is a crucial one because it questions some of the basic assumptions of human existence and is naturally intersectional. The second

aspect of my contribution is what I call dissident or resistant discourse: Rather than focusing on the language use of powerful social actors like politicians and newsworkers, my study puts the participants' perspectives in the foreground. The implications of this shift of focus will be discussed further in Subsection 2.4.3. The overarching **research question** is:

> **How do blind and partially sighted people in the UK and in Germany construct their professional identities, especially in the face of barriers to, and challenges in, employment such as discrimination (i.e. disablism)?**
>
> **Concerning discourse formation, what characterises the counter- or resistant discourse of the community under investigation and how does this discourse reflect, challenge or deconstruct dominant conventions and perceptions of blindness and visual impairment?**

To explore this question, I will analyse the precise linguistic means, narrative choices and rhetorical strategies that people employ throughout their narratives. The question will be answered in part, and from differing perspectives, by the analysis chapters. The analysis will be carried out by both quantitative (Chapters 4 and 5) and qualitative means (Chapters 6 through 9), and the study can therefore be considered to use a mixed-method approach. The comparative aspect of differences and similarities between German and English participants is a secondary one. For practical constraints detailed in the Methodology Chapter, a truly comparative account cannot be developed from the data I collected. Section 4.2 stands out insofar as it is a quantitative exploration of the so-called dominant discourse on blindness and visual impairment. I carried out a corpus analysis with large, freely available English and German corpora to find out what kind of discourses are drawn on when referring to blind and partially sighted people in the mass media, academic and popular literature. This inquiry was a necessary step to confirm the claims in the literature review about how VI people are viewed in larger society. The chapter therefore offers a complementary, if somewhat general, perspective on the stigmatisation of blindness and related lexemes and shows what kind of discourses prevail concerning visual disability. The following list provides the questions that guided the analytical process and writing up of each of the main chapters as well as the outline and structure of the analysis part of the thesis:

> **Chapter 4 (Contextual Background Chapter; Corpus Linguistics and Visual Impairment)**: How are blindness and blind people as well as visual impairment and visually impaired people (differently) represented in academic and mass media genres like news discourse and popular literature? Which discourses do these representations draw on and what kind of associations, social evaluations (or semantic prosodies) do they connect to? Are these positive, neutral or negative?

Chapter 5 (Discourse Patterns – Quantitative Analysis): What can a quantitative analysis reveal about patterns in the narrative data and further avenues for analysis?

Chapter 6 (Discourse Topics – Qualitative Analysis): Which discourse topics do the participants discuss in their narratives and on which of those do they put the most emphasis?

Chapter 7 (Evaluation): How do the participants evaluate their employment experience a) as a whole, and b) more specifically, what kind of emotional attitude do they express (AFFECT), how do they evaluate the behaviour and character of other social actors like colleagues, service providers and employers (JUDGMENT), and how do they assess the quality and value of things and processes related to these experiences (APPRECIATION)?

Chapter 8 (Agency and Affectedness): What conclusions can we draw from the participants' use of semantic and grammatical means like active verb senses and passive voice that indicate either agency and narrative ownership or affectedness, passivity and the severity of negative experiences?

Chapter 9 (Rhetorical Strategies and Discourse Models): Which rhetorical strategies and argumentation schemes do VI people use to talk about their employment experience? Which discourse models (compliant, explanatory or resistant discourses) can these strategies be associated with?

In the following Chapter 2, the literature review, I will explore the theoretical scope of my research angle in more detail by first discussing identity, especially disability identity, its formation and performance in social contexts (Section 2.1), and concepts in disability studies such as disablism, which is defined as an ideological construct and the basis for discrimination and unequal treatment of disabled people (Section 2.2). Identity, disability and complex embodiment can also be understood as the topics or content areas of inquiry. Section 2.3 on narrative research provides a rationale for the chosen methodology. Here we are concerned with the impact of stories on identity and reflections of personal experience that guided the data collection strategy. Finally, Section 2.4 deals with the Critical Discourse Studies perspective, particularly the Discourse-Historical approach, which forms the basis of my analysis.

Alternatively, the sections on identity and disability can be viewed as macro-level sociological theories, the section on narrative inquiry as the meso-level methodological approach and the section on CDS as the analytical framework (see KIM 2016: 32) – even though these levels at times intersect. I will conclude this Introduction by discussing some ethical considerations that have impacted my role as researcher. The following explanations also

serve to make my personal standing and socio-cultural context transparent, which is imperative in a Critical Discourse study on disability.

1.2   Ethical Implications of the Study

When I started researching blind and partially sighted people's employment experience, people would ask me why I am interested in this topic. I am not visually impaired in any shape or form, nor do I have any other type of physical or mental impairment (although I have experienced other kinds of discrimination). My personal connection with this theme came from my aunt, who is congenitally blind. After finishing her degree in languages and translation studies (she speaks Finnish and German fluently), she started looking for a job as a translator. She has often told me how difficult she found it to get a job in this area and has mostly been doing short-term contract work for one business or another. These jobs were very infrequent, and she would often be unemployed for long stretches of time, having to rely on benefit support and her disability allowance. She also told me that the situation in her home country Finland is comparatively worse because there are no charities or organisations that she is aware of that would support blind and partially sighted people in(to) work, such as the London-based charity Blind in Business. Her story and experience inspired me to investigate this topic.

The relationship between academic inquiry and emancipatory social change and political activism is a complex one. Disability studies researchers have sometimes been accused of "using the subject and the experience of disabled people for their own ends and to build their own careers" (OLIVER & BARNES 2010: 551). The central question is how scientific research can continue to be relevant to people and their lived experience, which it purported to support, once the data is collected and analysed (PEACE 2010, SHELDON 2014). While I recognise the importance of basic research that explores theoretical socio-cultural matters connected to disability, the disabled body and other issues, it is crucial to consider how scientific findings can be used to feedback to participants in applied research. The main beneficiary of such a study should be the participants and the community, not the researcher that uses the data as part of a career-advancing academic qualification. Developing research production that is truly emancipatory is a challenging endeavour, not only for early-career researchers. The results of my own study were shared with the participants and the charities and organisations I worked with, but at this point it is difficult to estimate what kind of a

social impact this will have. However, following the tenets of the biographical narrative approach, I am convinced that sharing stories and reading about people's experience can have a healing effect and create 'ripples' that, slowly but surely, change people's lives. After all, narratives can be a site of collective action and drive social change (RIESSMAN 2008: 9 f.).

Going back to my earlier comment that I am not visually impaired myself, the question remains whether I can claim any authority or credibility in disability studies. I would like to address these concerns with VEHMAS' (2014) argument, who pointed out an ad hominem fallacy in some areas of disability studies: Personal experience does not guarantee sound reasoning or understanding. Research should be primarily judged by qualitative standards rather than personal involvement. SWAIN and CAMERON (1999: 77) also state that it is possible "to be non-disabled and politically committed to disabled people." I believe that, ultimately, everyone benefits from an inclusive, barrier-free society, not just the people directly affected by those barriers, and I also think that many areas of research would benefit from considering the added value of a disability studies perspective because it has universal implications for all areas concerned with human existence:

> Disability is a major philosophical and ethical problem, as well as a pressing political and social issue. It affects non-disabled, as well as disabled people. Disability studies is concerned with general matters of principle, meaning and value … and it can influence broader debates about power and meaning.
>
> (SHAKESPEARE 1998: 257)

Debates about value, power and meaning will be carried out in the later analysis chapters.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Identity as Performed Social Construct

2.1.1   Defining Aspects of Identity

Since the research field on identity is a very wide one and can encompass a range of different research traditions, I have been selective and will concentrate on the topics that are most relevant to the study at hand.

Social advocates promote the concept of inclusiveness: not only the general acceptance but also the appreciation of differences in intercultural awareness. This notion applies to the core sense of cultures (ethnicities and nationalities, for instance), but also to the entire range of socio-cultural differences, including disabilities. Intercultural communication refers "not only to the communication between individuals of diverse cultural identities but also the communication between diverse groups" (JANDT 2010: 18), and this "includes such cultural differences as age, class, gender, ethnicity, language, race, nationality and *physical/mental ability*" (JACKSON 2014: 3, my emphasis). Ability identity aspects are also included in social identity categories since they are usually associated with particular groups (TING-TOOMEY & CHUNG 2012: 309). A problem with the focus on group identity lies in the fact that the "overall effect is to impose a single, drastically simplified group-identity which denies the complexity of people's lives, the multiplicity of their identifications and the cross-pull of their various affiliations" (FRASER 2000: 112). Consequently, values of in- and out-groups are not dichotomous but situated on a scale of *negotiated* identity space (KNIGHT 2010). These differences have also become visible in my participants.

Identity is "our self-concept or sense of self" (JACKSON 2014: 130), and the "self is primarily a social construction crafted through linguistic exchanges (i.e., symbolic interactions) with others" (HARTER 1999: 677). Identities are further qualified as (JACKSON 2014: Chapter 6):

- formed through socialisation;
- shaped in diverse ways in different cultural contexts;
- multiple and complex;
- dynamic – how we see or experience ourselves can change over time;

- variable in salience (what aspect of our identity stands out in which situation) and intensity (how *significant* aspects of our identity are in certain circumstances);
- expressed verbally and non-verbally;
- and both avowed (how we choose to present ourselves) and ascribed (how others describe us or how we describe others).

Depending on the context, different facets of one's identity are foregrounded, and others backgrounded. On top of personal, social, cultural, class, physical and mental ability identity, JACKSON distinguishes organisational identity and professional identity (2014: 149 f., 152 f.). The different identity aspects are not always clear-cut, neither practically nor theoretically, as shall be laid out in this chapter. Physical ability identity and professional identity will be especially relevant for this study. In terms of the labelling of identity aspects, we can further differentiate between avowed and ascribed identities. The first is the identity we wish to present or claim in an interaction, while the latter is the one that others assign to us (OETZEL 2009: 62). Identity intensity refers to the degree of significance of a particular identity in a given context (COLLIER 1994, JACKSON 2014: 135). Importantly, identities are also formed and shaped through (inter-)action (RICHARDS 2006: 3): What "narratives, categories, roles and positions come to mean as an experience of participation is something that must be worked out in practice" (WENGER 1998: 151). Critical discourse scholars have also discussed the impact of discourses about the self on identity:

> How one represents the world, to what one commits oneself, e.g. one's degree of commitment to truth, is a part of how one identifies oneself, necessarily in relation to others with whom one is interacting. Putting it differently, identities are relational: who one is is a matter of how one relates to the world and to other people.
>
> (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 166)

The key characteristics that shape collaborative groups and influence professional and social identities are: a meaningful core activity, social relations as a result of jointly constructed goals and recognition of individuals, and their contributions as part of the cooperative activity (DONATO 2004: 287). Group talk represents aspects of a group's verbal interaction "that serve to reinforce the identity of the group, however this might be achieved" (RICHARDS 2006: 226). The concept of *community of practice* has been used to describe this circumstance. It is represented as embedded in "a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do" (WENGER 1998: 47). Practice as a source of coherence is achieved through mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (routines, words, ways of doing things, stories, etc.) (WENGER 1998: 73). Charities, for instance,

provide a platform for blind and partially sighted people to exchange opinions and experiences and develop this kind of social cohesion reflected in certain practices, stories and shared views on topics (see also Subsection 9.3.3).

ZIMMERMAN (1998) proposes three facets of identities when it comes to linguistic interaction: local discourse identities (speaker and listener), situational identities (such as researcher and participant, advice seeker and advice giver) and transferable identities discussed above (gender, ethnicity, etc.). Those identities are positions the subject is obliged to take (HALL 1996a: 6). RIBEIRO (2006) describes the process of frame analysis in discursive approaches to identity. Micro-shifts in the narrative are discussed under the term of *footing*, for example when different expressions are used to describe the same object or situation. *Positioning* on the other hand relates to social macro-relations. Cognitive resources, knowledge structures and schemata play a vital role in positioning. *Voice* is used to describe the degree of agency in the story, something that will be taken up during Chapter 8.

Identity is a complex concept and, depending on the focus and research tradition, involves many aspects. The discussion so far has provided some clarification as to how we can handle identities and describe them. The rest of this chapter will elaborate on the nature of identity and the formation mechanisms at play. Emphasis is put on the social constructionist, dynamic and context-dependent features of identities.

2.1.2   Social Constructionist Perspectives

Identities are to a degree dynamic, which does not mean that they are arbitrary. There are patterns and stability in identity practices for individuals (KIESLING 2013: 449). RICŒUR therefore replaces the criterion of uninterrupted continuity with similarity (RICŒUR 1992: 117): Slight changes to one's identity over time do not threaten its general stability. As HALL posits, unity exists only as a discursive construct. To give an example, in the company of non-disabled people, a partially sighted person might be considered simply disabled. In the company of blind people, however, this ascription can change and a partially sighted person might be labelled "only partially sighted" or "less severely impaired" in contrast to someone who is fully blind. Identities are constructed differently depending on context, utterance, setting, topic and audience (WODAK et al. 2009: 186 f.). We find degrees of disability whose salience changes with changing contexts. We can speak of multiple identities when identity fragments are intertwined and each receive attention, for instance, in the case of someone

who might be discriminated against both on the grounds of a disability and ethnicity or gender (see subsequent chapters).

Identities are furthermore seen as performed accomplishments (e.g., GOFFMAN 1979). This is especially relevant in Gender Studies. The concept of *Doing Gender* was originally developed for theorising constructions of masculine and feminine identities and their limits, but has since been transferred to a variety of identity aspects. Instead of possessing a fixed, integral, originary and unified identity, individuals are constantly engaged in negotiating identity, focusing in part on the other, on what they are not, as identity emerges from (real or imagined) contrasts (HALL 1996a, RIDDELL & WATSON 2003: 10). In terms of disability, disabled people's "self image is thus dominated by the non-disabled world's reaction" to them (MORRIS 1991: 28).

The social constructionist identity concept was advanced by HALL (1996a, b).[2] Identity is a structure by which we identify and become identified "with a set of social narratives, ideas, myths, values, and types of knowledge of varying reliability, usefulness, and verifiability" (SIEBERS 2013: 283 f.). They are the "theories that we use to fit into and travel through the social world" (SIEBERS 2013: 287). Identity construction is an inherently relational process of negotiating intersubjectivity in social space (PRIESTLEY 2003: 16 f.); subjects are both agents and patients of social processes (KIESLING 2013: 450, BUCHOLTZ & HALL 2004: 493 f.). HALL (1996a) approaches identity from the concept of identification, which is constructed through shared characteristics with another person or group (1996a: 2). As a process of articulation, it is never complete, which is why he highlights strategic and positional aspects of identity (1996a: 3). Identities are never unified but increasingly fragmented and fractured across "different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (1996a: 4). He further notes that "identities are about questions of using resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being" (HALL 1996a: 4).

Hall puts great emphasis on the constructional character of identity on the one hand, and on language and narrative as resources of expressing and constructing identity on the other. Context and situatedness of identity are the causes of this construction process. Identities "emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion" (HALL 1996a: 4). This explains why group

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[2] This approach to identity *construction* as a core function is also in line with the view of knowledge and discourse as construed versions of reality in CDS (e.g. VAN DIJK 2008, 2011, and cognitive takes on CDS, e.g. HART 2011).

identity can also be used to discriminate against people. Here we see once more the social constructionist perspective that aligns Hall's concepts of identity with CDS. Both emphasise the contribution of elements like power, difference and exclusion in the formation of identity. Identity provides a sense of belonging, but it also has an outside, the Other, who does not belong, is marginalised and devalued. VAN DIJK (e.g. 2008) frequently makes the claim that the distinction of Us and Them is one of the basic principles of discriminatory practice. I will discuss this further in Subsection 2.4.1 on concepts in Critical Discourse Studies.

HALL also transfers the perspective of identity as an unstable construction to the body (1996a: 11): The body might have served to function as a referent or product of condensation of subjective qualities in the individual, but social constructionism inspired by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler has effectively tried to reveal the underlying misconceptions of the body as unaffected by discourses about the body. The body "is never a single physical thing so much as a series of attitudes toward it", which are in turn formed and expressed through language and social practices (DAVIS 2013a: 271). HALL concludes that the "question, and the theorization, of identity is a matter of considerable political significance" and is only advanced when both the necessity and "impossibility" of identity (i.e. the renunciation of identities as stable and unified) are fully acknowledged (HALL 1996a: 16). These points will be discussed further when I review the literature in disability studies in Section 2.2.

2.1.3 Group Identity, Prejudice and Stereotypes

Group or social identities can refer to a "collective identity as a socio-cognitive representation" (KOLLER 2012: 20) or mental construct as well as to the linguistic constructions used to mark these relations in text and reinforce them through repetition, i.e. the strengthening of internal cohesion over time (FUHSE 2001: 2). Highlighting our own identity as part of a group (for instance, "the non-disabled") necessarily involves demarcating the Others, who are not considered part of that group. This process is the basis for prejudice:

> Logically, *in*clusion entails *ex*clusion, if only by default. To define the criteria for membership of any set of objects is, at the same time, also to create a boundary, everything beyond which does not belong.
>
> (JENKINS 2014: 104, original emphasis)

During the socio-cognitive process of stereotyping, (real or imagined) differences are accentuated between categories while within-category differences are minimised resulting in a so-called accentuation effect (TURNER & ONORATO 1999). Stereotypes, though to a degree necessary to simplify information processing, can be misleading, provide pre-structured information and, when persistent, overgeneralise, reduce individuality, devalue people and diminish their worth (DERVIN 2012, SAMOVAR et al. 2010, SORRELLS 2012), although there are also positive stereotypes (see Subsections 2.2.5 and 4.2.3 for notes on 'super-human' abilities of disabled people). From a CDS perspective, participants' experiences with discrimination based on stereotypes will be crucial. Stereotyping is defined as

> part of the maintenance of the social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological,' the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them.
>
> (GALVIN 2003)

Today we know that the concept of race when used to refer to human beings has nothing to do with biological reality. Both race and disability are ultimately social constructions, but the case of disability is an overall more complex one. Admittedly, it can be problematic to compare the two prejudicial systems of racism and disablism. However, it can be argued that all prejudice springs from the same roots, as explained above (see also HUNT 1998: 14). Disability is a different case than race in the sense that there is no clear distinction between biological and social aspects of disability since "social arrangements can make a biological condition more or less relevant to almost any situation" (WENDELL 1996: 35). Although it has been suggested that disability (just like *race*) is a concept that is mainly or entirely socially constructed with no biological foundation – hence the development of the two distinguished categories of *disability* and *impairment* (see Section 2.2) – most scholars in disability studies now argue for a less straightforward relationship. Importantly, the two *Isms* disablism and racism can fulfil similar social functions. The following definition of racism is easily applicable to disablism as defined in Subsection 2.2.2. Racism

> refers to the generalised and absolute evaluation of real or fictitious differences that is advantageous to the 'accuser' and detrimental to his or her victim. With

this negative judgment, the accuser wants to legitimise his or her privileges or aggressions.

(MEMMI 1992: 103, cited in REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 5)

Just like structural racism, structural disablism is an exclusionary practice that leads to unequal treatment and disadvantaging of persons in the allocation of resources, opportunities and services (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 8). Prejudice in turn

> is not merely a characteristic of individual beliefs or emotions about social groups, but a shared form of social representation in group members, acquired during processes of socialisation and transformed and enacted in social communication and interaction. Such ethnic [or disablist, in this case] attitudes have social functions, e.g. to protect the interests of the ingroup. Their cognitive structures and the strategies of their use reflect these social functions.

(VAN DIJK 1984: 13)

VAN DIJK (1984: 13) then designates seven strategies used to rationalise prejudice against minority groups: dominance, differentiation, distance, diffusion, diversion, depersonalisation, and daily discrimination (see also GRAUMANN & WINTERMANTEL 2007, GRAUMANN 1998). To explore these topics further and relate them to disability identity, I will explain the concepts of complex embodiment and disablism as well as discuss the types of discourses that surround disability identity in particular. Dominance, difference and discrimination will be especially relevant during the analysis.

2.2 Complex Embodiment and Disablism: Concepts and Discourses in Disability Studies

This section will continue to prepare the contextual layers necessary in qualitative Discourse-Historical analysis (WODAK 2009): the extra-linguistic sociological variables and the socio-political and historical context of disability. To this end, I will trace the development of disability studies and disability discourse that moved from a medical individualistic understanding of impairment toward social model and affirmative thinking of disability in the face of structural socio-economic and psycho-emotional barriers in society.

Both disability studies and Critical Discourse Studies share some of the same concerns: asymmetric power relations, marginalisation and discrimination of groups or individuals; but the two disciplines are not quite integrated yet (GRUE 2015: ix f.). As I already mentioned, a subordinate aim of this study is to show how the two disciplines can inform

each other. Disability studies can aid us a great deal in understanding human variation and grounds for differential treatment through embodiment theory:

> Disability creates theories of embodiment more complex than the ideology of ability allows, and these many embodiments are each crucial to the understanding of humanity and its variations, whether physical, mental, social, or historical.

> (SIEBERS 2013: 279)

Theorising about forms of embodiment makes the dominant ideologies of society, or the hegemony of normalcy, as Davis framed it, visible and opens them up to criticism (SIEBERS 2013: 283). A disability studies perspective adds a critical dimension to thinking about issues that go beyond disability and impairment. These aspects include notions like "autonomy, competence, wholeness, independence/dependence, health, physical appearance, aesthetics, community, and ideas of progress and perfection – issues that pervade every aspect of the civic and pedagogic culture" (LINTON 1998: 118). Connections between the two diciplines also become visible when we consider the critical impact of disability studies that has begun to emerge in more recent transdisciplinary studies. Much like the developments in CDS, fields such as psychology, feminism, queer and post-colonial studies have been drawn into the flux of research in an area that is now labelled *Critical Disability Studies* (GOODLEY 2013). Critical Disability Studies

> acknowledge that we are living in a time of complex identity politics, of huge debates around the ethics of care, political and theoretical appeals to the significance of the body, in a climate of economic downturn that is leading yet again to reformulations of what counts as disabled.

> (GOODLEY 2013: 632)

We can find two major strands in disability research, namely individualist (or medical) models and social models (or discourses) of disability (PRIESTLEY 2003).[3] In this chapter, the basic notions of disability studies need to be discussed in order to arrive at a working definition of disablism and disability identity. I will begin by focusing on one of the most damaging discourses on disability, the medical and individualist discourse (Subsection 2.2.1), to which the social and affirmative model discourses have been proposed as alternative ways of thinking (2.2.2 and 2.2.4). Finally, I will establish a working definition of disability identity (2.2.6).

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[3] Compare GRUE (2015) for finer distinctions and differences between the medical/individualist and social models of disability in different countries and regions of the world.

2.2.1   The Medical/Individual Discourse of Disability

In the literature we often find the term individualist (or medical) and social *model* of disability. The term 'model' itself, however, is misleading when understood in its narrow sense. For example, 'the medical model' as a phrase "tends to characterize *the practice of medicalization*, not any form of *theoretically coherent or explicit attempt to define disability as a purely medical matter*" (GRUE 2015: 48, italics in original). In disability studies it is common to use *model* in this manner, but of course GRUE is right to emphasise that we need to keep this methodological shortcut in mind. As a consequence, he suggests using the term *medical discourse* instead of *medical model*. Since I am also primarily interested in discursive constructions of disability, I shall henceforth adopt this expression where suitable.

Individualist discourse on disability foregrounds the 'biographical disruption' resulting from impairment. The "medicalization of disability casts human variation as deviance from the norm, as pathological condition, as deficit, and, significantly, as an individual burden and personal tragedy" (LINTON 1998: 11). Disability is equated with abnormality and opposed to normality in dominant discourses on disability.[4] The focus of the medical in contrast to the social discourse is person-fixing rather than context-changing (TRICKETT et al. 1994: 18). The medical discourse reduces "every aspect of disability to bodily impairment, prescribing only medical treatment and normalization as appropriate interventions, and denying agency to disabled people while reserving power for medical professionals" (GRUE 2015: 38). Such reasoning is most problematic when it places a cure for impairment above the need for accommodation and integration or battling social oppression (LINTON 1998: 110), which explains why it has taken so long for any substantial legal frameworks of anti-discrimination to be put in place. Aspects of the medical discourse, however, still echo in certain parts of society and remain effective in shaping the discursive representations of disabled people, as I will discuss later on. As a reaction to the shortcomings of medical discourses about disability, which, for the most part, arose from the medical professions, scholars in disability studies, social advocates and political activists have proposed to think of disability in terms of social oppression and barriers placed upon disabled people by majority society.

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[4] This view was confirmed, among others, by WALDSCHMIDT (2009), who carried out a discourse analysis of an online platform about bioethics.

2.2.2   The Social Discourse of Disability as a Reaction to Disablism

One of the crucial realisations propelling social model thinking forward was that struggles with embodied experience are not restricted to people with bodily impairments (see DAVIS 2013a, b for the problematic assumptions about normality in discourse about disability): "Impairment is the rule, and normalcy is fantasy. Dependence is the reality, and independence grandiose thinking" (DAVIS 2013a: 276). The development of disability studies has provided these insights and challenged the medical individual discourses persistent in majority society:

> Before the advent of disability studies, the academic study of disability was confined to fields such as medicine, psychology and medical sociology, with disability conceptualised as a functional deficiency experienced by unfortunate, 'deviant' individuals.
>
> (SHELDON 2014: 327)

Mike OLIVER (1990) coined the phrase *the social model of disability*. According to the social model, being disabled is, in contrast to an impairment, a socially imposed category, not an individual tragedy (DAVIS 2013a: 265). The materialist social model in the UK was influenced by neo-Marxist sociology (UPIAS 1976). Following this argument, disablism becomes an unequal social relationship manifest in exclusionary and oppressive practices at the interpersonal, organisational, cultural and socio-cultural level (THOMAS 1999). The most important contribution of the social model is that

> it has enabled a vision of ourselves free from constraints of disability (oppression) and provided a direction for our commitment to social change. It has played a central role in promoting disabled people's individual self worth, collective identity and political organisation. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that the social model has saved lives.
>
> (CROW 1996: 207)

LINTON (1998) uses the term *ableism* to refer to the ideology of physical ability. In other literature I have also found the term *dis*ablism, sometimes used with the same denotation. There seems to be a slight difference in focus of these two terms, given that ableism is defined as "discrimination in favour of the able-bodied" (LINTON 1998: 9), whereas disablism refers "to the *social* imposition of *avoidable restrictions* on the life activities, aspirations and psycho-emotional well-being of people categorised as 'impaired' by those deemed 'normal'" (THOMAS 2012: 211). Since the morphological derivative *disablism* is also the more recent

35

term, I will henceforth use this expression. This noun also highlights that *ability* is seen as the norm and contrasted with *dis*ability in dominant discourses. To elaborate further on this concept, disablism

> is *social-relational* in character and constitutes a form of *social oppression* in contemporary society – alongside sexism, racism, ageism, and homophobia. As well as enacted in person-to-person interactions, disablism may manifest itself in institutionalised and other socio-structural forms.
>
> (THOMAS 2012: 211)

The term *disability* itself has been criticised, arguing that it invalidates the subject position of people with impairments (CAMERON 2010: 113). I will return to this point of in/validation during the beginning of the data analysis. In any case, the terms *disabled person* and *disability* could be used to discriminate against people and mark differences that do not only bear some physical meaning (in terms of impairments), but also have social power. However, as LINTON argues, erasing the line between the categories of disabled and non-disabled people will not be helpful if disabled people are still discriminated against. Marking the boarder is a "strategic endeavour not to separate the two groups further but to illuminate the lines that currently divide them" (LINTON 1998: 124). Linking disablism with identity, NELSON states that

> [a] person' s identity is damaged when powerful institutions or individuals, seeing people […] as morally sub- or abnormal, unjustly prevent [them and their kind] from occupying roles or impose restrictions on activity and prevent them from occupying roles or entering into relationships that are identity-constituting […]. Harm to an oppressed person's identity that takes this form may be called *deprivation of opportunity*.
>
> (NELSON 2001: 20 f.)

Identity therefore also plays a significant role in disability studies, although the institutional setting and structural barriers receive more prominence in the deprivation of individuals' opportunities. THOMAS (2014) upholds the distinction between disability and impairment (effects) while clarifying that both are inextricably linked: Although "impairment is not the cause of disability, it is the raw material upon which disability works", "it is marked as unacceptable bodily deviation." **Impairment** is thus defined as

> physical, sensory, emotional and cognitive difference, divergent from culturally valued norms of embodiment, to be expected and respected on its own terms in a diverse society.

> (CAMERON 2014: 6)

Impairment can affect a person's daily life in numerous ways. However, these effects have a different origin than a disablist treatment per se. **Impairment effects**, on the other hand, are

> the direct and unavoidable impacts that 'impairments' (physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional) have on individuals' embodied functioning in the social world. Impairments and impairment effects are always bio-social and culturally constructed in character, and may occur at any stage in their life course.

> (THOMAS 2012: 211)

Impairment effects are "restrictions of activity which are associated with being impaired but which are not disabilities" (THOMAS 1999: 43). Impairment effects and disablism are intermeshed with social conditions that give them both meaning (THOMAS 2014: 14). Most disability scholars promote a view that is neither biologically reductionist nor culturally determinist (THOMAS 1999, 2007). As THOMAS explains, embodiment in terms of disability is in fact highly complex (cf. the previous Section 2.1):

> We should not give the bio-medics exclusive rights over the concept of impairment, nor perform the poststructuralist 'vanishing act' involved in treating *real bodily variations from the average* as entirely linguistically or culturally constructed differences. What is required is a framework that recognises the *social dimensions of the biological* and the irreducibly *biological dimensions of the social*.

> (THOMAS 2014: 14)

There is an analogy here with gender just as biological sex and socially constructed gender are distinguished in Gender Studies. Disabilities are "physically based but socially constructed" (ALBRECHT 1992: 35). The approach for improving the situation is thus radically different from the answer suggested in medical discourses: "Social model thinking mandates barrier removal, anti-discrimination legislation, independent living and other responses to social oppression" (SHAKESPEARE 2013: 216). In other words, the focus is on social change and transformation. Another strength of the model is the psychological effect of "improving the self-esteem of disabled people and building a positive sense of collective identity" (SHAKESPEARE 2013: 217), which has also been compared to social movements in other areas such as gay pride, *black is beautiful*, etc. – all examples for acts of reclaiming identity by the marginalised groups providing a change of perspective and source of power:

> Suddenly, people were able to understand that they weren't at fault: society was. They didn't need to change: society needed to change. They didn't have to be sorry for themselves: they could be angry.
>
> (SHAKESPEARE & WATSON 2002: 5)

According to SHAKESPEARE and WATSON (2002) and SHAKESPEARE (2013), however, the strengths of the social model also constitute some of its weaknesses. The categories of *impairment* and *the body* were factored out of the equation although both remain an important aspect of many disabled people's lived lives and experience which is hard to ignore. Social oppression cannot be adequately addressed without taking into account the role of impairment, if only because solutions to barrier removal are often impairment-specific (CORKER 1998, CORKER & FRENCH 1999). The social model framework also "reduces phenomenological notions of the embodied Self", the relation between mind and body (CORKER & FRENCH 1999: 5). The intricacies are manifold: Some impairments are visible, others invisible; some are congenital, others are acquired; some are static, others are episodic or degenerative; some bodily differences affect appearance, others restrict functioning; and these can have different implications on individual, psychological, social and structural levels (SHAKESPEARE & WATSON 2002: 12). There is a risk of circular argumentation insofar as "the social model assumes what it needs to prove: that disabled people are oppressed" (SHAKESPEARE 2013: 218). The social model has made it difficult to distinguish clearly between the impact of impairment and the impact of social barriers (see also GRUE 2015: 39). In practice, it "is the interaction of individual bodies and social environments which produces disability", since "impairment is always already social" (SHAKESPEARE 2013: 218 f.), just as much as bodies and identities are. Importantly, complete removal of social barriers would not lead to complete participation for all disabled people: If "someone has an impairment which causes constant pain, how can the social environment be implicated?" (SHAKESPEARE & WATSON 2002: 17 f.). These are some of the reasons why the social discourse has started to be seen as hindering further progress in the area (SHAKESPEARE 2013: 220).

While the social model views the relations between social representations and bodies as unidirectional, the medical model sees them as non-existent; so, what is needed is a discourse that emphasises reciprocity (SIEBERS 2013: 290). The British social model "has been an excellent basis for a political movement, but is now an inadequate grounding for a social theory" (SHAKESPEARE & WATSON 2002: 29). Effects of individual bodily impairment and social disability work together, so the different models should be applicable to different situations. Instead, they are often perceived as mutually exclusive (GRUE 2015: 41).

Differences between the models could be conceived more usefully in terms of "interest, orientation, preferred subject matter, and so on, than in terms of epistemological and ontological divides" (GRUE 2015: 49). SIEBERS proposes a view of intersectional identities and complex embodiment. Intersectionality as a theory "references the tendency of identities to construct one another reciprocally" (COLLINS 2003: 208, cited in SIEBERS 2013: 292):

> Intersectionality of identities involves focusing not only on individual axes such as gender and class but on how specific intersections of these identities are qualitatively different and not just additive of their individual qualities.
>
> (KIESLING 2013: 455)

What remains constant from the development of the social discourse is the orientation towards ideology of ability and the language of pathology justifying disability identity labels as inferior. SIEBERS takes the stance that while being social constructs identities are nevertheless meaningful and real precisely because they are "complexly embodied" (2013: 293). The reciprocity aspect reveals that both disability and ability are dependent on one another's definitions. Following SHAKESPEARE and WATSON (2002: 19), disability is complex, variable, contingent and situated, sitting at the intersection of biology and society and agency and structure. This point will also become apparent during the analysis part. Before I continue with the affirmative model of disability, I will discuss another aspect that has been neglected in disability theory for some time: the psycho-emotional level of oppression and disablism.

2.2.3   Psycho-Emotional Disablism

GRUE (2015) calls the idea of improved self-esteem of the disabled community discussed above into question: If group identity of disabled people is construed as either a marginalised minority or an economically oppressed class, "to actively identify as disabled means partaking of and embracing the kind of stigmatized identity that is rarely sought out by anyone" (2015: 55):

> Effectively, there is a recurring dilemma when it comes to disability and representation: positive framings of the concept of impairment entail either a) logical inconsistency, or b) a compensatory moral calculus [along the lines of *the impairment made them realise the worth of life*; my addition]. If impairments cannot be negative at all, if they merely entail 'difference', then the concept is

superfluous. If impairments *do* have negative aspects, however, then in order to maintain an overall positive impression, there must be compensations.

(GRUE 2015: 112)

This would explain why some disabled people actively subscribe to the medical discourse and rather see their impairment as an illness, thus avoiding an identification as socially oppressed. The label *ill* can sometimes be seen as less stigmatising because it signifies a temporary condition in comparison to *disabled* (GRUE 2015: 73); at least this could be the case for some people, although this would yet again endorse medical discourses and lead to the problems already discussed. Whether a person will identify as disabled depends on the interplay of a range of factors (GRUE 2015: 95):

- Stigma
- Visibility of impairments or inability to pass as non-impaired
- Direct or indirect discrimination
- Impairment effects such as pain and fatigue
- Degree of adaptation to the physical environment in general, including access to public transportation
- Welfare benefits
- Anti-discrimination measures
- The right to individual accommodation in education and employment situations

Many of these points will be taken up again during the analysis of the data. It will be interesting to explore these factors and see which aspects are most important to participants in any given situation. Impairment itself is (almost) never positive, but the achievement unlocked by traumatic experience can be (GRUE 2015: 121). Traumatic experience and the confrontation with disablist attitudes and actions by others can, however, also cause emotional pain to the individual (see also HUGHES 2014). I have found this to be reflected in the narrative data as well, at least to some degree for some participants. Depending on the outcome of the participants' narrations, emotional pain can be caused by obstacles and barriers a person faces in everyday life inside as well as outside of employment. Pain can be inflicted by misrecognition, discrimination, inequality and deliberate exclusion by majority society, in short, disablism, causing psychological trauma. As TAYLOR suggests, non- or misrecognition is part of disablist and discriminatory treatment and oppression in general:

> [O]ur identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-

recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false distorted, and reduced mode of being.

(TAYLOR 1994: 25)

The lived experience of disability can involve struggling with both socio-structural barriers and psycho-emotional dimensions of life (THOMAS 2002). REEVE distinguishes indirect and direct psycho-emotional disablism. The psycho-emotional, more private experiences of oppression have only recently begun to enter the purview of scholarly endeavour (REEVE 2014: 93):

> [T]he act of exclusion can operate at both a material and psycho-emotional level because this barrier to physical inclusion also serves to remind the disabled person that 'you are out of place', 'you are different' (Kitchin 1998: 351), in addition to emotional reaction such as anger/hurt at being excluded.

Crucially, indirect psycho-emotional disablism can persist while structural barriers are being removed in the process of making reasonable adjustments under the 2010 Equality Act, for example, when a disabled person is forced to use the back entrance to a building with a ramp, which can create the feeling of being a second-class citizen (REEVE 2014: 93). Direct psycho-emotional forms of disablism include words, behaviour and actions, such as prejudiced comments, being stared at or "having the gaze deliberately withdrawn when others avoid interacting with a disabled person" (REEVE 2014: 93 f.). These kinds of comments and actions are consequential and can fuel disablist hate crime. Prejudice and contempt for disabled people are "rooted in the view that disabled people are inferior; in some cases less than human" (QUARMBY 2008: 8). The processes of disableism, "like those of racism, include an internalisation of self-loathing which devalues disablement" (CAMPBELL 2009: 20). Furthermore, these processes can drive people to distance themselves from other disabled people by creating hierarchies of impairment (referred to as "dispersal") as well as adopt disablist norms in order to pass as non-disabled or (over-)compensate for their supposed limitations ("emulation"). Dispersal and emulation can have serious repercussions for the individual:

> [A] disabled person who is struggling to emulate the ableist norm, is manufacturing an identity as non-disabled; this takes emotional energy, is forever at risk of fracture and exposure, and denies access to alternate ways of being in which disability is associated with diversity, as a site of potential resistance and possibility.

(REEVE 2014: 95)

Methodologically, emotional reactions can be conceptualised by the appraisal framework of evaluation (see Subsection 3.6.4 and Chapter 7). Psycho-emotional barriers and their impact

will also be taken up during the analysis of the rhetorical strategy of Self-Blame Attribution (see Subsection 9.2.2). Meanwhile, another "solution" to the problem of self-devaluation and a means for empowerment has been suggested under the term of *affirmative model of disability*, which will be discussed next.

2.2.4   The Affirmative Discourse of Disability

The affirmative discourse of disability arose as a reaction to the problems some people found with both the biomedical individualist and the social constructionist model. Any hope for resistance "lies in a disabled person's ability to reject and resist the medical and associated categories imposed upon them, and to break free from the discursive bonds in which they are held" (THOMAS 2014: 12). At the same time, the affirmative model builds on and is a development of the social model (CAMERON 2014: 25). According to the affirmative model advocates, the aim is "not to deny that there can be negative experiences resulting from impairment, but to make the point that this is not all that impairment is about" (CAMERON 2014: 25). It can be aligned with difference-sensitive inclusion (HABERMAS 1996: 172 ff.), that is, "equal pluralistic coexistence of various ethnic groups, language communities, religious communities and forms of life" (WODAK et al. 2009: 9). In my data, the affirmation discourse is most strongly reflected in so-called "Resistant Discourse" strategies laid out in Section 9.4.

As SWAIN and FRENCH (2000: 571) state, "even in an ideal world of full civil rights and participative citizenship for disabled people, an impairment could be seen to be a personal tragedy." So, the social model does not in fact automatically reject a tragic view of impairment, while the affirmative model does try to accomplish just that. Does this thinking allow for upholding the distinction between disability and impairment, however? Disability is often made a problem by other people around, not so much the disabled person themself. The affirmation model can also be used for making sense of disabling encounters and as a resource of resilience (CAMERON 2014: 29). Insights provided by the affirmation model might have already been implicit in the social model; however, access is not the same as inclusion. Being able to be somewhere does not automatically equal being valued. In terms of my empirical data, I will outline these forms of endorsement in participants' stories and identification with or support of either medical, social or affirmative discourses, which are in turn reflected in rhetorical strategies and argumentation patterns.

Importantly, disability is not a minority issue but a universal experience of humanity (SHAKESPEARE 2013: 221). This can be called the universalist principle and is also used in a statement by the WHO (2011: 3). Its consequence, however, is that if disability is so wide-ranging, what is the category good for (GRUE 2015: 78)? As I have discussed, it is a means of calling attention to the treatment of individuals or groups and making this treatment visible in various forms of discourse. To sum up this section, "disability remains a complex phenomenon, requiring various levels of analysis and intervention, ranging from the medical to the socio-political" (SHAKESPEARE 2013: 221). Not any one model, theory or discourse will be able to explain disability completely (GRUE 2015: xi, 29).

2.2.5 Representations of Disability in the Mass Media

This section serves as a precursor to the corpus analysis in Section 4.2. To provide some context and situate my investigation in the field, I will summarise results from disability studies that have researched representations of disabled people in the mass media, popular culture, news, film and on television. Many of the sentiments will echo what we have already established about societal views of disability and disabled people and provide the empirical basis for these explanations.

By sheer number of representations, disabled people are not a marginalised group in modern media. COUSER (2013) suggests disabled people are in fact hyper-represented in mainstream culture and that disability is "an extremely valuable cultural commodity" (2013: 456). These representations, for instance in popular films, which DARKE (1998) calls *normality drama*, are reinforcing the individualist and medical model of disability. Disability is used in all kinds of psychological, social and cultural discourses as a source domain for lack, tragedy and flaw (DAVIS 1995). Disabled people are represented from a limited perspective, and this is where one aspect of their marginalisation lies.[5]

---

[5] See also the use of esentialising phrases such as "the disabled" versus the attributive phrase "people with a disability/with disabilities" in mass media discourses. As some disability researchers have argued, however, the latter term is also in danger of masking problematic views and behaviour because it suggests too close a relationship between the person and their disability, even if only by way of attributing one with the other. The passivised form "disabled people", on the other hand, can be understood to emphasise the fact that people *are being disabled* by society, for instance, and are denied access to the environments and spaces able-bodied individuals have created for themselves.

Disability discourses are often characterised by self-blame, guilt, shame and an obsession with perfection, which entails that almost every anomaly or bodily flaw can be corrected (BURKE 1969, AVERY 1999, see also Subsection 9.2.2). At the same time, disabled people did not have any control over these images: They are often stereotyped and presented as either superhuman characters, deformed villains or as flawed or damaged, labelled patients, victims, sufferers and described as being "confined" to wheelchairs (AVERY 1999: 120). But they are hardly ever depicted as ordinary people, nor is there much focus on the social barriers that they encounter. The physical impairment appears to be the most important aspect about the individual rather than any personal characteristic (SHAKESPEARE 1999: 164).

Stories about disability in the news media and in fiction are mostly occupied with cure stories, heroic tales and the role of charity appeals (e.g. RIDDELL & WATSON 2003: 2 f.). WILLIAMS-FINDLAY (2009, 2014) carried out a study on the representation of disability-related matters in two newspapers, *The Times* and the *Guardian*, by comparing language use of these two papers over an eight-week period in 1988 and 2008. He concludes that "many journalists continue to represent disability as a medical problem or social deviance which denies disabled people's own perspectives" and instead enforces culturally dominant views on disability (WILLIAMS-FINDLAY 2014: 110 ff.). Disabled people are more likely to be framed in negative representations than progressive ones and passive rather than active ones. The news industry rarely views disability from the social oppression or restriction perspective (WILLIAMS-FINDLAY 2014: 112).

Regarding narrative structure, SHAKESPEARE (1999: 164) summarises that disabled characters in film, for example, are often objectified and distanced from the audience in comparison to other characters. He identifies three master narratives: the "tragic but brave invalid", the "sinister cripple" and the "supercrip who triumphs over tragedy". SHAKESPEARE elaborates on the underlying psychological processes in the following manner: Non-disabled people "project their fear of death, their unease at their physicality and mortality, onto disabled people, who represent all the different aspects of human existence"; they pose a threat to order or "to the self-conception of Western beings" as "perfectible" and "all-knowing" (SHAKESPEARE 1994: 298). As DAVIS (2013b: 10) puts it, almost any literary work will have some reference to the "abnormal" to bolster the hegemony of normalcy.

Taken together, this leaves a very limited spectrum within which products in the mass media operate when it comes to presenting the audience with disabled people and their experiences. To counter these kinds of representations and narrative structures is to change

the attitudes people harbour and, ultimately, to "alter the very experiences of those lives as well" (Annette Kolodny, quoted in HINCHMAN & HINCHMAN 1997: 122). This point also highlights why the views and experiences of disabled people are crucial to challenge and disprove those widely known stereotypes. To conclude the section on disability studies and forms of complex embodiment, I will now suggest a working definition of disability identity.

2.2.6 Disability Identity: A Working Definition

As discussed in Section 2.1.3, social groups are mental constructs or imagined communities, since individuals will not usually meet or know all the members of that community (ANDERSON 1983: 14 ff.). These social constructs are reproduced and transformed through discourse and narrative (WODAK et al. 2009: 4, 22), which is why HALL uses the term *symbolic community* in the quote below. Although he applies the concept to national cultures, it sits just as well with other, smaller congregates of identity, the main difference in the case of the study at hand being that communities of blind and partially sighted people are minority identities rather than majority identity groups. It can be argued, though, that the able-bodied majority identity exhibits a similar makeup to a national identity. The parallels are visible in the kinds of discourses of disability discussed in the previous sections.

> A national culture is a *discourse*—a way of constructing meanings which influences and organises both our actions and our conception of ourselves. National cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' which we can *identify*; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and imagines which are constructed of it.
>
> (HALL 1996b: 613)

I build on the definition of national identity provided by WODAK et al. to develop a version of the able-bodied/disabled concept of identity:

> **(Dis-)Ability identity** is a complex of common or similar beliefs or opinions internalised in the course of socialisation and of common or similar emotional attitudes with regard to these aspects and outgroups, as well as common or similar behavioural dispositions, including inclusive, solidarity-oriented and exclusive, distinguishing dispositions and also in many cases linguistic dispositions. Insofar as this common complex (a 'generalised Other') is

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internalised, it is also, depending on the degree of identification, more or less a part of the individual's identity complex.

(Appropriated from WODAK et al. 2009: 28)

Behavioural dispositions can refer to the tendency that identifications inspire individuals to take sides with and defend their own community (WODAK et al. 2009: 29). Group members share emotional dispositions and attitudes both toward the ingroup (e.g. solidarity) and the outgroup (e.g. exclusion, stigmatisation and negative other-representation) (WODAK et al. 2009: 4), although the act of (re)claiming disability identity occurred as a reaction to the exclusion and oppression practiced by majority able-bodied groups. Stereotypes serve as the cognitive mechanism used to construct and maintain these divides (see previous Subsection), and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours are reflected both in discourses about disability provided by the outgroup (see Chapter 4) and in the narratives shared and told by the ingroup(s). FRENCH (1999: 27) suspects there might be a 'blind culture', something akin to Deaf culture. SWAIN and CAMERON (1999: 74) also talk about social categorisation and group identification processes disabled people exhibit: A "disabled identity offers a positive self-regard in moving from a personal tragedy view to a social model of disability". In the next section, I will explain the rationale for my data collection approach, which is guided by biographical narrative research. I will also further consolidate the points established so far with concepts of narrative and storytelling.

2.3 Narrative or Life Story Approaches

2.3.1 Thematic Versus Structural and Event- Versus Experience-Centred Approaches in Narrative Research

One of the ways in which identity is constructed and performed is through narrative (RIESSMAN 2008). TURNER (1980: 167) suggests that narrative is "the supreme instrument for binding the 'values' and 'goals' … which motivate human conduct into situational structures of 'meaning'". Stories therefore serve several basic purposes for people. ATKINSON (1998: 9 f.) proposes four classic functions of stories: 1. a psychological function (bringing order to our experience to "foster an unfolding of the self"), 2. a social function (transforming

our experience in relation to those around us; helping us understand commonalities and differences), 3. a mythical-religious function (inspiring feelings like awe and wonder; going beyond the here and now) and 4. a cosmological-philosophical function (rendering a worldview, our roles and purpose).

Identities of disabled people have mostly been studied by means of a thematic narrative analysis (see for example SMITH & SPARKES 2008). Thematic analysis is almost exclusively content-focused (*what* is said, instead of *how* it is said). Language is viewed as a resource, rather than a topic of inquiry; the local context, structures of speech and interaction play little role (RIESSMAN 2008: 54, 59). Thematic analyses are sufficient for sociological research, but a critical linguistic analysis can yield insights by uncovering underlying conceptualisations and rhetorical strategies that are not easily accessible through methodologies from other disciplines. The semiotic resources at our disposal for constructing identities "are so rich and subtle that our command of them at the conscious level is necessarily limited" (RICHARDS 2006: 3).[6] Structural narrative analysis, which is also carried out in sociolinguistics, has received less attention in qualitative research than thematic analysis (RIESSMAN 2008: 80), hence my focus on discursive strategies in narratives.[7]

Second, narrative research can be divided along the lines of event-centred and experience-centred approaches (TAMBOUKOU et al. 2013: 5). However, "research that focuses on narrative as an expression of individual experience, or as a mirror of social realities, tends to bypass the language of stories in order to focus on their meanings, or the social positionings they produce or reflect" (TAMBOUKOU et al. 2013: 9). The Labovian model of narrative analysis, for instance, is text- and event-centred (PATTERSON 2013: 28), although LABOV later recognised experientiality as a major aspect of narratives (1997). Labov and Waletzky propose a six-stage model from abstract to coda to subdivide parts of the story (LABOV & WALETZKY 1967, LABOV 2013). This model has been applied to a wide range of topics. Despite its methodological clarity, one of its weak points in relation to my own study is that it prioritises the narration of events over experience (PATTERSON 2013: 35). Also, the

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[6] It should be mentioned that RICHARDS approaches professional identity from the research angle of conversation analysis as opposed to the Critical Discourse Studies approach used in this investigation.

[7] However, as DE FINA and GEORGAKOPOULOU (2012: 24) have noted, the distinction between thematic and structural narrative analysis does not sufficiently characterise a researcher's approach. A summary of my methodological stance can be found at the beginning of Chapter 3.

theoretical distinction of referential and evaluative clauses is difficult to maintain in analysis since they are often simultaneously realised in stories (PATTERSON 2013: 36).[8]

The experience-centred approach focuses on the semantics of stories, their sequencing and progression of themes, transformation and resolution (SQUIRE 2013: 57). Stories are the result of a creative act of telling that is subject to reconstruction and selectiveness (PATTERSON 2013: 36); they are "texts which bring stories of personal experience into being by means of the first person oral narration of past, present, future or imaginary experience" (PATTERSON 2000: 128). Narratives display transformations or changes (SQUIRE 2013: 48): "Time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode" (RICŒUR 1984: 52). The biographical narrative approach is an experience-centred approach. Biographical researchers are usually not interested in the impacts of a single event on a person's life story, but in the overall experience, the biography or lived life, and investigate how certain views, evaluations and attitudes, i.e. symbols and meanings, came to surface over the course of a narrator's life. This is also in line with findings from cognitive science that posit a distinction between semantic or social memory and episodic memory: These modes of memory also influence each other as we learn by generalising and abstracting from specific events (CHILTON 2005: 74). Historical and narrative truth are therefore not necessarily congruent, as I will discuss in Subsection 2.3.3.

Before I discuss the biographical approach in more detail, it is warranted to mention another widely used approach in biographical research, which is Grounded Theory. While resistant discourse of visually impaired people has not been studied to any large extent in CDS or linguistics, discrimination and the reproduction of inequality have been investigated in some detail. The different approaches to CDS are available to be applied to new data, and it is therefore not necessary to derive a new grounded theory for this investigation. Let me explain why I take this to be the case. Grounded theory as developed by GLASER and STRAUSS (1995) holds that theory must be grounded in data. It is claimed to be especially suitable in areas and communities that have not been investigated fully and therefore lack an available theory that can be applied to the data. Despite its advantages in terms of conceptional plausibility, data sampling and theorisation, the study at hand does not utilise a grounded theory approach. As should have become clear in the previous section, racism and disablism share many cognitive-emotional and social-structural features. This allows for the

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[8] Evaluation is not restricted to a particular part in the narrative, even though it might aggregate at certain points. Appraisal Theory (MARTIN & WHITE 2005), an extension of Systemic Functional Grammar, sees referential and evaluative clauses as inseparable, using the term *evoked attitudes* for indirect evaluation. This is discussed in more detail in Subsection 3.6.4.

application of a CDS approach to examine the data. The Discourse-Historical Approach outlined below is also flexible enough for its analytical categories to be tailored to the data where suitable, as Wodak's studies have shown over the past few decades. Second, the basic linguistic structures and rhetorical strategies available to narrators have been described before (see MARTIN & WHITE 2005, REISIGL & WODAK 2001 and 2016, VAN DIJK 2008). While they are context-dependent to some degree, the rhetorical macro-functions remain relatively stable (e.g. resistance, justification, etc.; see Chapter 9). The linguistic means can be employed in diverse ways, but I would doubt that a Grounded Theory approach can yield radically new insights in this area of linguistic investigation.

However, there are several parallels between my study and a Grounded Theory study: While the general direction of my research was defined beforehand (i.e. employment experiences of blind and partially sighted people in the UK and Germany), the research question and especially the concepts, strategies and analytical frameworks crystallised over the course of the data collection, coding, exploration and analysis. My research question was thus a broad one rather than a narrow one to begin with. This allowed for flexibility and adaptability in the analysis by finding theoretical and methodological frameworks best suited to explain aspects of the narrative interviews, as I will demonstrate later.

2.3.2 The Biographical Narrative Approach: Research Tradition

The biographical narrative approach is used in this study mainly as a means of generating and collecting interview data. In terms of the actual analysis, I utilise methods laid out in the Discourse-Historical approach in CDS since it focuses on linguistic structures and discourse strategies rather than a thematic narrative analysis that is the standard within the field of biographical narratives. As I will explain below, a linguistic and rhetorical analysis can provide a distinct perspective when it comes to the participants' identities and rationale for argumentation. In the following paragraphs I will discuss the development of the biographical approach. Details of its application will be dealt with in Section 3.1, where I explain how it can contribute to data validity and lessen researcher bias. After reviewing the Discourse-Historical approach in Subsection 2.4.2 and discussing what I understand as resistant discourse, I will summarise why a biographical approach is compatible with a Critical Discourse approach in the Methodology Chapter (3.2).

Life history methods have been used for decades, but until recently, biographical research was mostly subsumed under discussions of ethnography and in-depth or informal interviewing in qualitative studies rather than being viewed as an independent research area. Especially in the past fifteen years, the biographical method has become a significant approach in social research (ROBERTS 2002). As ROBERTS (2002: 50) explains, after an extensive development of biographical methods in the 1920s and 1930s in Chicago, the use of the approach declined in relation to the growing number of statistical techniques and the development of social macro-theory. It then saw a revival in the 1960s together with the rise of micro-sociologies, as well as in the 1970s and 1980s through works of BERTAUX (1981), and again in the past two decades.

Biographical researchers draw heavily on sociology and oral history. The types of data can encompass a range of genres and media, including text, oral, visual and multimedia data, and the approach has been applied to a number of different topics, such as education, health, social history and migration, among others (ROBERTS 2002: 15, 31). Biographical research can aid our understanding of major social shifts while including how experiences are interpreted by individuals (ROBERTS 2002: 5). The idea of narrative "is firmly grounded in qualitative traditions and stresses the 'lived experience' of individuals, the importance of multiple perspectives, the existence of context-bound constructed social realities, and the impact of the researcher on the research process" (MULLER 1999: 223). As ROBERTS asserts below, identities are often multi-faceted in socio-cultural, professional, economic and personal terms:

> The analysis of life stories gives us powerful insights into how individuals reshape their sense of past, present and future and their social relations and thus respond to sociocultural and economic changes – for instance, on the important question whether contemporary 'individual identity' is becoming more fragmented or has to be more consciously constructed.
>
> (ROBERTS 2002: 21 f.)

As I will show in the analysis, the fragmentation and intersectionality of identity is also relevant for the participants I interviewed. For instance, some may have more than one disability, or they may have encountered prejudice in terms of their ethnic origin, gender or age in addition to having a visual impairment.

2.3.3 Interpreting Stories: Narrative Truth and Historical Truth

Personal or biographical narrative data, it could be argued, is not authentic, since it is prompted and generated in an interview situation as opposed to a more natural setting where the storyteller expands on their story without the invitation from a researcher. Indeed, we need to take the specific narrative structure into account when analysing stories (as ROBERTS noted in the quote above). MISHLER (1997: 224 f.) has also pointed out that stories are co-produced and adapted for a specific audience (e.g. a researcher). LUCIUS-HOENE and DEPPERMANN (2004: 29 ff.) further distinguish five levels of understanding of *biography*, which all possess their own logic of construction and thus the potential for transformation (and misinterpretation), including the historical event, the subjective experience, memory, the narrative (as a product) and the interactive process of narration. Because of complex relations between these five levels it is problematic to assume that we can access historical truth through narrative analysis.

However, this does not render the accounts any less relevant. They are authentic speech situations, if particular ones (CORTAZZI & JIN 2000: 109). In the absence of what could be considered more authentic sources (for example a sound-and-video recording of an interaction between applicant and employer in a job interview), narratives express the person's stance and their subjective experience in a semi-private setting vis-à-vis the social world: Narratives "are reflections *on*–not *of*–the world as it is known" (DENZIN 2000: xiii) and they express "how people see themselves at this point in their lives and want others to see them" (ATKINSON 1998: 24). In other words, biographical narratives can serve to index one's identity, although there is no one true narrative self at any point in time (see also DEPPERMANN 2004). Instead, our telling changes according to the audience it is addressed to – whether real or imagined – and gets worked through with every instance of reification (see also WODAK et al. 2009: 15 for a similar point).

Narratives furthermore construct (or position)[9] others and assign beliefs, motivations and emotions, blame, responsibility and agency to these others (DEPPERMANN 2013b,

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[9] My analysis does not explicitly draw on Positioning Theory as developed by DAVIES and HARRÉ (1990). However, as DEPPERMANN (2004, 2013a,b) has argued, positioning theory has extensive explanatory potential in biographical narrative analysis, which is why I will occasionally use the term *positioning* or *position* to highlight such situated identities. In fact, evoked evaluation seems to be congruent with implicit positioning achieved through descriptions of people's behaviour and actions (see DEPPERMANN 2013b, who sees positionings as implicit performative claims of identity).

see especially Chapter 7 on social evaluations in my narrative data). Analysing the employment narratives people tell will not lead to a person's all-encompassing narrative identity for a number of reasons (DEPPERMANN 2013a: 1 f.): No single story exhausts the narrative identity, identity is not unified but fragmented and context-dependent (relating to the explanations in Section 2.1) and not all aspects of experience are narrativised. The lived experience is structured by, rather than directly reflected in, narratives. Moreover, the story is not just an individual account but contains elements from the wider social sphere, beliefs and assumptions that influence group identities and perceptions. As DE FINA and GEORGAKOPOULOU (2012: ix f.) point out, storytelling is a social practice shaped by and shaping multiple social contexts.[10] In the case of a symbolic community or social group, as could apply to blind and partially sighted people, it also incorporates aspects that are relevant to different group members and can be used to construct a group's history from their own perspective:

> The notion of narrative identity also indicated its fruitfulness in that it can be applied to a community as well as to an individual. […] Individual and community are constituted in their identity by taking up narratives that become for them their actual history.
>
> (RICŒUR 1988: 247)

If interviews can be seen as a form of discourse that is grounded in context and to a degree jointly constructed, we also have to accept the possibility that contexts and audiences, and thus narrations, change. Stories have power beyond the time of the recording by creating rapport with the interviewer or encouraging people to rethink their experience and arrive at different 'morales' of a tale: "Taking stories seriously, to us, means treating them as having power to shape experiences, influence mind-sets, and construct relationships (WINSLADE & MONK 2008: 1). To put it differently, it is internal (narrative) rather than external (historical) validity and coherence that we are concerned with in biographical research (ROBERTS 2002: 39). Inconsistencies are "important in themselves – signs of tension or change in interpretation" (ROBERTS 2002: 40) rather than indicators of an underlying historical truth:

> It has become clear that the critical issue [of representativeness and validity of narrative data and analysis] is not the determination of one singular and absolute

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[10] DE FINA and GEORGAKOPOULOU's approach to narrative analysis, although clearly focused on linguistic detail and discursive functions, is strongly influenced by conversation-analytical research traditions and interactional dynamics in storytelling. As they discuss, there is considerable commonality between biographical narrative and sociolinguistic approaches (2012: 160 f.). Despite these alignments, biographical narrative interviews like mine are designed in a way that tries to avoid the development of a 'conversation' between interview partners and minimise researcher influence as far as possible (see also Section 3.1). Therefore, many of the analytical concepts they apply will not be relevant here.

‘truth’ but the assessment of the relative plausibility of an interpretation when compared with other specific and potentially plausible alternative interpretations.

(MISHLER 1986: 112)

Interpretation should attend to these inconsistencies and ambiguities in stories and how reality is formed for the narrator rather than to ‘objective’ or historical truth (ROBERTS 2002: 7 f.). As I will discuss below, a Critical Discourse Studies perspective is well equipped to address these issues because it can uncover people’s ideologies and link them with dominant reasoning and strategies in other types of discourses (see especially Chapter 9). “Inconsistencies” thus become points of ideological struggle and sites of the contestation of power. Narrators pursue ideological goals by telling their stories in a particular way, by ascribing certain characteristics to themselves as well as to the characters in their stories and by showing their actions from a specific perspective.

These *positionings* are not neutral or objective, but they reveal a lot about the storyteller because every narrative reconstruction affords acts of construction that can become contestable (DEPPERMANN 2004: 175). This view is indicative of the pragmatic approach of biographical research and narrative analysis (ROBERTS 2002: 8). Analytic induction places an emphasis on close investigation and comparison of cases, highlighting similarities and differences that serve to approach the confirmation of a hypothesis (ROBERTS 2002: 8 f.). Lastly, when analysing narratives, drawing on our cultural understanding is unavoidable. Analyses of narratives require the investigator to add to and supplement the text through what LABOV and FANSHEL (1977: 49) call *expansion* in order to help in understanding the meaning, drawing on other parts of the narrative, other data or contextual knowledge (MISHLER 1986: 95) – a practice that is also in line with the Discourse-Historical Approach to CDS outlined in Subsection 2.4.2 (see also the Background Chapter 4).

2.3.4 Embodied Telling and Disability

Since I will be investigating the narratives of people who are faced with or have acquired a visual impairment at some point in their life, it is presumed that the shift or the experienced contrast of identity between an able-bodied and a disabled person can in some cases be accompanied by emotional pain, feelings of loss, grief and a need for reorientation in one’s life. Narrative is key to unlock this experience and share it with others. As I pointed out in Section 2.2, the influence of the body on the formation of identity cannot be ignored. If

identity is expressed through narrative, then embodiment should also be considered at this stage. Stories as forms of embodied experience, however, have received little attention in narrative research (SQUIRE 2013: 61), although some have at least pointed to the influence of embodiment on narrative telling:

> Through telling/writing our memories, we piece together our embodied identities. We construct a sense of our bodies/selves. And we do this via a 'patchwork' process. We sew together scraps. Of physical sensation, emotion, images, words […]. Of messages from outside ourselves. And from inside ourselves. To create seemingly coherent – but inevitably patchworked – accounts of past events. And seemingly coherent – but inevitably patchworked – bodies/selves.
>
> (ANTONIOU 2003: 148 f.)

If disability (and indeed, human existence) is experienced in and through the body (HUGHES & PATERSON 1997: 334), then it becomes clear why HYDÉN (2013) also makes a case for embodied narrative research, especially with people who have differently embodied experience. "Importantly, the act of narration that structures and projects our sense of selfhood and identity over time, along with the tellability of personal stories, is an embodied process" (SMITH & SPARKES 2008: 219). This process is not only evident in people's emotions and social evaluations (see Chapter 7): Bodies always mean something, they are never neutral, be it as prerequisites of an experiencer moving though the social world or as a communicative resource (gesture, facial expression, voice, but also silences and breathing as marked pauses are sings of embodied telling) (HYDÉN 2013: 128 ff., 136).

The disabled body is a "marked case" that calls for a story if the person possessing it cannot pass as 'normal' (the unmarked case). There is a "demand for explanatory narrative in everyday life" (COUSER 2013: 457) when it comes to impairment. Disabled people are often expected to account for the story of their bodies (*what happened to* you?), even by complete strangers, or worse, their story is taken as self-evident (COUSER 2013: 457 f.). COUSER's account focuses on the importance of life writing but it holds similarly true for any other form of narrative self-representation which is the "best-case scenario for revaluation" (2013: 458). Those narrative accounts are an "entree for inquiry into one of the fundamental aspects of human diversity" (COUSER 2013: 459). People that underwent this transformation of identity from a seeing to a sight-impaired person might be more conscious of particular aspects of their identity and how others view and treat them. A radical change can force people to rethink their self-image. What is known as identity confusion or self-shock can occur: the intrusion of inconsistent, conflicting self-images combined with a diminished

ability to perform self-identity (ZAHARNA 1989) can stem from embodied experience. This occurrence can also explain internalised oppression, which will become relevant in Subsection 9.2.2.

Not being able or being seen as unable to fully perform one's (professional) identity can result in emotional pain. Disability identity "is the identity most associated with pain, and a great deal of discrimination against people with disabilities derives from the irrational fear of pain" (SIEBERS 2013: 287). Ideally, a gradual process of summoning to a new level of identification takes place in such biographies (GALVIN 2003), but in order to arrive at this stage of self-affirmation, most people go through a journey of transition and reformation of identity. Three narrative models were suggested in order to describe these transitions. They will be discussed now, in the last subsection on Narrative Research.

2.3.5   Narrative Models of Restitution, Chaos and Quest

Researchers in narrative inquiry have used different models of perceiving and dealing with one's biography and the disruption in personal identity. FRANK (1995) approaches the topic from the perspective of medical sociology and uses three storylines that a person facing (chronic) illness would use. Though he refers to them as *illness stories*, I do not mean to suggest that impairment can be equated with illness. However, Frank's concepts can be useful to analyse transformation stages in identity constructions. The three models present a temporal dynamic and paradigmatic shift from illness to health (Restitution stories), health to illness (Chaos stories) and illness to experience and insight (Quest stories) (GRUE 2015: 102). Experience can be interpreted differently at varying stages and by different individuals, which is what FRANK's narrative models capture.

The Restitution story can be compared to the medical discourse of disability, arguing that impairment might be a temporary state with room for improvement over time. It also idealises the healthy, normal, non-impaired body. The hope to regain the former self is not lost but projected into the future. Of course, this hope can turn out to be futile or even hindering to self-growth and adjusting to a new reality. Importantly, chronic illness – and disability – do not work as Restitution stories, as FRANK himself emphasises (1995: 94).

The Chaos narrative model views the new identity as an ultimately devastating and hopeless state without any prospect of improvement. The Chaos story is an anti-narrative where the self is not self-reflective (1995: 98). This narrative mode also underlines the

relevance of verbalising the painful experience: Storytelling can play a key role in repairing narrative wreckage (FRANK 1995). FRANK (1995: 110) points out that "people can only be helped out when those who care are willing to become witnesses to the story. Chaos is never transcended but must be accepted before new lives can be built and new stories told". In terms of disability discourses, this model mirrors the damage of psycho-emotional disablism and internalised oppression (see Subsection 9.2.2 on the Self-Blame strategy).

Finally, the Quest narrative model functions as a counter-narrative to the Chaos model and encompasses positive social identities, aligning itself with the affirmative model of disability (SWAIN & FRENCH 2000) and resistant discourse reasoning (see Section 9.4). People that embody this principle use their impairment in the belief that something is to be gained from the experience (SMITH & SPARKES 2008: 232 f.). The Quest story is told with the person's own voice, it opens up alternative ways of being and a sense of purpose (FRANK 1995: 115 ff.).

Frank's typology has been quite influential and serves as a first step to help sort the narrative threads interwoven in 'illness' stories. GRUE (2015: 102), however, argues that while Frank emphasises the validity of patient subjectivity, he does not challenge the primacy of patient identity, i.e. although the patient is put in a position of self-control, given autonomy and authorship in their own story, they effectively remain in the (for some people disempowering) identity category of the 'patient' in Frank's conception. Adaptations need to be made when researching identities of congenitally disabled people where the Quest story encompasses the full biography and is therefore broader than in Frank's model, or is related to certain impairment developments thereby re-imposing the illness frame (GRUE 2015: 103). As I demonstrated by comparing the narrative models with common disability discourses, disability studies can inform the arguments along these lines and lead to a clearer understanding and more fruitful approach in this combination of fields.

2.4   Critical Discourse Studies Approaches

In this section, I will outline the basic assumptions of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) programmes more generally before I move on to explain how the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is especially suited to aid the analysis of my data. After a preliminary analysis of the narratives, it became clear that a Critical Discourse Approach was most suited both in

terms of the research aims and the themes that participants talked about during the interviews.

2.4.1 Conceptual Foundations of CDS

CDS is also referred to as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), although this term could lead to the impression that CDS is a unified analytical approach that can be adopted by any discipline rather than an interdisciplinary subfield of linguistics and social sciences with its own assumptions, theories and methodologies. CDS is a more comprehensive notion and "allows more leeway for the eclectic approach to methods that is typical of critical text-based analysis" (KOLLER 2014: 149). Critical Discourse Studies are a multifarious research area (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 12) at the interface of social sciences and linguistics. CDS is influenced by the fields of classical rhetoric, text-linguistics, socio-linguistics and pragmatics (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 11), whose respective influence depends on the CDS approach in question. Theoretically, CDS finds its roots in a critical-dialectical and phenomenological-hermeneutic (as opposed to ontological-normative and deductive-axiomatic) conception of theory and scientific practice (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 5). The researcher does not remain neutral but makes their political position transparent (see also Section 1.2):

> Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality.

(VAN DIJK 2001: 352, see also VAN DIJK 1993: 252 f.)

Over the last decades, different strands, or schools, have developed. They share a common conceptual framework and critical angle, but have advanced distinct methodologies and analytical practices (VAN DIJK 2001). As WEISS and WODAK (2003: 6) go on to explain, the different schools, strands or approaches of CDS do not adhere to a uniform theory formation that is used consistently. The theoretical framework is eclectic and unsystematic (WODAK & WEISS 2005: 124), but this is understood as a strength of CDS, provoking inter- and transdisciplinary dialogue between social and linguistic studies (CHOULIARAKI & FAIRCLOUGH 1999: 16). This also means that the approaches are open to be expanded into areas that have as yet received less consideration and that they can be complemented by knowledge from

other research fields, in this case disability studies and narrative research, as long as they are conceptionally compatible and enrich the findings of the study at hand. The synthesis of theories is thus based on conceptual pragmatism or needs of utility. Such conceptual pragmatism becomes necessary when one tries to analyse relationships between texts and institutions, communication and structures, discourse and society (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 7, 9). This view relates the question of theory formation to specific problems to be investigated. Rather than asking 'Do we need a grand theory?' we are concerned with the question 'What conceptual tools are relevant for this or that problem and for this and that context?' (WODAK & WEISS 2005: 125).

Fowler, Fairclough, van Dijk and Wodak are among the most established researchers in this field of study. They are indicative of the Critical Linguistic, Socio-Semiotic, Socio-Cognitive and Discourse-Historical approaches, respectively. The different approaches have been applied to a variety of discourses revolving around discrimination, immigration, xenophobia and racism, anti-Semitism, corporate discourse and, more generally, the (re)creation of ideology, power imbalance and inequality. The discourses investigated are produced in both public and more private settings, but especially in mass media, in politics and social policy making. Politicians and journalists as representatives of their institutions take the roles of powerful social actors in discourse. They are capable of influencing the kind of narrative that is distributed in society: The "models of reality held and reinforced by groups with most power and discourse access then become quantitatively and qualitatively salient" (KOLLER 2009: 121), as I will discuss in Chapter 4.

CDS approaches developed in Germany have drawn more strongly on Foucault's theory of discourse than those in the UK. Linguistically, the UK schools are closely associated with Firth and Halliday. The Dutch school, advanced by Teun van Dijk, has put personal and social cognition at its theoretical centre (WODAK et al. 2009: 7). The most prominent approach in terms of methodology in CDS is Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) (HALLIDAY & MATTHIESSEN 2014). Here, language use is viewed as social action, which is meaningful on all levels of description. Language serves three distinct functions, allowing speakers and text producers to make important choices at each level. Ideational meaning concerns content and the potential to describe the world by employing semantic, lexico-grammatical and phonological resources. The often-used category of description on this level is transitivity, relating to different processes, participant and circumstance types of clauses. The interpersonal metafunction relates to tenor, aspects of interactivity between language and its users, social distance and status. Finally, the textual metafunction concerns the

organisation of text itself, such as mode, tone and cohesion. SFG made a crucial contribution to the field of Critical Discourse Studies: Halliday's systemic-functional grammar "made it possible to interpret differently worded representations of the same reality as different social constructions of that reality" (VAN LEEUWEN 2016: 141). While this view remains strong in many types of CDS, any specific approach might or might not adopt the full-fledged analytical concepts proposed in SFG. My own analysis will draw on some of the categories in VAN LEEUWEN's Social Actors Approach (1996) and process types in Chapter 8 on Agency and Affectedness.

The main principles of CDA relating to its theoretical assumptions in terms of power, ideology, discourse and critique can be summarised as follows (FAIRCLOUGH & WODAK 1997: 271–280). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss these points in turn in more detail.

1. CDA addresses social problems
2. Power relations are discursive
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture and is constituted by it
4. Discourse does ideological work
5. Discourse is historical
6. The link between text and society is mediated
7. Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory

Concerning the first point, social problems, CDS researchers agree that CDS is critical in so far as it is "rooted in a radical critique of social relations" (BILLIG 2003: 38).

> Basically, 'critical' is to be understood as having distance to the data, embedding data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and a focus on self-reflection as scholars doing research.
>
> (WODAK 2001: 9)

Critical Discourse analysts focus on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance: "Dominance is defined here as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality" (VAN DIJK 1993: 249 f.). WEBER (1980: 28) defines power as the chance that an individual in a social relationship can achieve his or her own will even against the resistance of others (see also Subsection 2.2.5 and Chapter 4).

Researchers of CDS aim to examine how language serves as a means to create and sustain those social relations of dominance and power, ultimately achieving social change (HART 2014: 2). In comparison to other fields that investigate the makeup and functions of discourse, the strength of Critical Discourse Studies, stemming from its focus on the use of

language, is to provide tools that are linguistically subtle enough to uncover implicit assumptions and insinuations. Text opens up an understanding of the social beyond its overt content as a field of power that gives rise to difference in language use (KRESS 2001: 35). To put it differently, linguistic action "is social action of which texts are the outward manifestation", making texts the starting point of the investigation (KRESS 2001: 35).

Discourse is understood as a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices related to a macro-topic (FORCHTNER 2014: 22). According to BUSSE and TEUBERT (1994: 14), the term *discourse* refers to virtual corpora of texts or speech that are organised in terms of content-related or semantic criteria. Texts that are part of a discourse deal with the same topic, theme, knowledge complex or concept (in this case employment experience of visually impaired people), they fulfil similar communicative functions, belong to the same period of time or represent the same part of society and create intertextual relations through explicit or implicit reference. Another important distinction is to be made between discourse as a more abstract form of knowledge (or socio-cultural memory) and texts as concrete utterances or documents that can be analysed linguistically and rhetorically (REISIGL & WODAK 2001).

Texts "are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance" (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 15). Ideologies are "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation" (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 9). As "meanings in the service of power" (THOMPSON 1984), ideological representations of in- and out-groups can be identified in texts (see, for instance, KOLLER 2013). Language, however, is not powerful on its own terms; rather, power is exercised by social actors who have access to discourses and are able to influence them (WEISS & WODAK 2003). These powerful actors are the ones most able but possibly least likely to change the status quo (since they are often not negatively affected *by* or even profit *from* it). The use of certain linguistic forms is therefore not automatically ideological and does not always create similar effects (VAN DIJK 2008). Power is manifested in language rather than being derived from it per se (FAIRCLOUGH 2003, WEISS & WODAK 2003: 13).

Ideally, a Critical Discourse study provides criteria for distinguishing "between manipulative and suggestive procedures of persuasion and discursive procedures of convincing argumentation" (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 265). The specific strategies that discourse participants use encompass a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic means: topics, local coherence, actor description (as part of identity constructions), detail (i.e. granularity) and precision/vagueness, definitions, evidentiality, argumentation, metaphor, modalities,

rhetorical devices, grammar, lexicon and nonverbal structures (VAN DIJK 2011: 37 ff.). My own analysis will, for the most part, focus on discourse topics, evaluation, the role of social actors, verb semantics, grammatical voice, process types, argumentation and rhetorical strategies.

Furthermore, it is assumed that language use is shaped by social structures, but also shapes and reinforces these structures (FAIRCLOUGH 1995: 131). There is a complex relation between what is structurally possible and what happens in a social event. In other words, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned (see for instance WODAK et al. 2009: 8). Text reproduction therefore equals system reproduction (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 10), which

> constitutes situations, objects of knowledge and social identities … It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it.
>
> (FAIRCLOUGH & WODAK 1997: 258)

Social practices on the other hand, "are intermediate organizational entities between structures and events" (e.g. practices of teaching or management in educational institutions) (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 23). Discourses, genres and styles constitute a network of social practices, which FAIRCLOUGH (2003: 24) – relating to FOUCAULT (1981) – calls "order of discourse".

Critical Discourse Studies researchers can engage in three different forms of critique (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 32): Text and discourse critique aim at discovering discourse internal inconsistencies, logico-semantic, argumentational, fallacious interactional structures. Socio-diagnostic critique "is concerned with the demystifying exposure of the – manifest or latent – persuasive, propagandist, populist, 'manipulative' character of discursive practices" uncovering the speaker's intentions, claims and interests, which are, importantly, "either inferable from the spoken or written discourse itself or from contextual, social, historical and political knowledge" (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 32). Since *manipulation* and *unmasking* as concepts are problematic and reductionist in their narrow sense, it is essential to provide transparent and intersubjectively comprehensible analyses (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 33). Finally, prospective or prognostic critique has ethico-practical dimensions and means recontextualising research in non-academic contexts through guidelines, consultancy or training. FAIRCLOUGH (2016: 88) maintains that CDS can improve people's wellbeing by criticising power abuse, if only indirectly. The same applies to normative and explanatory critique. Prognostic critique seeks to change and transform the status quo and is political in

the action-related sense of politics. Engaged social critique is nurtured by a sense of justice, human rights and the awareness of suffering, which take sides against repression and for emancipation and self-recognition (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 34).

For Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the concept of deliberative democracy is especially relevant. It is based on the idea of a free public sphere and strong civil society, which are realised linguistically and discursively. Decision-making and problem solving in a democracy build on the majority principle. However, this should not be taken to mean that the preferences and claims of minorities are simply suspended by the majority decision (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 265). A certain decision can be doubted by minorities for good reasons, and these have to be carefully examined and taken into account. The distinction between good and 'bad' reasons is exactly that between sound and fallacious argumentation procedures in CDS, which can apply not only to powerful actors but also to oppressed groups, as I shall discuss during the analysis, especially in Chapter 9. This procedure should follow "the deliberative principle that decisions which concern the welfare of a political community take the form of the result of a free and reasonable weighing of arguments among individuals who are recognised to be morally and politically equal" (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 265, drawing on BENHABIB 1995: 3).

2.4.2 The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

The DHA it is one of the most linguistically oriented of the approaches. My choice to use this strand of CDS therefore also links with the earlier argument that a more detailed structural analysis of this type of discourse is needed in addition to an explication of the stories' thematic progression. The DHA provides a well-suited toolkit for linguistic descriptions. It "attempts to transcend the pure linguistic dimension and to include more or less systematically the historical, political, sociological and/or psychological dimension in the analysis and interpretation of a specific discursive occasion" (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 22). This seems especially relevant considering the complexity of social identity relations as discussed in previous sections and the contribution that an impairment can make to one's (professional) identity. Without a clear view of the social and cultural implications, an analysis would be void of any direction for improvement and social as well as attitude change.

The DHA is influenced by van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, especially notions of positive self- and negative other-representation.[11] Both approaches start with a social problem and adhere to a detailed textual analysis (KOLLER 2014: 150). The socio-cognitive approach aims to reveal the socio-cognitive representations (SCRs) which are formative of discursive practices, while the DHA has a strong hermeneutic basis and draws on critical theory (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse) (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 32) to account for four basic levels of analysis (WEISS & WODAK 2003: 22): text internal, intertextual/interdiscursive relations, extra-linguistic and sociological variables, and the broader socio-political and historical contexts. Rhetorically, we distinguish content (or discourse topics), discursive strategies (as types) and their specific context-dependent forms of realisation, the linguistic means (as tokens), in the DHA (REISIGL & WODAK 2016).

The range of specific linguistic realisations of these strategies is manifold. KOLLER (2014: 153) distinguishes three levels for analysing collective identities in discourse. At the micro-level, we are concerned with the linguistic devices and discourse features people use to construct identities. The meso-level looks at the context of these discourse practices, their production, reception, distribution and appropriation, that is, the role of social agents and their discourse goals and functions. At the macro-level, we enter the social context and questions of which identities are constructed and why in this way. A Critical Discourse Analysis of VI people's professional identities necessarily oscillates between these three levels, since an analysis of linguistic devices by itself cannot unlock interpretations of people's identities, their (discursive) goals or the social functions connected to them without also relating to the context of these practices (see also GEORGAKOPOULOU & GOUTSOS 2004: 189). In the DHA, macro-strategies correspond to social macro-functions, such as construction, perpetuation/justification, transformation, demontage/dismantling, and are often interwoven in discourse (WODAK et al. 2009: 33). Discursive strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation encompass five types of sub-strategies (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: xiii, 46):

> **Referential/nomination strategies**: how persons and entities are named and referred to linguistically (functioning as identification)
>
> **Predicational strategies**: what traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them (e.g. through evaluation)
>
> **Argumentation strategies**: by means of what arguments and argumentation schemes specific persons or social groups reflect and react to or try to justify

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[11] However, the in-group is not necessarily evaluated positively as my analysis of compliant discourse strategies, especially Self-Blame Attribution, will also demonstrate (see Chapter 9).

and legitimate exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others (or themselves)

Perspectivisation and framing strategies: from what perspective or point of view these namings, attributions and arguments are expressed (linking back to predicational strategies and evaluation)

Mitigation and intensification strategies: how the discriminating utterances are articulated (covertly or overtly, intensified or mitigated)

The following analysis will reveal that we have to at least partly rely on aspects central to the socio-cognitive approach, particularly to reach the explanation stage of Critical Discourse Analysis. It would be implausible to deny that cognitive representations and mental models, for instance stereotypes as mental representations of groups (see Subsection 2.1.3) and ideologies as belief systems, play a role in discourse (see also Subsections 4.2 and 6.2), both for the production as well as the reception side. According to HERMAN (2003: 170) narrative is essentially a "basic pattern-forming cognitive system".

To give an example of how the socio-cognitive and systemic-functional approaches can be linked, in Chapter 7 on Evaluation, we must draw on structures of assumed shared knowledge to explain how attitude judgments are effected in evoked evaluations. Similarly, the rhetorical strategies discussed in Chapter 9 can serve ideological as well as psychological functions for participants that need to be discussed if we are to understand why these strategies are being employed at all. As VAN DIJK (1993) puts it, social cognition provides the link between discourse and power. Nevertheless, my analysis does not focus on categories originally associated with a socio-cognitive analysis such as conceptual metaphors, schemas, scripts and frames, force dynamics or discourse spaces (with some minor exceptions) because I did not find that these categories provide a sufficient answer to the research questions I have developed from the discourse genre at hand. This is justified because, in CDS, "[t]heories, descriptions, methods and empirical work are chosen or elaborated as a function of their relevance for the realization of … a sociopolitical goal" (VAN DIJK 1993: 252).

First, referential or nomination strategies are used to construct and represent social actors through lexis (see discourse patterns and topics, Chapters 5 and 6). In a second step, the actors are linguistically characterised through predications describing their own actions or actions inflicted upon them by others. Predicational strategies may be "realized as evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates" (WODAK 2009: 320, see Chapters 7 and 8). They are linguistically realised by attributes, predicates, collocations, comparisons, similes, metaphors, allusions, vagueness, hesitation, disruption, slips, reported speech, social actor description (VAN LEEUWEN 1996),

personification and anthropomorphism, pronouns, passive voice, and other rhetorical figures such as metonymy, hyperbole, litotes, rhetorical questions, synecdoche and euphemism (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 54 f.).

Examining actual discourse, it becomes clear that these strategies are not always neatly distinguishable from one another on a textual level. In particular, the "referential identification very often already involves a denotatively as well as connotatively more or less deprecatory or appreciative labelling of the social actors" (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 45). For instance, the nominal *cripple* carries a strong negative evaluation (or used to carry such associations before it was partly reclaimed), implicitly characterising people as broken and useless. It is also perspectivising insofar as it profiles the person's physical state above anything else and reduces the human being to their disability. Nevertheless, this example would be counted as a nomination strategy due to its linguistic form, namely a nominal. Although the strategies are not always clearly separated from their specific discourse-rhetorical functions, we can identify them as belonging to distinct categories by virtue of their linguistic makeup as either nominal or verbal groups. In the words of Cognitive Grammarian LAN-GACKER (2008: 124 f.), a noun profiles a "thing" in the widest sense (or a process reified as a thing, in the case of nominalisations), while a verb profiles a process. This is also the basis for coding them as either nomination or predication instances. Argumentation strategies are used for means of justification of the positions and viewpoints advocated and can also be implicitly included in nominations and predications (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 76). They often go beyond the scope of single words or sentences. Finally, through perspectivation, framing or representation speakers express their involvement and attitudinal stance (see the Appraisal framework discussed in Subsection 3.6.4 and applied in Chapter 7).

The notion of *strategy* reflects an unconscious relationship between what Bourdieu calls a habitus and a field. Strategies are "actions objectively oriented towards goals that may not be the goals subjectively pursued" (BOURDIEU 1993: 90), i.e. textual strategies can create rhetorical effects in recipients which the text producer might not be fully conscious about (see, for example, the rhetorical strategy of Self-Blame and its consequences discussed in Subsection 9.2.2). Individuals have some freedom to follow strategies; otherwise there would be no point in any form of critical analysis. Strategies "mediate between communicative functions and objectives deduced from the interaction and the social conditions of interacting partners and, on the other hand, the realisation of linguistic (or extra-linguistic) means and their structuration" (HEINEMANN & VIEHWEGER 1991: 215). The concept of *strategy* is connected to concepts of *frame*, *scheme* and *script*, although in DHA *strategy* is

characterised in terms of planned social or discursive activities and political or socio-psychological aims or functions rather than memory-modelling and knowledge retrieval and representation (WODAK et al. 2009: 33). As I will show in the methodology Subsection 3.6.4 on evaluation, however, the Discourse-Historical Approach can profit from the explication of knowledge structures when it comes to indirect expressions of attitude.

The intentional aspect of a strategy also varies depending on the data under investigation. Political speeches for instance are usually meticulously constructed, whereas contributions in focus groups might be more or less thought through at the moment of their utterance but probably not planned in quite as much detail in advance, and interviews or biographical narratives are more freely delivered while allowing space for the possibility that participants have schemas for typical experiences or that particular parts of the story have been told before and are thus more 'rehearsed'.

2.4.3   The Role of Counter- or Resistant Discourse

CDS is mainly interested in the language use of powerful social actors. The discourse produced by ordinary citizens has received less attention. On the one hand, this is understandable since CDS is aiming at social change; elites and people in power have more possibilities to achieve social change, were it in their interests. It is also the case that powerful social actors more often engage in discriminatory and exclusionary practices and power abuse. Unfortunately, this emphasis on powerful agents does not provide the whole picture. If we want to understand discourse properly, then less powerful actors, their attitudes and resources to shape language, cannot be ignored. After all, only by the individuals' endorsing, conforming to and identifying with the dominant discourse can that discourse survive (UNDERHILL 2011: 238). In other words, discursive practices can conceal power relations (WODAK et al. 2009: 8). This study focuses on the group of people who would be considered the "victims" of inequality and discrimination in traditional CDS, namely visually impaired people. Their active role in my study is not just a means of empowerment but reflects the reality of discourse organisation more accurately than a focus only concerned with powerful actors:

> Ultimately, it makes little sense to consider the individual as the passive object or 'victim' of ideology (as the casual logic of the social sciences often invites

us to do). All citizens are actors, whether they play passive or active roles in adopting, imposing or resisting dominant political discourse.

(UNDERHILL 2011: 6)

VAN DIJK (1993: 250) proposes that the analysis of counter-power needs to be included in a broader theory of power and discourse; "we pay more attention to top down relations of dominance than to bottom-up relations of resistance, compliance and acceptance". Power and power abuse may seem jointly produced when dominated groups are persuaded that dominance is natural and legitimate (VAN DIJK 1993: 250). Where isolated experiences are assimilated into general schemata to confirm existing prejudices, prejudice becomes a self-sustaining system. As I will show in the analysis chapters (especially Chapter 9), CDS can address issues of what we can call 'resistant discourse'. However, this is an area that has only recently gained more attention in comparison to the more common critique of powerful social actors (see VAN DIJK 2016 on anti-racist discourse). My study commits "to uncovering the formative influence of ideology on people's actions and beliefs" and attempts "to describe the ways in which everyday actions and relationships are both influenced and influential within large scale processes of domination and struggle" (RAMPTON 2001: 83). If it is the case that all language can do ideological work, as I have discussed earlier, then so can the discourse produced by blind and partially sighted people in biographical narratives. Which kind of ideological positions are taken up, supported or challenged by the participants, will be explored in the analysis chapters.

A classical Critical Discourse Study of the language use of powerful social actors is concerned with how linguistic means and rhetorical strategies are used to construct, evaluate and discriminate against marginalised groups. A Critical Discourse study of the language use of the marginalised group itself, on the other hand, is interested in how language is used to either resist and challenge those discursive constructions provided by powerful social actors or how the dominant discourse is reflected in a person's narrative and thus becomes a form of compliance: If "someone has been rejected – or has rejected herself – as a result of attributions of race, class, gender or disability, she finds it necessary to construct a new identity which accommodates the rejection" (GRIFFITHS 2003: 88). Compliant discourse facilitates the position naturalised by a text, empathising and sympathising with the social actors that authored the text (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 206; see Section 9.2). Narratives are often seen as a means of empowerment (*finding one's voice,* e.g. MISHLER 1986: x), but they can also reflect dominant conventions and ideologies (ROBERTS 2002: 124). Negative judgments are then incorporated into one's identity and self-narrative, somehow accepted or

left unquestioned, consciously or otherwise concealing power relations and dominance for a range of reasons (see also WODAK et al. 2009: 8). This argumentation strategy has been labelled "victim-victimiser reversal" (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 72), but it has so far been mostly applied to the victimisers' rather than the victims' discursive practices. The focus on counter-discourse is perfectly in accord with the basis of CDS that "texts can be seen as doing ideological work in assuming, taking as an unquestioned and unavoidable reality" (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 58). Narrators who engage in such compliant discourse models are more likely to tell a Restitution or Chaos narrative.

Resistant discursive practices "may be effective in transforming, dismantling or even destroying the status quo" (WODAK et al. 2009: 8). Such readings "work against the grain of [a] naturalisation process" (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 206). I expect that people who endorse this kind of powerful, resistant, affirmative narrative are also more likely to employ FRANK's Quest narrative model (see Section 9.4). There is also space for a middle ground, which Martin and White call tactical readings and which I have labelled Explanatory Discourse (see Section 9.3):

> Tactical readings are readings which take some aspect of the evaluation a text affords, and respond to it in an interested way that neither accepts nor rejects communion with the text as a whole.
>
> (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 206).

Therefore, there clearly is potential for a spectrum of stances, opinions and actions in the participants' stories. The resources to intervene and bring about social change both for oneself and in a wider social sense, however, are differently available to different social actors (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 41), and there are limits to an individual's knowledge of the contextual structuring of their lives. They may simply not be fully aware of the "unconscious basis and unintended consequences of their own actions" (ROBERTS 2002: 80, drawing on SCOTT 1998: 33). After all, it is not enough to realise that one is being oppressed or treated less favourably, but one needs to act accordingly, something which can be extremely difficult and challenging for individuals:

> [T]o be empowered is not only to speak in one's own voice and to tell one's own story, but to apply the understanding arrived at to action in accord with one's own interests.
>
> (MISHLER 1986: 119)

Disability research must be empowering to be emancipatory. It must generate accessible data and have "meaningful and practical outcomes for disabled people. … But empowerment is

not something that can be given – it is something that people must do for themselves" (BARNES 2014: 42). I would argue that social change is not a futile hope, and if we cannot easily change the views of majority society about disabled people, maybe raising awareness about the potential for resistance in the oppressed and marginalised groups themselves can be beneficial. As we know from psychotherapy, self-stories can help uncover the previously unconscious and reformulate psychological experience which leads to transformation (PAWELCZYK 2011: 11 f.). In the next section I will discuss how the biographical narrative and Critical Discourse approach can be combined.

3   Methodology

I see my methodology taking the stance of both a micro and a macro perspective on the data. A close linguistic analysis focuses mainly on the language use of the individual, a single text or utterance and the underlying conceptualisations or rhetorical strategies. Analytical categories from the fields of sociology, disability studies (but also Critical Discourse Studies) underline the influence of society, cultural models and discourse as an instantiation of those socio-cultural models. The two 'extremes' of micro and macro perspective are not treated as irreconcilable in more recent studies, but the distinction often still serves as a theoretical anchor. My analysis uses concepts from both micro and macro perspective approaches. An interdisciplinary approach can produce more comprehensive and integrated findings. By using different methods and analysing the data from different theoretical angles, I can triangulate the findings and address weaknesses of each of the methods and theoretical approaches.

As I already mentioned, the data I use comprise of two sources. The main source of discourse data are the 23 in-depth narrative interviews with participants using techniques detailed in the section on biographical narratives. However, I have also drawn on literature within disability studies, evidence provided by social science surveys and studies on the employment context of disabled people (see Section 1.1), as well as findings from a corpus linguistic analysis (see below). Results from my own analysis can be compared with conclusions from other studies to find overlap as well as disagreement. Data from the German participants can be utilised to compare narrative accounts and their structures in both languages and uncover shared patterns as well as differences.

Following DE FINA and GEORGAKOPOULOU's proposal for differentiating between methods of narrative analysis (2012: 24 f.), my approach is – for the most part – characterised by the following parameters:

- Object of analysis: narratives as text, narratives as identities
- General methodological approach: eclectic, i.e. qualitative elements (emphasis on observation and analysis of participants' understandings, discovery of units of analysis, see Chapters 6, and 8–9, and below) and quantitative elements (use of predetermined models of analysis, see Chapters 4, 5 and 7)
- Methods of data collection: elicited (narrative corpus)
- Types of data: oral
- Data analysis: focus on content/themes (Chapters 5–6), focus on language/style (Chapters 7–9)

I will start this chapter with recapitulating the methodological basics and advantages of the biographical narrative method before I move on to issues of combining this approach with a Critical Discourse perspective. In subsequent sections, I will discuss the procedure, ethics and participant recruitment processes, present the participants, talk about transcription and data coding and, lastly, instruments and analytical frameworks. I will conclude the chapter with a self-critical remark on generalisability in qualitative research.

3.1 Methodological Basics of the Biographical Approach and Centrality of the *Story*

The biographical narrative approach is participant- and context-focused as well as socially dynamic and rejects the formulation of concepts and theories in advance of fieldwork (BRYMAN 2003: 61 ff.). This is expected to allow participants to express their experience more freely without a researcher having to preclude aspects by using a defined set of possibly suggestive questions. The approach also raises the data's validity as it minimises the researcher's influence on the outcomes of the narrators' stories – at the expense of more manageable, 'tidy' data. Nevertheless, it is recognised that stories are always co-authored by the researcher, by their analytic redescriptions, concepts and methods, research strategies and transcription procedures (MISHLER 1995: 117).

The biographical approach can be characterised as taking the opposite direction that a semi-structured interview might normally take. Instead of beginning with a few more or less specific questions and ending with an open question such as 'Anything else that you would like to tell me?', a biographical narrative interview starts with a very general, open question. Only once the participant has told their story would the researcher ask any further clarifying questions or invite the interviewee to expand on a topic they mentioned in the original telling. The participant can go into more detail *after* they have told the story that matters most to them. Life story interviews that are interested in a person's full biography can be even more open-ended than that.[12]

Due to the critical angle of the study and the desire to eventually advance positive social change, I am particularly interested in challenges that VI people face. However, I did

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[12] *Life stories* look at life as a whole, thus my analysis is more concerned with particular kinds of narratives we might call employment narratives or employment biographies.

not want to assume that everybody's experience is inevitably negative. To start the participants on their narratives, I asked the question 'What's the story of your employment experience?'. As it turned out, most of the interviewees included challenges and negative aspects of being a VI person in employment on their own accord. The narrative design is strongly influenced by the trigger *story* in the question, which is at the same time a pivotal point in the theoretical conception of the approach. As ROBERTS states, the term 'story' "appears to presume a narrative fiction with main and lesser characters and a discernible plot structure around which the given of elements of the story, as written or told, fit" (ROBERTS 2002: 48). In terms of one's personal life history, stories fulfil the role of lending coherence to the events we find ourselves in:

> Stories give people the reassuring sense that life is not just a series of events happening one after the other without rhyme or reason. In terms of individuals' sense of themselves, stories enable people to have a sense of coherence about who they are.
>
> (WINSLADE & MONK 2008: 4)

A basic assumption of narrative analysis and the biographical approach in particular is that telling stories is one of the significant ways individuals construct and express meaning and identity (MISHLER 1986: 67). Moreover, identity constructions in narratives possess specific characteristics. They reveal personal as well as social aspects of identity work exclusive to the medium of storytelling and provide different insights into people's lives (DEPPERMANN 2004: 167 f.). In other words, personal meaning is constructed during the telling of the story (BRUNER 1986, 1990). However, narratives are necessarily social, no matter how particularistic the stories are (CHASE 2003, DE FINA & GEORGAKOPOULOU 2012). Stories guide action and people construct their identities by locating themselves within stories, making sense of their experience "on the basis of the projections, expectations, and memories derived from a multiple but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives" (SOMERS 1994: 613 f.).

Casting experience in narrative form is one of *the* primary ways or even the primary way human beings make sense of their experience (GEE 1985: 11). Narrative is an expression of the formation of selfhood: The "story *is* one's identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell" (LIEBLICH et al. 1998: 7). When we talk about a person's story, we can make a fundamental distinction between stories as phenomena (people tell stories) and method as narrative (researchers collect stories) (ROBERTS 2002: 117, drawing on CLANDININ &

CONNELLY 1994: 415 f.). This point also relates to notions of narrative truth versus historical truth discussed in Subsection 2.3.3.

3.2 Combining the Biographical Narrative and Discourse-Historical Approach

> The combination of multiple methods … within a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation.
>
> (KIM 2016: 257)

Much like CDS, the biographical research method is an eclectic, transferable and interdisciplinary approach (ATKINSON 1998: 3, KIM 2016: 7, 22). Nevertheless, according to ROBERTS (2002: 119), the idea of narrative and biographical research is resistant to incorporating discourse analysis. The main reason he gives is the focus of biographical narrative on individuality and the link between individual and social life, something that is easily lost in certain schools of Discourse Studies (see below), whose "focus on the given 'text' fences off a conception of an acting, social individual" (ROBERTS 2002: 119). The field, however, has come some way since its beginning and has addressed much of the critique directed at it. Although we are often using fractured examples to make a certain analytical point, what we gather from ROBERTs' concerns is that it remains crucial to reflect on the roles that particular parts of a narrative play in reference to the whole "text" and its meaning(s) as well as the individual voice of the social actor in context. The risk of decontextualised analyses can be reduced on the one hand by widening the scope of the analysis beyond the purely linguistic or even discourse level and integrating findings from, for instance, disability studies. Second, I will show that personal individual experiences can be explained by socio-political configurations that have an impact beyond the individual narrative. Importantly, though, Roberts' warnings seem to be directed at a fashion of CDS that draws heavily on Foucault and Derrida, where the notion of discourse as a supra-textual unit can indeed be so powerful that the individual becomes diffused in it. The criticism does not necessarily apply to other approaches to the same extent. Linguists working in the narrative tradition see narratives as a particular, discursively organised text-type, but they nevertheless recognise that stories are socially constituted (DE FINA & GEORGAKOPOULOU 2012: 1 f., 11).

In the Discourse-Historical Approach, a strong emphasis is placed on contextual factors as well as individuals' contribution to the discourse over time. Compared to other

approaches such as the Dispositive Analysis Approach (JÄGER & MAIER 2016), for example, the DHA is the most inductive programme focused on detailed case studies (WODAK & MEYER 2016: 18), although it is still less actor-focused than for example VAN LEEUWEN's Social Actors Approach (1996; WODAK & MEYER 2016: 20). Disablist attitudes toward visually impaired people, however, which present both deeply set structural as well personal challenges to individuals, justify the choice of this strand of CDS and afford combining it with a biographical narrative approach. Conceptional commonalities between the two approaches have been pointed out in previous sections.

3.3   Procedure and Participant Recruitment

Before the participant recruitment process could begin, I applied for ethical clearance and approval at the university's ethics committee. An independent board reviewed my proposed methods and procedure of participant recruitment and data collection as well as the overall aims and theoretical background of the study and judged whether these complied with the university's ethics standards. After approval was given, I identified the biggest charities in the UK and in Germany that work together with blind and partially sighted people, namely *Blind in Business, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)* and *Action for Blind People* in the UK and the *Deutsche Verein der Blinden und Sehbehinderten in Studium und Beruf e.V. (DVBS)* in Germany. These charities offer training in different areas, among them employment-related workshops, but also counselling and legal advice for VI people. I contacted these organisations and asked them to circulate the call for participants (see Appendices) in their newsletters and mailing groups or by whatever means they deemed appropriate.

In the call, potential participants were informed about the nature of the project stating that the aim was to conduct qualitative interviews with blind and partially sighted people about their employment experience. It was offered that interviews take place in person, if the person lived in the area, via the online video chat and voice call service Skype (although we did not use our cameras during the interview) or by telephone if they lived in parts of the country further removed from Newcastle and the North East of England. Contact information of the researcher was included in the call as well. The call informed participants that the project had received ethical clearance and that all identifiable data would be anonymised or generalised after transcription with only the research team having access to people's personal

information. Requirements for participation included that participants be over the age of 18 and that they self-identify as having a visual impairment. This could include total blindness as well as partial sight. After potential participants had made initial contact with the researcher via email or telephone, they were sent the information sheet and consent form (see Appendices) electronically and asked to carefully read them before the interview could proceed. In the information sheet, participants were again informed of the ethical standards, the nature and aims of the study and how the interview process would be designed. It was made clear that interviews would be recorded, transcribed and analysed to be incorporated into a PhD thesis and that data would be stored on the University servers in line with the data protection act. The information sheet also included contact details of both the researcher, his supervisor and an email address and telephone number of the university in case participants wanted to make a complaint or report an incident concerning the research. Participants were asked several times if they had any questions before the interview would take place, both via email and on the day of the interview. They were also told to keep a copy of the information sheet and consent form for their records and any future reference. Consent was given by the participants via email and again confirmed at the beginning of the interview. Interviews with German participants were conducted while I was in Germany, also via Skype or telephone. Interviews were recorded between December 2015 and December 2016. I used freely available software: Skype interviews were recorded with the *MP3 Skype Recorder* for Windows PCs and telephone interviews with an Android smartphone app called *ACR Call Recorder* by NLL. Before the narrative section of the interview, I asked interviewees some basic demographic questions to be able to compare their stories with other people's narratives and to have an indication of their socio-cultural background. The most important questions in this section, though, were title of occupation and the nature of their visual impairment.

Contrary to my expectation, most participants seemed relaxed and had no obvious problems in telling me about their experience. Some even confirmed it had helped them to think about their experience in a way they had not done before. Following the participant-focused approach of empowerment, supportive and active listening, I eased participants' minds by emphasising that the story they were about to tell was their own and they would know best what they have experienced. I underlined there were no right or wrong answers. I also pointed out that silences might occur, but that these would not have to feel awkward or taken as deficits but that the interviewees could use them to think about what to say next, how to continue their stories and which aspects to focus on or just to take a moment to relax. I would also stress that I would not comment on anything they said (except for very minimal

occasional backchannel signals to indicate that I was still listening) or judge what they told me. While they were narrating, I would take notes to ask more specific questions toward the end, if necessary, or to clarify something for me.

The question I asked them was deliberately formulated as an open question – as intended by the biographical approach: *What's the story of your employment experience?* Some participants asked whether I wanted them to relate the employment experience they were going to tell me to their visual impairment, especially if they had not been VI for all their life. In those cases, I told them that the question was consciously formulated as an open one and up to interpretation, but that I would suggest that they might want to compare their experience from before their visual impairment with the experience they made during and after this transition, at which point participants were happy to continue with their story. The participants' stories lasted between 20–40 minutes on average, a few were even speaking for more than an hour.

As I already discussed in Section 1.2 when mentioning the ethical implications of the study, my role as a researcher and interviewer investigating this particular topic was a challenging one at first. I feared that participants would be weary of speaking about their personal experience to someone who was effectively an outsider, since I have no first-hand experience of living with a visual impairment. However, my anxieties were unfounded. It was surprisingly easy to quickly build rapport with the interviewees. It did not feel like people were holding back much at all or being too cautious, and some even shared very traumatising accounts. Of course, it is entirely possible that people would have reacted differently to someone who self-identifies as visually impaired or blind, that the narratives would have been even more personal and the experiences told more revealing when it comes to their professional identities. But even so, I think it is safe to say that I have been provided with rich, informative data, which allowed me to draw many interesting conclusions during the analysis. Having been less personally involved in the topic might have even been an advantage because it allowed me to take a more analytical, matter-of-factly stance on the subject.

3.4 Participants

All participants that replied to the call, fulfilled the basic requirements and agreed to take part in the study were included without exceptions. Participants were therefore chosen based

on an availability sample (also referred to as a non-probability or convenience sample, see BERG 2009: 50). There were no restrictions in terms of participants' employment status or type of employment. All participants were above the age of eighteen. A total of 23 participants took part in the study and had their narrative interview recorded (see Table 3.1). 17 interviews were conducted in English, six in German. The participants belong to different age groups (for reasons of anonymity, the participants' exact age is not revealed). They have varied professional backgrounds, although several have or used to have management responsibilities in their careers. Thirteen participants identified as male, ten as female. Twelve participants were understood to be blind with either no useful sight or such a reduced amount of sight that they would not be able to use magnification devices and instead rely on screen readers and voice software when doing computer work. Three of the English-speaking participants (Anthony, Linda and Nada) and two of the German-speaking participants (Marie and Salma) were congenitally blind since birth. Eleven participants were partially sighted; the degree of their sight could be varying, but they all stated they had a level of sight that they could use in everyday tasks.

Table 3.1   Participant Information

Pseudo-nym	Gender	Age group	Occupation	Employment status	Visual impairment
			English participants:		
Ali	m	30s	Massage therapist	Employed	Partially sighted
Anthony	m	20s	Equipment and information specialist	Employed	Blind
Brian	m	50s	Probation officer	Employed	Partially sighted
Chris	m	70s	Disability and employment counsellor	Employed	Partially sighted
Delta	f	50s	Teacher	Retired	Partially sighted
Ed	m	30s	IT specialist	Employed	Blind
Emma	f	50s	Civil servant	Employed	Partially sighted
Gary	m	40s	Field office manager	Employed	Blind
Isaac	m	50s	Banking assistant	Employed	Partially sighted
Jessica	f	30s	Freelancer	Employed	Blind
Jon	m	50s	Welfare rights manager	Employed	Partially sighted
Kelly	f	30s	Team manager	Off sick	Partially sighted
Linda	f	20s	Lawyer	Unemployed	Blind
Mack	m	40s	Project manager	Employed	Partially sighted
Melissa	f	40s	Advice worker	Employed	Partially sighted
Nada	f	30s	Volunteer counsellor	Volunteer/ unemployed	Blind
Stuart	m	50s	Web developer	Unemployed	Partially sighted
			German participants:		
Chloe	f	40s	Call Agent	Employed	Blind
Jiri	m	40s	Software consultant	Employed	Blind
Marco	m	30s	Labour broker	Employed	Blind
Marie	f	30s	Clerk	Employed	Blind
Salma	f	40s	Social worker	Unemployed	Blind
Tom	m	70s	Mechanic	Retired	Blind

Some participants had circulated the call among friends and people they knew and thought could be interested in taking part in the study, which led to two people contacting me about participating in the research that were not based in the United Kingdom: Jessica was born in Malaysia but had stayed in the UK for a year during a volunteer programme (she spoke fluent English), and Gary is a citizen of the United States of America. After careful consideration, both were included in the sample because their stories still reflect employment experiences of blind and partially sighted people. More general themes such as support mechanisms, challenges and interactions with colleagues and managers were assumed to be comparable even if legal frameworks in their home countries differed. This was later confirmed by the closer analysis of their stories.

A central question in qualitative analysis and biographical interviewing is how many participants should be included in the sample (see KIM 2016: 161): BEITIN (2012) holds that between six and twelve interviews are already appropriate provided there is thematic redundancy in the data; KVALE (1996) proposes 15 plus minus ten to be sufficient, depending on the researcher's resources. If we explore themes across interviews, the sample can be larger and interviews shorter. This can be taken to be the case in my study. One guiding principle is saturation of the data, which occurs when breadth as well as depth is achieved, and no new knowledge can be obtained from adding new data to the sample. During the coding and analysis stages, I found reoccurring themes across several if not most of the participants. However, the problem with qualitative interviews and human experience is that some parts will be unique to people's stories and full saturation might never be achieved, although O'REILLY and PARKER (2012: 194) argue that if saturation is not reached, "it simply means that the phenomenon has not yet been fully explored rather than that findings are invalid." New data might then bring new perspectives that complement and extend the results obtained thus far.

3.5   Interview Transcription

To listen to the audio recordings during transcription, I used the analysis software *Audacity*. The interviews were transcribed verbatim using a broad transcription system that focuses on content and rhetorical-semantic means of expression rather than a fine-grained speech analysis. I did, however, transcribe pauses that lasted longer than a few seconds as well as words that received an unusually strong emphasis. The transcripts were carefully compared with

the recordings several times to correct errors and omissions. Any personally identifiable information such as people's names were deleted from the transcripts and bracketed with pseudonyms. The transcribed narrative corpus of all participants consists of almost 92,000 words. The English data comprised 76,000 words, the German narratives 15,900. The average length of a transcript was 4,000 words. As Figure 3.2 shows, most participants' interviews were shorter than the average length, which is also raised by Ali's extremely long interview.

Figure 3.2   Number of Words per Participant Transcript
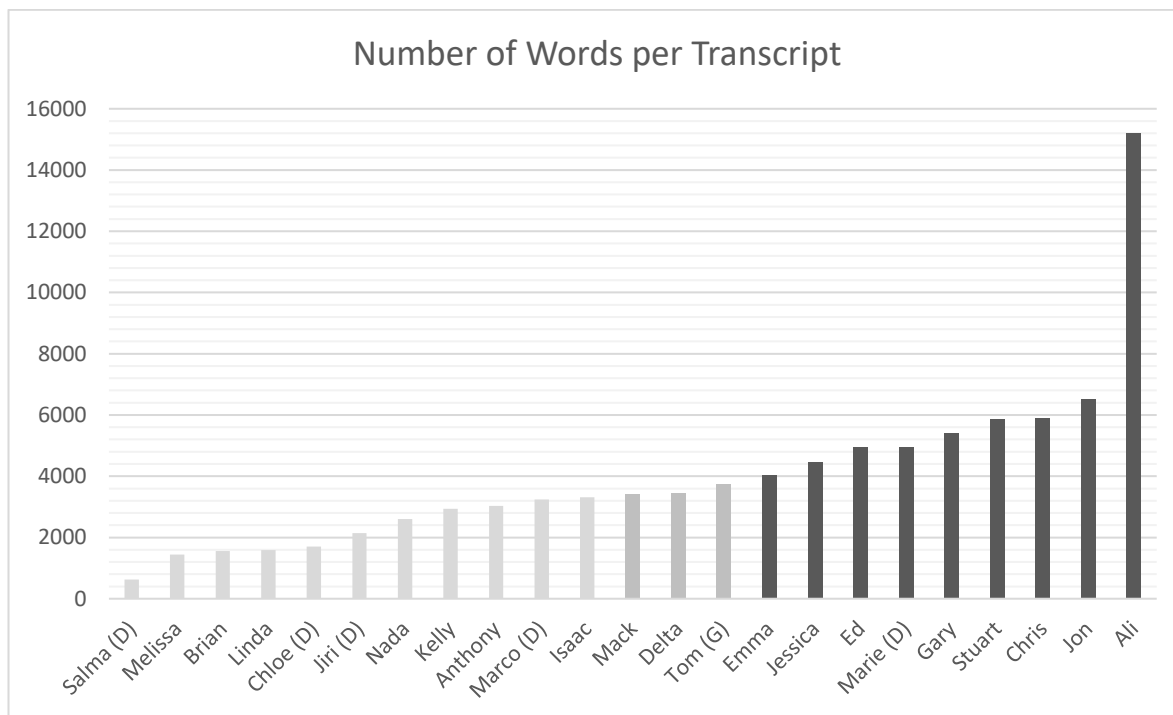
Some people may choose not to give lengthy accounts of their experience, and this must be respected by the researcher (RIESSMAN 2008: 25 f.). While some researchers may work together with participants to develop more detailed stories over the course of several meetings, time constraints stood in the way of such a process in my study. By the time data collection with these 23 partcipants was finished and interviews transcribed, I had to move on to the next stages.

Interviews with people who had more negative experiences were generally shorter because many of those participants had not remained in employment for long enough to give quite so detailed accounts. It is also plausible that the aspects worth telling, to their mind, were mainly concerned with the end of their employment stories, i.e. how and why their careers had ended, rather than recounting everything (positive) that had happened before then. Participants who had not been employed for long might have felt they did not have as

much to say about employment. Personality aspects might play a role as well with some people being more verbal and outspoken than others.

3.6   Instruments and Analytical Frameworks

The analysis of the narrative interview data focuses on five discursive phenomena:

1. **Discourse patterns** in the data were explored with automated corpus analytical techniques using Wmatrix and Sketch Engine. This analysis also provided the inspiration for the conception of the analytical categories in steps three to five.
2. **Discourse topics** were identified based on the quantitative exploration in step one, but the topics were coded manually using the qualitative data analysis and coding software NVivo 11.
3. **Evaluation** as conceptualised in the appraisal framework by systemic functional grammarians MARTIN and WHITE (2005) was employed top-down. (Categories three to five in this list were also coded using NVivo 11.)
4. **Agency, narrative ownership and affectedness** are expressed through verb semantics and grammatical voice.
5. **Rhetorical strategies** or argumentation schemes on the broader textual level of the discourse are associated with the three discourse models of compliance, explanation and resistance.

The corpus investigation of representations of blindness and visual impairment in Chapter 4 draws on the concept of semantic prosody, which will be discussed below. The chapter on evaluation relies on the appraisal framework, which is directly applied in the analysis (top-down, so to speak). The other two categories, agency and affectedness and rhetorical strategies, however, have been developed bottom-up during the coding and analysis of the data. In other words, the categories I use are specific to the genre. Some strategies such as perspectivisation and victim-victimiser reversal have been discussed in the literature before, while others have been specifically developed for my purposes. These include the rhetorical mode of explanatory discourse and a strategy I named Speculation as well as the resistant discourse strategy Self-Affirmation, neither of which I could find in the CDS literature – presumably because counter-discourse and disability identity have not been analysed to any great extent before. Chapters 7 through 9 also tie in most closely with the topic of people's feelings, judgments and beliefs, which all mark the argumentative character of the narratives (see also SCHIFFRIN 1994: 40).

3.6.1   Semantic Prosody and Social Evaluation in Corpus Data

This subsection serves a precursor to the quantitative, large-scale corpus analysis of views and social evaluations of VI people in the mass media and text genres carried out in Section 4.2. Although findings from this chapter serve as a contextual background rather than a main part of my narrative analyses, it is necessary to explore all methodological frameworks used in the thesis and explain their conceptual underpinnings.

A corpus linguistic investigation can reveal social meanings in a speech community using large amounts of data that are too extensive for a detailed qualitative analysis. As TEUBERT (2005: 8) stresses, corpus linguistics can still look at language from a social perspective. One way to do this is through collocation analysis. Semantic prosody is a possible effect of semantic preference, which means that words tend to co-occur with other words from certain lexical fields (PARTINGTON 2004, STUBBS 2001: 88). By looking at collocates and their semantic prosody, we can identify societal value judgments (MAUTNER 2007: 56) because collocates can "act as triggers, suggesting unconscious associations which are ways that discourses can be maintained" (BAKER 2006: 114). Semantic prosody refers to the "aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates" (LOUW 1993: 175). HUNSTON (2004: 157) calls this evaluative meaning. A more detailed definition of this concept can be found in HUNSTON and THOMPSON'S editors' introduction to Channell (2000):

> The notion of semantic prosody (or pragmatic meaning) is that a given word or phrase may occur most frequently in the context of other words or phrases which are predominantly positive or negative in the evaluative orientation … As a result, the given word takes on an association with the positive, or, more usually, the negative, and this association can be exploited by speakers to express evaluative meaning covertly.
>
> (HUNSTON & THOMPSON 2000: 38)

To put it differently, semantic prosody refers to the notion that a word's social, evaluative or attitudinal meaning and preference to co-occur with certain words and phrases, cannot be derived from a case-by-case analysis, but instead needs to be supported by evidence from repeated uses in large databases. This kind of analysis can only really be provided by quantitative corpus linguistics. Although semantic prosody provides an interesting approach to corpus analysis, the concept is not wholly unproblematic, as STEWART (2010) argues. First, introspection and intuition play a substantial role in identifying and analysing the semantic prosody of lexical items. To some extent, this will also be the case in my analysis below.

However, subjective judgments will continue to be at the centre of semantic prosody analyses due to the nature of the concept: It "is strictly speaking the item's [lexical] environment which is 'revealed', and from this environment the analyst makes inferences about the presence or absence of a prosody" (STEWART 2010: 80 f., and 134 f.). A researcher must look at collocation lists and make sense of the rankings and scores of collocational strength provided by automatic calculations (BAKER 2006: 18). It is important, then, to base one's claims on empirical evidence and to strive for intersubjectively comprehensible reasoning and transparency. Furthermore, the expression of evaluation and attitude is not as apparent in all examples cited in the research literature, nor does hidden meaning seem to be a necessary feature of semantically loaded lexemes (STEWART 2010: Chapter 2). I will focus on the difference in meaning hinted at by the collocation profiles of the words under investigation. To do this, I considered the words' rankings and their collocation strength in comparison to similar expressions, i.e. near-synonyms or alternatives. MAUTNER (2007) has demonstrated this for the words *old/aged* and *elderly*. My study uses a similar comparative aspect by looking at *blind* and *visually impaired*.

MAUTNER (2007) carried out a corpus analysis of the word *elderly* in the *Wordbanks Online* corpora to provide lexico-grammatical evidence for stereotypical constructions of old age. The collocational profiles she analysed show that *elderly* is connected to discourses of care, illness, disability and vulnerability through negative semantic prosodies. My study is based on similar assumptions and arrives at almost identical conclusions, the only difference being that I am concerned with the VI community instead of older people. BAKER (2006) mentions findings from a corpus analysis which indicate that the term *blind* is more likely to be used with a metaphorical sense in the 1990s than in a comparative corpus from the 1960s. Most of these metaphors also express negative meanings, such as *turn a blind eye, blind anger/panic/patriotism, blind to change*, etc. *Blind* has therefore undergone semantic expansion to refer to situations where someone is ignorant or thoughtless. The non-literal meaning of the word could constitute a discourse prosody "which influences attitudes to literal blindness (although it could also be argued that the separate meanings exist independently of each other)" (BAKER 2006: 15, drawing on Hunston 1999). BAKER concludes that the negative metaphorical meaning has increased in written Britisch English over time, at least over the last 30 years. I will return to this point in my corpus analysis (Chapter 4).

3.6.2 Discourse Patterns

Discourse, grammatical and collocational patterns in the narrative data were investigated by using two software programmes, *Wmatrix* and *Sketch Engine*, which provide frequency and keyword lists, collocational profiles and so-called Word Sketches of target words. Wmatrix (http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix/) and Sketch Engine (https://sketchengine.co.uk) are web-based corpus analysis software tools that researchers can use to analyse their data. Text-based transcripts can be uploaded to private servers, and several corpus linguistic analyses can then be carried out. These include determining word frequency and collocational patterns, calculating keyness scores of terms in the corpus and comparing them with reference corpora, finding the most common modifiers of lexemes (so-called Word Sketches) and displaying sample concordance lines for them, as well as exploring the distribution of semantic fields. After uploading corpus data to one's account, the text is automatically annotated (tagged) for parts-of-speech (POS). In Sketch Engine this is done using a modified version of the TreeTagger POS tagset called "English TreeTagger POS tagset pipeline, version 2." The original TreeTagger was developed by Helmut Schmid in the TC project (*Textcorpora und Erschließungswerkzeuge*) at the Institute of Computational Linguistics at the University of Stuttgart (see https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/penn-treebank-tagset/). This analysis was carried out only for the English narrative data (see Chapter 5).

3.6.2.1 Wmatrix

Wmatrix is a web-based corpus analysis tool and as such similar to Sketch Engine when it comes to carrying out standard corpus linguistic queries like frequency and concordance analyses of custom-built corpora (http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix/). However, one distinct advantage of the software is that it integrates the Semantic Analysis System USAS developed at the *University Centre for Computer Corpus Research on Language* (UCREL) at Lancaster University. It can be used to annotate a corpus based on semantic properties and display the most common topics in that corpus. It can also compare keyness of the custom-built corpus with a reference corpus of a similar register such as the British National Corpus spoken sampler.

Using semantic annotation allows the researcher to identify words associated with topics that might not be frequent enough on their own and would thus not rank high in a frequency list, but gain significance when considered side by side with other lexemes from

the same semantic category (such as *doctor*, *GP* and *hospital* from the *Medicines and medical treatment* discourse field B3). USAS has a multi-tier structure which relies on a manually compiled lexicon with 21 major discourse fields (see table below) that can further be subdivided into more fine-grained subdomains.

Table 3.3   The UCREL Semantic Analysis System: Main Discourse Fields

A General and abstract terms	B The body and the individual	C Arts and crafts
E Emotion	F Food and farming	G Government and public
H Architecture, housing and the home	I Money and commerce in industry	K Entertainment, sports and games
L Life and living things	M Movement, location, travel and transport	N Numbers and measurement
O Substances, materials, objects and equipment	P Education	Q Language and communication
S Social actions, states and processes	T Time	W World and environment
X Psychological actions, states and processes	Y Science and technology	Z Names and grammar

The USAS tagger in Wmatrix was especially useful at the beginning of my analysis and aided in formulating the discourse topics in the narrative data (see Chapter 6). It also showed which topics or semantic domains are especially frequent. The analysis in Wmatrix will be detailed in Chapter 5.

3.6.2.2   Sketch Engine

Corpus linguistic techniques of counting frequencies of words in the narrative corpus can aid in determining the most common topics (see Chapter 5). One of the advantages of Sketch Engine compared to other tools that can calculate frequencies is using so-called average reduced frequency instead of (or next to) standard frequency counts.

> Average Reduced Frequency (ARF) is a variant on a frequency list that 'discounts' multiple occurrences of a word that occur close to each other, e.g. in the same document.
>
> (https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/documentation/average-reduced-frequency/)

This option is helpful to give a more balanced picture of the data. For example, it might be the case that one participant talks about a certain topic repeatedly and at great lengths whereas others do not even mention it. This would increase the overall frequency of the term in question and make it seem more prevalent than it is when considering general tendencies. In other words, the ARF calculation estimates what the word frequency of any given lemma would be in a homogeneous corpus. Lemmas not normally considered content words were removed from the list in the post-processing stage. These include grammatical function words (pronouns like *I*, *you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, connectives, articles and prepositions like *and*, *the*, *a*, *that, to, in, on* and *of,* and highly frequent auxiliary verbs like *be*, *have* and *do*).

Sketch Engine can produce keyword lists for various search attributes. Keyword tables list words that occur more often than expected in one corpus when compared to another so-called reference corpus representative of the language variety under investigation. A keyword list "gives a measure of *saliency*, whereas a simple word list only provides *frequency*" (BAKER 2006: 125, original emphasis). The largest default reference corpus of English in Sketch Engine is the *English Web 2013 (enTenTen13)* corpus containing circa 19 billion words. To further explore the grammatical and collocational behaviour of the salient lexical items showing up on the frequency and keyword lists, I used the so-called Word Sketch function in Sketch Engine. As the website explains,

> A word sketch is a one-page summary of the word's grammatical and collocational behaviour. It shows the word's collocates categorised by grammatical relations such as words that serve as an object of the verb, words that serve as a subject of the verb, words that modify the word etc.
>
> (https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/user-guide/user-manual/word-sketch/)

Results of the analysis in Sketch Engine, including word sketches, frequency and keylists will be discussed in Chapter 5 as well.

3.6.3   Discourse Topics

Discourse topics were identified based on the categories in the quantitative exploration and then further refined by manual coding and a close reading of the narratives. Associated

themes were grouped into subtopics (cf. JÄGER & MAIER 2016: 129). The discourse topics already "yield ideas for the ensuing detailed analysis of typical discourse fragments" (JÄGER & MAIER 2016: 129). Identifying and grouping these topics informed the context-sensitive analysis of narrative structures and linguistic means in subsequent chapters because the analytical categories could be cross-tabulated with the discourse topics in NVivo. The structure of these topics and associated domains will be explained and analysed in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.6.4   Evaluation

Drawing on the related but distinct concept of stancetaking, ALBA-JUEZ and THOMPSON broadly define evaluation as

> a dynamic subsystem of language, permeating all linguistic levels and involving the expression of the speaker's or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that s/he is talking about, which entails relational work including the (possible and prototypically expected and subsequent) response of the hearer or (potential) audience. This relational work is generally related to the speaker's and/or hearer's personal group, or cultural set of values.
>
> (ALBA-JUEZ & THOMPSON 2014: 13)

Stancetaking, they argue, can be thought of as the more abstract concept, whereas evaluation is the verbal expression of stance (ALBA-JUEZ & THOMPSON 2014: 10). It will become clear how we can start to disentangle the concepts of attitude, viewpoint, judgment and emotion when looking for evaluative aspects of language. Before I turn to the intricacies of the appraisal framework, however, I will continue this section by first looking at evaluation as a global structural rather than a micro-functional element of a story.

According to LABOV and WALETZKY (1967), the evaluative section in a story typically occurs after the complication and before its resolution and coda. It has been referred to as the *whole point of the story* and indicates why the story was told, 'what the narrator is getting at' (LABOV 1972: 366). I will not use this model to analyse the narratives in any detail because of its "lack of attention to the interactional dynamics of storytelling" and the "ambiguity of the coding categories" (DE FINA & GEORGAKOPOULOU 2012: xi). Nevertheless, the evaluative parts on a more global scale demonstrate how the participants assess their careers and employment experience as a whole. This was a good starting point to understand their general stance toward employment and views of colleagues and managers, and reveals that experience can be positive, negative or mixed. Participants' views are therefore quite

varied: Mostly negative experience and more positive accounts both feature in the data. In respect to the type of narrative, "it is evaluation that enables monologic narrative to be interactive and to fulfil a communicative function" (THOMPSON & HUNSTON 2000: 13). Since the stories I collected deal with a series of different events and aspects related to employment, it is not surprising that we find several evaluative sections throughout the narratives, sometimes blended in with the coda of the story. As the examples will attest, there is a range of viewpoints when it comes to VI people's experience in employment, from emotionally bruising encounters with employers as well as colleagues and practical issues to mixed opinions in terms of the Access to Work scheme, but also overall positive evaluations of established careers. My analysis will be mostly concerned with what LABOV (1972) calls *internal evaluation*, and which I have dubbed *micro-functional evaluation*.

In 2005, MARTIN and WHITE published a comprehensive account of their APPRAISAL framework, which they had been working on since the early 1990s. Although this framework, to my knowledge, is not explicitly drawn on in the Discourse-Historical Approach, it is easily compatible with it, since the CDS programme encourages the appropriation of other methods and frameworks and "is best used in combination with theoretical and analytical resources in various areas of social science" (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 210). The APPRAISAL system sets out to elaborate the interpersonal function of language as one of three principle functions in Halliday's systemic functional grammar (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 7). As such, it is also strongly connected to (social) identity because evaluative meanings construe the speaker's value system (BEDNAREK 2015). Declarations of attitude "are dialogically directed towards aligning the addressee into a community of shared value and belief" (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 95). Appraisal as a discourse semantic resource is therefore "deployed to construe power and solidarity" (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 32). Through the interpersonal function, the speaker negotiates social relations and expresses their feelings, attitudes and judgments, "seeking to influence the attitudes and behaviour of others" (HALLIDAY 1975/2007: 184). Even though Martin and White deal exclusively with written language in their seminal work, "the tools developed here can be usefully applied to both spoken and written texts" (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 7) – as my analysis will confirm (see Chapter 7).

Within the APPRAISAL system, speakers make choices to express their emotions, feelings and attitudes (ATTITUDE system), incorporate and interact with alternative voices and standpoints (ENGAGEMENT) and modulate these subsystems by degree through GRADUATION, intensifying or toning down their evaluations (FORCE and FOCUS) to express how strongly they feel about the judgments they advance. As far as ENGAGEMENT goes, the

narratives are "monoglossic", predominantly expressing the speakers' attitude and belief with only occasional reference to alternative voices or viewpoints, although people will sometimes use direct quotes to express the opinions of others and re-enact a conversation from the past.

The ATTITUDE system itself is further broken down into the three categories of AF-FECT (expressing the speaker's emotions), JUDGMENT (evaluating people's behaviour ethically) and APPRECIATION (evaluating the aesthetics of semiotic and natural phenomena according to an underlying value system) (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 42 ff.). Following HART (2014: 47) we can say that AFFECT focuses on the appraiser, JUDGMENT on the individuals in the appraiser's social environment and APPRECIATION on the objects in that environment. The clause frames and the nature of the source and target of evaluation can be used to distinguish among the three subsystems (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 61).

Figure 3.4   An Overview of Appraisal Resources (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 38)
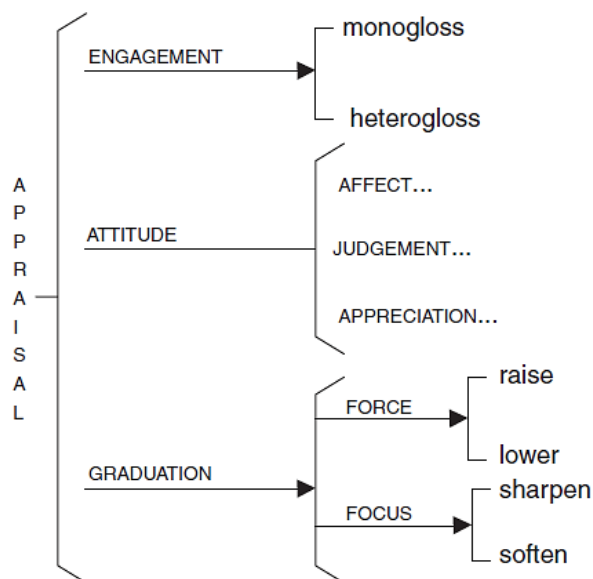
Attitude that is directly marked by the use of attitudinal lexis is called inscribed attitude (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 61). This contrasts with indirect realisations, or evoked attitude, which I will discuss later. I will start by considering AFFECT, before moving on to JUDGMENT and APPRECIATION. The basic dimensions of AFFECT group emotions into UN-/HAPPINESS (e.g. sadness, love and hate), IN-/SECURITY (e.g. anxiety, fear, surprise, confidence and trust) and DIS-/SATISFACTION (e.g. ennui, displeasure, curiosity and respect) (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 49 ff.). Each dimension can be expressed by positive or negative instantiations. If the

appraiser, or emoter, in this case the person expressing the affect, was someone other than the narrator, I coded this in the data accordingly. I have also annotated the respective object of appraisal, or trigger, of the emotional state (if they were made explicit). This can be a person, a situation or a circumstance, a decision, an action or a behaviour as well as a proposition. AFFECT can also be realised by denoting surges of behaviour, embodied manifestations of emotion that commonly co-occur with certain emotional dispositions (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 47), like in these examples: *I'd just sit and **cry** because it was so difficult, so difficult mentally, to carry on. ... I was, you know, getting **tearful** and **emotional*** (Delta).

In the JUDGMENT system, people evaluate their own or other people's character and behaviour (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 52). It can be divided into SOCIAL ESTEEM (normality, capacity and tenacity) and SOCIAL SANCTION (truth and ethics). In contrast to AFFECT, JUDGMENT does not involve emoters and triggers. The respective terms here are 'appraiser' and 'appraised'. The third subsystem of attitude is APPRECIATION, the evaluation of the impact, quality, balance and complexity of things and natural phenomena (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 56). Most evaluations in the JUDGMENT category are not realised via inscribed but evoked attitudinal accounts in my data.

Evoked attitude as a more indirect form of appraisal is realised through tokens and builds on the audience's socio-cultural knowledge and empathy.[13] Here, the selection of ideational meanings, the mere description of events, is often enough to evoke evaluation (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 62). Attitude can also be flagged by construing an action or event as contrary to expectation (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 66). This side of evaluation often affords double codings. For instance, by appraising someone's behaviour we can indirectly express our attitude toward this person's behaviour and give recipients a chance to infer our emotional state in that situation. Direct textual evidence of attitudinal lexis is not required; attitude is connoted rather than denoted. GRADUATION, amplifying or softening one's attitude, can serve as some sort of textual trace, though. In building on this underlying value system (THOMPSON & HUNSTON 2000: 6), the narrator expects the audience to draw the necessary conclusions themself. From a recipient perspective, the activation of socio-cultural knowledge and frame structures is fast and unintentional (HAIDT 2001: 817).

BEDNAREK (2009) refers to this phenomenon as "emotional talk" in contrast to "emotion talk". The values we draw on reflect our cultural knowledge, are context-dependent and often negotiable (ALBA-JUEZ & THOMPSON 2014: 4, 6). TANNEN (1993: 29) uses the

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[13] Similarly, FAIRCLOUGH'S notion of *assumed values* (2003: 173) builds upon a shared familiarity with "implicit value systems between author and interpreter".

concept of (cognitive) frames and describes these as forms of expectations about the world (see also SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA & BLANCO-CARRIÓN 2007: 235). These expectations can be validated expressively, but they do not have to be. The frame semantic concept in its modern sense originates from FILLMORE (1975). Frames are chunks of experience and situations stored in long-term memory. They guide us in constructing a mental text model that is compatible with the text (SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA & BLANCO-CARRIÓN 2007: 238, drawing on FILLMORE 1975). During discourse comprehension, a person

> mentally creates a partially specified world; as he continues with the text, the details of this world get filled in; and in the process, expectations get set up which later on are fulfilled or thwarted, and so on.
>
> (FILLMORE 1975: 125)

As SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA and BLANCO-CARRIÓN go on to explain, "a frame is a relational mental or knowledge structure prototypically representing or shaping a stereotyped situation" (2007: 235).[14] Emotive schemas, then, "link emotions to the cultural context and work as extensions of lexical or frame-based models" (SÁNCHEZ-GARCÍA & BLANCO-CARRIÓN 2007: 240). The audience must activate frames, emotive schemas and use cultural knowledge to infer the narrator's emotional disposition in evoked evaluations. Even though my focus is not on cognitive schemas and mental representations, it seems indispensable to draw on this kind of contextual knowledge at least in part if we want to explain the situated meanings and shades of evaluation in natural language use, as VAN DIJK has repeatedly stressed (e.g. 2006).

3.6.5   Agency and Affectedness

Following VAN LEEUWEN'S Social Actor Categories, "[a]*ctivation* occurs when social actors are represented as the active, dynamic forces in an activity, *passivation* [or *passivisation*, as I will call it to highlight the dynamics of the process] when they are represented as 'undergoing' the activity, or as being 'at the receiving end of it'" (1996: 43 f.). Passivisation can serve particular ideological functions, working in support of the status quo and an unequal distribution of power (FOWLER et al. 1979, FOWLER 1991). The over-use of passivisation (and nominalisation), especially in the newspaper media and in politics, is often criticised

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[14] This notion of frame as the mental representation of a paticular situation is in accord with VAN DIJK's theorisation of mental models (2006: 367; 2008), with the latter being the most abstract and general term, since there are also specific forms of mental models, i.e. context models and models of particular events ('event models').

by Critical Discourse analysts. In passive clauses, social actors can be omitted and kept in the semantic background (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 58; see below). This can apply both to the narrator of the story and other characters, although this will have different ideological implications and express different rhetorical functions. Semantically, the subject becomes the goal of the transitive process:

Figure 3.5   The Process of Passivisation[15]

I	*was told*	*that …*
Target/Recipient (Semantic Patient)	(Verbal) Process	(Actor/Agent (= Sayer) omitted)

Passive constructions have more than one function, depending on the context, and not every occurrence of a passive bears ideological meaning. As BILLIG has pointed out, "[on] occasions speakers/writers may find it easier not to consider the range of options that are available to them, but to go along with familiar, linguistic habits" (BILLIG 2008: 797). Arguably, there are constructions that will almost exclusively appear in passivised form, such as *I was made redundant, I'd **been promoted**, I've recently **been diagnosed**, I was told* by the GP; just to name a few. What also varies is "the extent to which the situation provides **motivation** for a particular choice of subject" (LANGACKER 2008: 368, original emphasis). Rather than intentionally hiding an actor's agency, the person in question might be unknown, hard to specify or painful to reveal and therefore be omitted from the sentence (LANGACKER 2008: 493). Attention is naturally drawn to the more active participant (LANGACKER 2008: 368), which makes some choices more likely and thus unmarked in comparison to others.

Another area that has been investigated for the use of passives and nominals, and their connection to pragmatic functions, is therapeutic discourse, where nominalisation can also be used to a positive effect. When becoming stuck in negative identity claims, clients often identify problem attributes as stable and enduring features of their identity (WHITE 2001). Detaching behaviour from the person can help to overcome negative identity claims and be a step towards working through a trauma (MUNTIGL & HORVATH 2005: 224). *I let him down* then becomes *Letting him down* in the client's story or account. Change occurs when we re-author our lives and relationships to construct preferred alternative ways of

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[15] It is, of course, possible to have the social actor SAYER remain in the clause (*I was told **by my GP** that…*), so, as the argument goes, whether or not social actors are actually omitted – and which actors are omitted – makes a significant difference in terms of the sentence's discursive meaning.

living and acting in the world (WHITE & EPSON 1990). To relate back to the data at hand, I make the case that the use of passive voice and the expression of limited semantic agency can be connected to the stability of a person's (professional) identity, their self-confidence and the severity of hurtful experience. Using semantic affectedness indicators, the narrators are cast, or rather cast themselves, in the role of the PATIENT who experiences things happening *to* them without taking an active part *in* them.[16]

Figure 3.6   Agency and Affectedness and Their Associated Linguistic Means
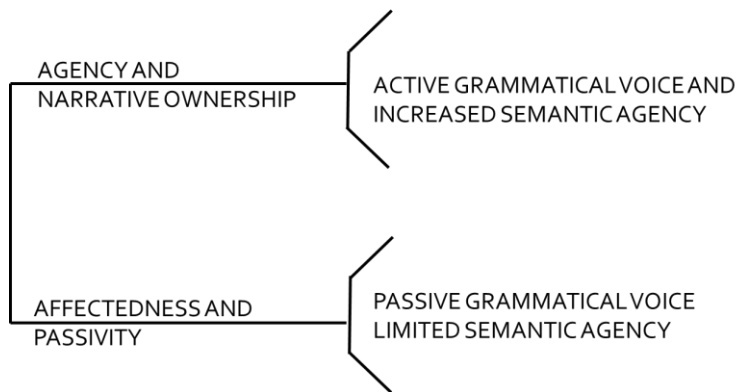
My analysis of agency and narrative ownership on one hand and affectedness and passivity on the other draws on DARICS and KOLLER's three-stage model of agency and action in business communication (forthcoming: 5): "while agency is a semantic category that refers to the meaning expressed through language", action is defined as "a grammatical category that refers to who or what is represented as grammatically active or passive" (see also COOREN 2008) – the two may or may not coincide. To clarify, grammatical action is expressed through the binary opposition between active and passive voice. Semantic agency, by contrast, "is a graded category, in that agents can be more or less agentive" (DARICS & KOLLER forthcoming: 6).

Constructions of limited semantic agency can therefore indicate affectedness in grammatically active voice: *(To) affect*, *push* and *move around* characterise the recipient or semantic goal of these actions as someone who is dependent on others or influenced,

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[16] Grammatical passive voice can also be used in contexts that do not express an individual's affectedness, limited agency and passivity semantically. Such instances include *to be offered/given a job*, *to be interviewed* and *to be retrained*. Here, the narrator is not a grammatical actor, but neither are they the goal in a process of limited agency. Instead, they are cast in the role of a beneficiary. References of this kind will therefore not be discussed in the analysis in Chapter 8.

affected, by their actions, possibly against their own will. In contrast, instances that show the narrator's sense of ownership use semantically active verbs and highly agentive constructions where the person becomes both the grammatical actor and semantic agent through expressions like *move change*, *turn around*, *manage*, *engage*, *become demanding*, *forge*, *do stuff, ride*. These terms are mainly used by participants that are in work and quite satisfied with their current employment or their employment history. To sum up, I suggest that the use of active and passive grammatical voice and expressions of increased and limited semantic agency are worth considering when analysing the data. Agency, ownership and affectedness suggest how strong and confident a person feels as a VI employee in the work environment.

3.6.6   Rhetorical Strategies and Discourse Models

Discourses represent a particular part of the world, the 'main themes' within a text, from a particular perspective (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 129). Although participants talk about the same general themes (employment experience in the context of their disabilities), they can engage varying perspectives because "differently positioned social actors 'see' and represent social life in different ways, different discourses" (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 206). Narratives can therefore "fulfil more than one discourse type" (DE FINA & GEORGAKOPOULOU 2012: 12). As DE FINA and GEORGAKOPOULOU further point out, argumentation in narrtives can be very persuasive because the accounts are based on first-hand experience (2012: 98).

The different argumentative perspectives are related to three discourse models I distinguish in the analysis of the rhetorical strategies, namely Compliant, Explanatory and Resistant Discourse. They will be explained in more detail below. The rhetorical strategies in my analysis are first and foremost content-related categories specific to the proposed discourse models. These argumentation schemes can then be combined with formal argumentation categories like mitigation, relativisation and legitimation where appropriate (REISIGL & WODAK 2016: 35). We can also use the distinction whether these strategies facilitate self- or other-representations (or positionings).

Argumentation is understood as an "abstract pattern of text formation or discourse formation" and cannot always be neatly separated from causal explanation or even narration (REISIGL 2014: 72 f.). As such, the arguments I discuss in Chapter 9 should not be understood in the narrow sense of the word *argumentation* (hence, I termed them 'rhetorical strategies'

instead): They are not constructed in the way traditional arguments would be constructed in philosophical or even everyday debates between two arguing parties. The strategies I examine often lack the traditional elements of data, warrant and claim, also because they are essentially monological rather than dialogical and serve to illustrate and explain people's experience rather than build a sound argument to refute a standpoint in a context of dissent. However, narratives have rhetorical functions and can therefore be analysed argumentatively because stories can be used to convince audiences (or the storyteller themself) of the veracity of the storyteller's experience (RIESSMAN 2008: 9).

At times, people subscribe to the judgments that are laid on them or mitigate employer responsibility and therefore indirectly endorse the traditional discourse on disability. In these Compliant Discourses, participants justify why employers' scepticism and reluctance of taking on VI people as employees is valid, understandable or relatable. The associating strategies are Perspectivisation of employer attitudes, behaviours and feelings, which supports positive other-presentation and self-blame (or victim-victimiser reversal), which rhetorically functions as negative self-presentation. Such argumentation schemes can ultimately lend strength to the continuation of disablist ideology and imbalanced power relations, even when such reasoning is not intended by the narrators. After all, "intentionality is irrelevant" in establishing discourse functions (VAN DIJK 1993: 262).

If a person's experience is exceptionally negative or destructive to their self-worth and professional identity, a process may occur that is called victim-victimiser reversal in Critical Discourse Studies or internalised oppression in Critical Pedagogy literature. Stigmatisation and stereotyping create "an existential crisis which often can only be resolved by internalising the view of the oppressor" (GALVIN 2003). Internalised oppression is defined as adopting "the [dominant] group's ideology", incorporating the Other's negative views and accepting one's own subordinate status as "deserved, natural, and inevitable'' (GRIFFIN 1997: 76). It is a largely unconscious process and thus difficult to challenge (MARKS 1999, however see TAPPAN 2006 for a different argument).[17] Internalised oppression as a specific form of psycho-emotional disablism is so powerful because it restricts who disabled people can *be* (THOMAS 2007, REEVE 2014: 95). Internalised oppression is not the cause of mistreatment but its result (MASON 1990). Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority may spring to

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[17] TAPPAN (2006) argues for reframing the two terms internalised oppression and internalised domination as "appropriated" oppression and domination to shift the focus from the deep, static and exclusively psychological to the systemic, institutional and socio-cultural aspects of these categories: "appropriated oppression results from the mastery and ownership of cultural tools that transmit oppressive ideologies, messages, and scripts" (p. 2127).

life, especially at the onset of being labelled or self-identifying as 'impaired' (GALVIN 2003). This self-devaluation seems to be a common viewpoint of disabled people (see SWAIN & CAMERON 1999: 73).

> Because disability, when identified as a personal attribute, is regarded as an undesirable quality, this has led many disabled people to reject disability as a social identity for themselves and to become tangled up in various forms of self-oppression.
>
> (SWAIN & CAMERON 1999: 75)

The phrase "disabled identity" can thus be understood in literal terms when it involves "the denial of a desirable identity" (GALVIN 2003). It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy and discourage people from even attempting to change anything about their situation (see AINSWORTH & HARDY 2004: 231). Disability scholars have experienced these processes themselves, as Mason elaborates:

> We harbour inside ourselves the pain and the memories, the fears and the confusions, the negative self-images and the low expectations, turning them into weapons with which to re-injure ourselves, every day of our lives.
>
> (MASON 1990: no pagination)

Internalised domination works in the same way for the dominant group when the group accepts its supposedly superior status as natural and deserved (GRIFFIN 1997: 76). Internalised domination can also explain why non-disabled people are restricted in their qualities for empathy, trust and openness to others, especially toward disabled people (see PHETERSON 1990), and this disposition can in turn have practical consequences in recruitment processes and during job interviews when coming into contact with people from the dominated group.

The second model, Explanatory Discourse, is functionally located between Compliant and Resistant Discourse. It is neither justifying the status quo nor directly challenging it. Instead, Explanatory Discourse is problem-oriented, focusing on issues that are not immediately connected to disablism and employers' attitudes or beliefs. Nevertheless, the points that are being raised in this discourse model remain part of a wider problem that narrators feel needs to be mentioned or criticised. The topics discussed in the Explanatory Discourse include unemployment rates among blind people, accessibility issues, economic and legal matters as well as employers' awareness about disability needs. The strategies that will be discussed in this section are Generalisation, Externalisation and Speculation of employers' knowledge and expertise in dealing with disabled applicants and employees.

Finally, engaging in Resistant Discourse is a way of openly questioning or condemning disablism, discrimination and inequality in the workplace. Interviewees challenge

negative attitudes and judgments of employers, colleagues or the public, and try to see these judgments as an attitude problem of the person who is disablist rather than the result of an individual shortcoming or an economic problem. Resistant Discourse strategies encompass Other-Blame Attribution, which works as Negative Other-Presentation, and Self-Affirmation, which engenders Positive Self-Presentation.

Figure 3.7   The Three Discourse Models and Associated Rhetorical Strategies

The different content-related rhetorical strategies can be combined with more general formal categories like mitigation, justification, rationalisation, relativisation, de-/legitimisation and intensification, depending on the argument in question. Many of the strategies belonging to the Compliant Discourse category in fact function as a form of delegitimation of VI people and legitimation, apology or justification of employer attitudes and actions. Regarding the disability discourses described in the Literature Review, Compliant Discourse is often aligned with individualist and medical discourses of disability (especially the Self-Blame argument, see Subsection 9.2.2), whereas Resistant Discourse promotes social and affirmative discourses of disability (especially Self-Affirmations, see Subsection 9.4.2). Any one individual can engage in more than one of these discourse models depending on the topic they discuss, their personal views and their socio-cultural context.

The purpose of the inquiry into people's argumentation patterns is not to criticise their thinking, to suggest that their arguments are incorrect or their logic misguided or fallacious, nor that they should not employ certain strategies. Doing so would undermine the participants' integrity and show disrespect for their perspective. From a cognitive linguistic and psychological point of view, Compliant Discourse strategies have merit and can serve as coping strategies that help the individual to make sense of and work through negative experiences (even though they are thwarting in the long run). The aim of this chapter is to critically analyse and discuss what the arguments entail rhetorically, why they might be used and how they support or challenge explanations, beliefs and attitudes about VI people in employment. The strategies and discourse models suggested here are to be understood as value-free categories, even when they have detrimental effects on a person's self-concept,

their outlook on employment or the discourse on disability more generally. According to GALVIN (2003), it is virtually impossible to speak outside of the dominant discourses, and since these views are so pervasive, it is understandable that some people do not have the means, the energy or the awareness necessary to resist the Compliant Discourse model, even in a semi-private setting.

3.7 Data Coding

To code the narrative data manually and qualitatively, I have used the qualitative analysis software NVivo 11. NVivo allowed me to code and cross-reference important sections in the narratives. The software also provides some basic corpus linguistic, i.e. frequency, calculations. Transcripts were uploaded to NVivo and then coded using a multi-level category structure (so-called *nodes*) for each of the analytical frameworks explicated above. After several close readings, I went through multiple coding processes for each of the analytical categories, each time finding salient sections, phrases or portions of the text to code, comparing these codes with each other, combining similar codes to form more extensive categories, patterns and themes (see KIM 2016: 188 f.). During the analysis, the examples of each category and subcategory could then be shown in a separate list with some cotext surrounding the coded instance.

The cross-tabulation function in NVivo was used for analyses of evaluation, agency and rhetorical strategies by comparing how much of the coded categories overlapped with the discourse domains and topics carved out in Chapters 5 and 6. This way, it was possible to structure the more complex analysis systems such as evaluation (e.g. Inscribed Valuation) in regards to the social actors and discourse topics or *things and processes* that appear in these coding nodes (e.g. *Tasks and Work Experience*; see especially Subsections 7.2.2 on Judgment and 7.2.3 on Appreciation). A more detailed discussion of the cross-tabulation approach in combination with Social Actors can be found in Section 6.4 as well as in the Agency and Affectedness Chapter 8, Section 8.3. Evaluation was coded on the following levels:

- **Attitude system**: AFFECT, JUDGMENT, APPRECIATION
    - AFFECT: Un-/Happiness, In-/Security, Dis-/Satisfaction
    - JUDGMENT: Social Esteem and Social Sanction
        - Social Esteem: Capacity, Normality, Tenacity

- Social Sanction: Propriety, Veracity
  - APPRECIATION: Composition, Reaction, Valuation

- **Appraiser or Emoter**: Authorial, Non-Authorial or Both

- **Appraised or Target of Evaluation**:
  - *Social Actors*: Self (Narrator), Employers, Colleagues, Institutions and Organisations, Other People at Work, Other Disabled People, Partners, Family and Friends, The Public, Health Professionals, Undefined
  - *Things and Processes*: Tasks and Work Experience, Visual Impairment, Written Information, Mobility and Transportation, Job Prospects, Education and Training, Support and Access to Work Scheme

- **Valency**: Positive, Negative or Mixed

- **Explicitness**: Inscribed (direct) or Evoked (indirect) evaluation

Agency and affectedness were coded in an analogous manner, although the category system is much more simplified. To sort the resulting codes by common themes, I relied on the discourse topic structure developed in Chapters 5 and 6 and cross-tabulated the topics and agency markers. These analytical steps therefore build on each other.

- **Agency and Narrative Ownership** (Agentic Verb Semantics)

- **Affectedness**:
  - Passive Voice Constructions
  - Semantic Passivity and Limited Agency

Rhetorical strategies and Discourse Models also relied on the previously developed discourse topics to sort the resulting nodes. The coding structure can be broken down as follows:

- **Compliant Discourse Model**
  - Perspectivisation Strategy
  - Self-Blame Strategy or Victim-Victimiser Reversal

- **Explanatory Discourse Model**
  - Generalisation Strategy
  - Externalisation Strategy

- o   Speculation Strategy

- **Resistant Discourse Model**
  - o   Other-Blame Attribution Strategy: Implicit and Explicit Mentions of Discrimination
  - o   Self-Affirmation Strategy

3.8   Critical Concluding Remark on Generalisability

In this section I will briefly deal with the issue of generalisability of my findings, which I consider part of being a transparent, critical researcher. Issues of representativeness, validity and generalisability of the judgments and findings and the role of interpretive work is often discussed in qualitative work more generally and in CDS in particular, especially in recent years. Representativeness is understood as the ability of a random sample to mirror the structure of the totality of data, something that can hardly be delimited in the social sciences and in Critical Discourse Studies specifically. Therefore, I cannot make the claim that the findings are representative of the views and experiences of all blind and partially sighted people (in the UK or in Germany). The sample size is probably too small to support this assumption. It is therefore important to be transparent about these issues, making methodological decisions explicit, describing how interpretations were produced and making primary data available where possible (RIESSMAN 2008: 195 f.).

To address the issue, CDS researchers deal with "typical cases" indicative of a range of possible positions (WODAK & MEYER 2016: 61). To give but one example, the participants in my sample are not representative of the spread of socio-economic classes. Many participants do have a job (unlike the majority of VI people in the respective countries) and quite a lot of them even occupy a position with management responsibilities, work as consultants, in IT or in retail banking rather than in low-paid areas. This bias seems to be brought about by the member structure of the charities I contacted, and this raises some other interesting questions about how to evaluate the recruitment process and how other VI people could be reached that might not be interested in the work that charities do. However, this is an issue I cannot resolve at this stage. I would also posit that people in employment are more likely to respond to such a call because they feel they have something to say about the issue and because they have the confidence to do so.

This leaves us with the realisation that explanations in a social science investigation cannot attain the same strength and stringency as in the natural sciences because of the nature of the social phenomena, their interpretations, 'senses', meanings – although the difference is mainly one of degree since natural sciences also rely on forms of interpretation (REISIGL & WODAK 2001: 268). Case-centred research models nevertheless generate knowledge that can be transferable – this knowledge can be tested by others and become the basis for their work (RIESSMAN 2008: 13), as I have demonstrated in the literature review. Cases can uncover social practices (RIESSMAN 2008: 194). Generalisability therefore lies in the theoretical abstraction from the data.

Recently, corpus linguistics is called for as a tool to battle claims of lacking representativeness. As my analysis of patterns in the Brigham Young corpora will indicate, this approach can indeed be helpful to gain insights from texts across a range of dates, authors and genres. However, the usefulness of corpus linguistic methods reaches its limitations where phenomena are concerned which go beyond lexical items or grammatical structures and are "played out on a larger textual stage, and with varying and unpredictable lexical realizations" (MAUTNER 2016: 157), which is certainly the case in the categories under investigation, especially rhetorical strategies and discourse models. Such argumentation strucutures are impossible to capture by corpus methods. Furthermore, texts can be read and analysed in different ways, and these readings will vary depending on the social subjectivity, position and interests of the reader or analyst, especially where evoked attitude is concerned (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 25, 206 f.). Widening the view to include both English- and German-speaking participants can serve as a first step toward firmer conclusions, as comparative studies have only recently started to receive more attention in CDS. Although Germany and the UK are not vastly different in terms of how VI people are viewed and treated, any similarities that do occur can increase the validity of the points the participants make during the interviews.

4   Contextual Background

The background chapter is divided up in two parts: First, I will trace some of the socio-historical developments in the context of disabled people and employment, which bleeds into the status quo of VI people's employment experience toward the end of that section. The second part is concerned with a corpus linguistic study on lexemes related to visual impairment and blindness that supplements the statements made in the first part with discourse data and answers the question how blindness and visual impairment are constructed in certain text and media genres.

4.1   Disabled People and Employment: Socio-Historical Developments and Status Quo

Disablism, i.e. the differential treatment and systemic disadvantaging of disabled people, has a long-standing history in Western societies. In terms of employment, scholars have traced back modern-day exclusionary practices in the workplace to capitalist social relations of the factory-based work system that formed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (FINKELSTEIN 1980, ROULSTONE 2014, THOMAS 2014). During the industrialisation, norms of effort, stamina, strength, awareness and endurance became increasingly pervasive (FINKELSTEIN 1980), qualities that disabled people are still generally thought to lack (see Section 2.2). People "who could not sell their labour-power on 'normal' and 'average' terms faced exclusion from the opportunity to obtain, independently, the means of subsistence" (THOMAS 2014: 11, see also OLIVER 1990). The economic basis paired with the medical professionalism discussed earlier produced "an ideology of the 'devalued difference' represented by 'cripples', 'imbeciles', 'the disabled'".

     The issues were subsequently addressed by introducing institutionalised care and welfare services: workhouses, enforced dependency, special education, sheltered workshops and community care. But instead of facilitating access to mainstream workplaces, these services have contributed to the stigmatisation of disabled people by placing them in a position where they are reliant on support schemes that emphasise rather than eradicate physical and/or mental difference and therefore helped perpetuate the individualistic medical

approach to impairment (BARNES 1998: 76, see Subsection 2.2.1). With the growth of the human service industry, some of these assumptions gradually began to change (GOODLEY 2013: 633), although we are still a long way from full inclusion and participation. Qualitative studies found that discriminatory attitudes toward disabled people take the form of "low productivity expectations, perceptions of disabled people as employment risks and disabled people's presence in the workplace provoking existential anxiety in others" (ROULSTONE & WILLIAMS 2014: 18, see also Subsection 7.2.2.1).

Not only does work offer income, it also contributes toward forming social relationships and meaning in life, which is why it is often linked to higher levels of physical, mental and social wellbeing (FREY & STRUTZER 2002). Conversely, in their meta-analysis of 29 studies, NYMAN et al. (2009) found that unemployed working-age adults with visual impairments were more likely to report lower levels of mental health, social functioning and quality of life. This finding is partly reflected in negative value assessments and constructions of limited agency and affectedness in my data (see Chapters 7 and 8). Moreover, those VI people that have found employment are more likely to indicate that they have been employed at a level below their education and skills (LA GROW 2003).

This does not apply exclusively to blind and partially sighted people[18]: There is a 30-percentage point gap between disabled and non-disabled people when it comes to being employed (OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS 2012). Recent statistics for Germany are missing: Neither the job center ("Arbeitsagentur") nor the German Federal Statistical Office provide current figures concerning the number of unemployed VI people, which in itself is a scandal and shows how little attention is paid to those issues. Quotas from the 1990s suggest that only 25 percent of blind people between the ages of 20 and 60 were in employment (DBSV 2014: 6). More optimistic estimations see one third of VI people finding employment (COORDES, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2008). This number compares well to more recent

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[18] Following CHARLTON (1998: 97), there is a hierarchy of disability according to which people with physical and visual disabilities, i.e. blind people and people in wheelchairs, have greater political and socio-economic opportunities and access to support systems than people with, for instance, mental disabilities. He goes on to explain that mental disabilities have taken longer to be accepted *as disabilities*; they are often less visible, the people who are affected by them have less capacity to fight for their rights and their support systems are more complex. Nevertheless, this study is focusing on VI people, partly because of personal connections with this group (see Chapter 1.2).

figures from the UK where one third of VI people were found to be employed (DOUGLAS et al. 2006).

The type of job also plays a significant role: Disabled people are more likely to be employed in the public and voluntary sectors than in the private sector (ROULSTONE & WILLIAMS 2014). ROULSTONE'S first large-scale study in the UK investigated disabled people's experiences in relation to paid employment as workers and job-seekers. He found that the "majority of participants felt that new technology had in some way begun to enhance their employment as disabled workers" (ROULSTONE 1998: 126), if they were already in employment. The case is different for people who were unable to find jobs:

> Overall, however, there is very limited evidence that employment programmes, ADL [anti-discrimination legislation] and workplace adjustments have made any great difference to disabled people.
>
> (OECD 2003, cited in ROULSTONE 2014: 238)

A large-scale study in Germany by BACH (2011) argues that technological adaptations have made considerable progress over the last 40 years. He concludes that this has been an enabling factor for blind and partially sighted job-seekers and employees alike. As I will explain later, technology is only one facet of an enabling work environment. Some participants in Roulstone's study also noted that an intense working regime outweighed any advantages originally provided by technological adaptations. Challenges for disabled people in the workplace further include environmental and attitudinal barriers, transportation, lack of support, low self-esteem, stereotypes and stigma – the latter being the most frequently reported barriers (see LINDSAY 2011: 1341, ROULSTONE 1998: 122).

SAUNDERS and SADRO (2015) carried out both qualitative and quantitative analyses of semi-structured interviews with visually impaired people. On the qualitative side, seven in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion with three people were conducted and analysed with a thematic narrative approach. Specifically, their guiding question was "why is it that some people feel able to stay in employment, and others don't?" (p. 2). This study will provide some groundwork that I can then expand on during the analysis of my own data. It will be interesting to see in how far their findings converge with other studies as well as my own analysis. Although the study is a valuable contribution to the field, it leaves room to explore people's linguistic means of expression and calls for a detailed investigation of the narratives that goes beyond a thematic analysis (see Section 2.3). The authors establish that for a quarter of non-working registered blind and partially sighted people the main reason they left their job was the onset of sight loss (p. 2). However, a third of VI people who had

previously worked said that they could have continued given the right support (p. 2). At the same time, there "was a perception that employers would view their sight loss negatively and force them to leave" (p. 4; see also Section 8.1). Hence, many people said they did not "let on" their impairment for fear of being viewed differently (p. 23), which can have repercussions in the long run. This ultimately has to do with individuals' confidence and feelings of being valued.

As a result, we see that psycho-emotional barriers discussed in Subsection 2.2.3 as well as practical barriers are in place here: "Evidence indicates that practical and emotional support, access to timely information and the provision of assistive technologies can aid job retention" (p. 2). Participants stated that positive attitudes and practical support from employers made a significant difference when it came to being able to stay in work (p. 3). Most people still in work received strong support from their employer, both practically and emotionally (p. 21, 29): People in work "articulated a strong personal desire to remain in employment and not to be defined by sight loss" (p. 3). Another factor contributing to the retention of work is support from colleagues and peers (p. 4). Some people expressed they felt that colleagues feared they had to care for the VI person rather than get on with their own work (p. 30).

In terms of technological support, participants felt that specialist equipment "made an important contribution to being able to stay in work" (p. 5). "A common theme however was that participants were often left to sort things out for themselves" (p. 25), which is particularly problematic if those people do not have the necessary experience of dealing with and managing assistive technology. Participants' experiences of using the Access to Work scheme, on the other hand, were mixed and knowledge of Access to Work was generally low (p. 5).

How can the situation be improved? SAUNDERS & SADRO note that "[e]ducating employers, support with travel, and building confidence, were all suggested as ways in which barriers to employment might be overcome" (2015: 6). BACH sees a focus on empowerment in individual counselling as the main contributor to increase access to the labour market for VI people. Councillors, he states, need to develop their empathy, competence and experience, especially concerning the different types of disabilities, if they wish to give useful guidance to people (BACH 2011: 11). Greater awareness of schemes such as Access to Work and practical ways of improving accessibility are also needed. It is suggested that the work-based assessments should be holistic and person-centred rather than a one-fits-all approach

(SAUNDERS & SADRO 2015: 8). On the employers' side, there is a need for greater awareness "to understand the business benefit of employing and/or retaining disabled employees. … Sight loss awareness training should be well-publicised and readily available to all employers" (p. 9). GOLD et al. (2012: 34) also see training and education of employers in disability issues and adjustment requests as one of the most effective measures to increase opportunities for disabled employees. If adjustments were made for people at all, for instance reduced targets, they were not always clearly communicated to the person in question:

> Participants felt that employers' expectations often changed with regard to their productivity levels. Several spoke about how managers were 'managing expectations' amongst their team; advising colleagues to adjust to a reduced output. This particular intervention caused some conflicting emotions. Whilst some accommodation was described as helpful, in most cases a reduction in workload felt like a personal slight; and as a sign that the participant's contribution was no longer as highly valued.

(SAUNDERS & SADRO 2015: 26)

Providing support mechanisms and accommodations has been associated with a number of positive influences on job performance and satisfaction, improved co-worker attitudes and reduced perception of discrimination (see GOLD et al 2012: 26). According to DONG et al. (2012: 187), the key factors for accommodation requests are employer's supportiveness, communication between employer and employee (framing a credible request and addressing it to the right person in the organisation) and employer's understanding of disabilities and the legal frameworks. Credibility, trust and workplace obligations played a key role in these processes. For many of my own participants, those values were missing in their employment (see especially Section 6.4 and Subsection 7.2.2.1).

Ideally, employees request workplace accommodations and then negotiate their needs with their employers. It was suggested that employees receive training from service providers in how to make compelling cases for adjustments to employers in a firm, confident but respectful manner (GOLD et al. 2012: 35). Employers see the burden of proof with the disabled employee, who must convince the company that adjustments are not only necessary but will ultimately benefit the business (GOLD et al. 2012: 28 f.). Employees therefore need good advocacy skills to make a successful case. However, this view takes for granted that employees have full knowledge about the impacts of their impairments and what kind of accommodation would most benefit their work performance, which is not always the case (see Subsection 9.2.2). Other complicating factors are feelings of embarrassment and shame the disabled person might experience (see Subsection 7.2.1).

GOLUB (2006) developed a model of work success based on mutual accommodation for employers as well as employees, stressing that both parties take necessary steps toward a common goal of labour force integration. Employer responsibilities include strengthening core values of diversity and mutual respect, providing technological assistance, sharing work-related information, using verbal cues in interactions with people who were VI and those who were fully sighted. To sum up, employers "need to make meaningful changes in company policies and institutional practices" to implement the model (GOLUB 2006: 722). I suspect herein lies one of the biggest challenges for businesses: They must effectively re-evaluate and possibly alter some of the ingrained habits and structures of the current model and practices. Recommendations for employees include being open and pro-active about their impairment, having competence in operating assistive technology and maintaining a positive attitude. These were all aspects that my participants mentioned.

Overall, "it was felt that all types of organisations had work to do in being able to see beyond the disability of the person applying for a job" (SAUNDERS & SADRO 2015: 27). As a result, we are dealing with ideological issues on top of the structural barriers that are in place (see Subsection 2.2.5). It was also "widely perceived that jobs on offer to blind and partially sighted people can be low paid, temporary and below the skill level people had", while "some participants blamed the current economy for creating more temporary jobs" (p. 31). The last remark is also part of an argumentative strategy that some of my participants use and that I will describe further in Subsection 9.3.1.

To sum up, the employment situation of disabled people in general and blind and partially sighted people in particular is problematic for a number of different reasons. These include some practical and environmental barriers, but more importantly attitudinal and psycho-emotional ones about what VI people can and cannot do at work. Employers often seem to misunderstand or misjudge what kind of support and technological adaptations are available, how they can be implemented and how these could increase people's access to employment. Studies have also made a case for furthering mutual understanding, increasing knowledge and awareness and providing training, both for employers and employees, although the power imbalance between the two parties suggests that employees do not normally have the means or confidence to directly challenge long-held assumptions in employers. If we look back on the progress in disability legislation and anti-discrimination over the past decades, it seems like a "double discourse" is being propagated which overtly promotes democratic values and an egalitarian ideology while at the same time masking traditional

models, which are only partially and superficially updated (see also MARTÍN ROJO & GÓMEZ ESTEBAN 2003: 268).

4.2 A Corpus Linguistic Study of Lexemes Related to *Visual Impairment* and *Blindness*

4.2.1 Introduction

This section explores some part of the larger discourse about framing disability, its pejorative images, stereotyped representations and negative associations embedded in majority culture – linking back to Subsection 2.2.5. As I have discussed in the literature review, disability identity has developed as a *reaction* to exclusionary practices performed by majority society. To supplement this claim with empirical data, I have carried out a corpus study. I will demonstrate what a corpus linguistic analysis can reveal about how the so-called Others construct visual impairment from the outside. The widely-shared views held by institutions and text producers in the mass media can then be compared to views from my participants in the following chapters.

For the most part, fears about disability are not explicitly marked in the mass media, but perhaps more commonly implied qua inversion of argument by representing desired, healthy, beautiful or "normal" bodies, so to speak – a view supported by findings in disability studies. While this assumption would surely warrant further analysis, constraints only allow me to focus on one aspect, namely the use of lexemes connected to semantic fields of blindness and visual impairment.

4.2.2 Structure of the Brigham Young and DeReKo Corpora

To explore how Others, the majority society, view the VI community, I have consulted two freely available web-interface corpora: contemporary English language corpora provided by Brigham Young University (http://corpus.byu.edu) and the so-called German Reference Corpus (*Deutsches Referenzkorpus* or DeReKo) compiled by the Institute for German Language (IDS) in Mannheim. DeReKo is available via the web-based search interface

COSMAS II (version 2.2.1, https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de). I chose these corpora because they are comparatively large as well as recent. More specifically, the sub-corpora available through Brigham Young were the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the British National Corpus (BNC) and the TIME magazine corpus. For a comparison with German, I carried out queries with the *Archiv W* for written language from DeReKo, the largest corpus of written German to date. The table below provides general information about the corpora.

Table 4.1   Size, Language and Period of the English and German corpora

Corpus	Number of words	Language/ dialect	Period
Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)	520 million	North American English	1990–2015
TIME Magazine Corpus	100 million	North American English	1923–2006
British National Corpus (BNC)	100 million	British English	1980s–1993
Archiv W (written language) in DeReKo	3.2 billion	German	1772–2015

The BNC is a relatively large but outdated corpus of British English containing the same variety of genres as the COCA. The TIME Magazine corpus is useful for comparing trends in news magazine articles (see below for more details). The COCA has a respectable size, covers a longer period and is compiled from a range of genres, including spoken language, fiction, news, magazines, academic and non-academic registers, but it only contains North American English. As the website suggests:

> The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is probably the best corpus of English (online or anywhere else) for looking at a wide range of

ongoing changes in the language … In order to look at ongoing changes, a corpus would ideally have the following characteristics:

1. **Large** (probably 100 million words or more)

2. **Recent texts** (ideally, it would be updated to within a year of the present time)

3. Balance between several **genres** (e.g. not just newspapers)

4. Roughly the **same genre balance** from year to year

5. An architecture that shows **frequency over time** and which allows one to **compare frequencies** between different periods

The Corpus of Contemporary American English was designed from the ground up as a 'monitor corpus' (a corpus that allows us to look at changes over time), and it is the only corpus (online or elsewhere) that has all of the five characteristics listed above.

(http://corpus.byu.edu/coca)

The German corpora under consideration consist of several different genres of written German language and fit the five criteria stated in the quote above. In terms of genre balance, DeReKo contains texts from newspapers, general scientific and specialist texts, as well as literary fiction. The earliest entries in the corpus date back to 1772. The search engine COSMAS II web did not allow for restricting searches to more recent periods while also maintaining the broad range of genres. While it is possible to select individual newspapers, there is no function to do collocation analyses for all texts from a given period (say, from 1990 to 2015) without having to manually select each of the thousands of individual sources. At first, this seems to pose a problem when comparing findings to the English corpora. However, it turns out that older sources only produce a relatively small number of hits. They contribute fewer words to the archive compared to more recent texts. For instance, there are only 340 hits for *blind* dating back to before 1960 compared to over 85,000 hits between 1960 and 2015. Therefore, I think it is warranted to continue the corpus analysis despite this potential margin for error.

4.2.3 Collocations and Semantic Prosody of *Blind* and *Visually Impaired*

There are some aspects we need to consider before going deeper into the analysis. First, as mentioned above, the COCA corpus only provides North American English sources.

Generalisations on how the terms are used in the United Kingdom nowadays can therefore not be made, although I would not expect major differences. The terms *blind* and *visually impaired* were applied identically in UK and US research literature. I also checked how their collocates ranked in the BNC corpus in the 1980s and early 1990s and found very similar results. To provide a contemporary account, I will primarily focus on the COCA. Second, corpus linguists mostly deal with frequencies. Infrequently occurring words, as in the case of *partially sighted*, will probably not yield any noteworthy results to begin with, and we should thus be careful when making assumptions about their usage and contextual meaning. However, it is telling that some terms are relatively scarce at certain periods. There are several explanations for this circumstance. Political correctness could play a role here: With the rise of disability awareness and growing disabled people's movements, laws and policies were put in place, and campaigns and demonstrations were organised to protect the rights and dignity of disabled people. We can hypothesise that *blind* has been partly replaced by *visually impaired* when referring to VI people, at least in certain genres and communities. We can also consider the usage of words over time and look at shifts in occurrences to support this hypothesis.

Third, the lexeme *blind* does not exclusively refer to blind people, of course. It occurs in many other expressions that have no connection to the VI community as such. Examples of expressions containing the word *blind* include metaphors and idioms such as *to turn a blind eye, double-blind (study), blind obedience/faith/ignorance/optimism, blind date/spot/tastings/corners/luck/rage/audition*, and much more (see Subsection 3.6.1). It is therefore not surprising that *blind* is the most commonly used term across all corpora. In the following analysis, I filtered out most of these figurative expressions and their respective collocates in the rankings below because they do not reveal much about how newsworkers and authors view blind and partially sighted people and what kind of discourses they routinely appear in when mentioned in the mass media.

Table 4.2   Raw Frequencies Of Each Search Term In The English Corpora

Corpus:	COCA	TIME	BNC
Search term:			
blind	16,944	3,573	3,018
visually impaired	1,970	7	39
with visual impairment/s	1,775	-	7
partially sighted	22	1	63
(with) sight loss	-	-	-

Visually impaired does occur in the corpora, although it is already less frequent and some-times restricted to certain text genres (see below). Considering the genres in more detail (see Table 4.3), we find that *blind* produces many hits in fictional and academic texts in COCA, but probably for very different reasons. The expressions above, such as *blind trust* and *blind rage*, would seem to be more widely used in fictional texts (1). The high number of occur-rences in academic texts has two reasons. The expression *double-blind (study)* is common in many areas of applied sciences and quantitative studies. There is a reasonable number of texts in the academic genre of the COCA corpus taken from a journal about visual impair-ment (2). Since the prevalence of these academic texts does skew the data, I have included the more homogenous TIME magazine corpus for balance (see below).

(1)   Environmental Action Foundation? check; and me, that's right, my own **blind trust** has led me to betray myself? (SoftMoney, Fiction, 1999)

(2)   whereas others have found no difference in the performance of **children who are blind** and those who are sighted (VisualImpairment, Academic, 2010)

Variations across all genres over time do not let us draw any meaningful conclusion. This trend is probably connected to the makeup of the COCA corpus rather than to semantic changes. I will discuss more significant temporal variations when considering the TIME magazine corpus (see Table 4.8 below).

Figure 4.3   Frequency of *Blind* in the COCA Corpus by Genre and Period
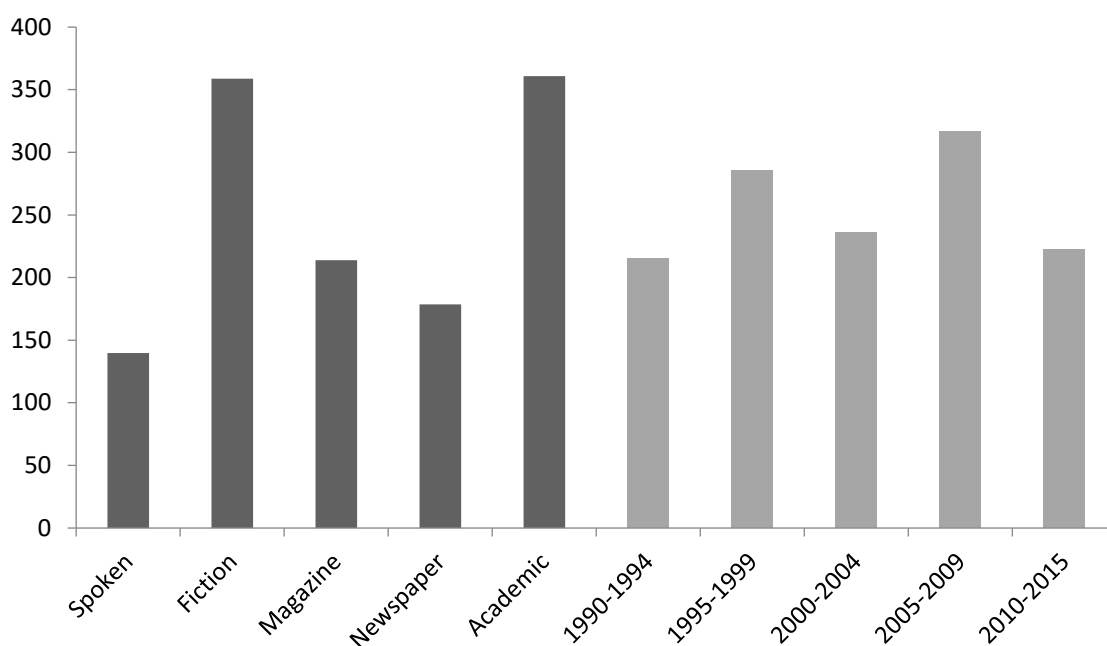
German provides us with a wider range of expressions connected to sight loss and visual impairment. *Blind* has a direct equivalent in German. Since it can also be used in figures of speech like the English lexeme, it is the most common term in the corpus. *Visually impaired* is best translated as *sehbehindert*, which is the second most common term as well. *Sehschwach* ("weak of sight"), *sehgeschädigt* ("sight-damaged") and *sehgestört* ("sight-disturbed") provoke quite negative associations and are thus far less common than the first two lexemes. *Sehverlust* (sight loss) and *sehbeeinträchtigt/Sehbeeinträchtigung* ("sight-compromised/hampered") have come up as collocates in some of the searches, but again, these are relatively uncommon. I will thus focus on the first four expressions in the German corpora.

Table 4.4   Raw Frequencies of each Search Term in the German Corpus DeReKo – Archiv W

Search term	Freq
Blind	86,032
Sehbehindert	17,692
(mit) Sehbehinderung/en	1,681
Sehschwach	2,777
Sehgeschädigt	799
Sehverlust	155
(mit) Sehbeeinträchtigung	129
Sehbeeinträchtigt	102
Sehgestört	25

Collocates can be queried directly in the web interface of both the Brigham Young corpora and DeReKo, although there are different settings to choose from when using these features. The English corpora use the mutual information score (MI). The MI is a statistical measure indicating mutual dependence and thus the strength of collocations or exclusivity of collocates,

> that is, the extent to which the two words appear solely or predominantly in each other's company, usually expressed in terms of the relationship between the number of times when they are seen together as opposed to the number of times when they are seen separately in the corpus.
>
> (GABLASOVA et al. 2017)

Appearing together here means that the collocates are used in the same sentence no more than four words apart to either side of the target word. In this analysis, I set the minimum MI to three. While the cut-off point is a matter of judgment, suggestions in the literature reach from three to five, three being taken to indicate significance (STUBBS 1995: 40, HUNSTON 2002: 71, MAUTNER 2007: 69). Three is also the default MI value provided by the interface.

As we can see from the tables provided, the MI scores for collocates of *blind* are mostly above four, in some cases even as high as eight. The following table shows collocates for *blind*, many of which could be argued to express negative semantic prosody. Aside from

the words' usage in literary texts, we can gather from this table that *blind* often occurs in discourses around (stereotyped) disability (physical as well as mental disability, e.g. *deaf*, *disabled*, *dumb*, *lame*, *crippled, paralysed*) and old age (*elderly*, *aged,* see also MAUTNER 2007). Although these collocations are not overwhelmingly common (49 instances in the COCA corpus for *dumb* and *blind* ranking 37th and 33 instances in the DeReKo ranking 496th, see Table 4.6 below), they are more likely to be found with *blind* than with *visually impaired*. These collocations are concordant with the view that some people have about disability in general and VI people in particular, namely that they are not as capable, intelligent/competent and mobile as the rest of society.

Table 4.5   Relevant Collocates of *Blind* in the COCA Corpus Ranked by MI Score

Rank	Collocates	Freq of collocates with *blind*	Total Freq	%	MI
4	*impaired*	479	4708	10.17	8.65
6	*deaf*	333	4082	8.16	8.33
58	*lame*	28	1973	1.42	5.80
61	*crippled*	27	2041	1.32	5.70
65	*handicapped*	24	2374	1.01	5.32
28	*rehabilitation*	68	6774	1.00	5.30
24	*disabled*	79	8408	0.94	5.21
37	*dumb*	49	6414	0.76	4.91
16	*persons*	122	17616	0.69	4.77
88	*paralysed*	18	3248	0.55	4.45
56	*aged*	30	7311	0.41	4.01
25	*adults*	77	32011	0.24	3.24
51	*elderly*	32	13548	0.24	3.22
2	*man*	807	345167	0.23	3.20
47	*stupid*	34	16466	0.21	3.02

Disabled, *dumb*, *elderly* and *handicapped* were also among the 60 most common collocates in the BNC. The expression *deaf, dumb and blind* was repeatedly found and warranted special attention. We must assume at least two slightly different senses or usages of the word *blind* that explain the collocation profiles. *Blind* can simply refer to the absence of visual

perception, thus we find lexemes like *eye*, *visually, blind, low, vision, sighted* among the top 20 collocates, as well as *Braille* and *congenitally*. *Blind* can also metaphorically refer to someone who is blind to a fact or blinded by their ignorance. Even though the second sense does not refer to blind or visually impaired people as such (it is, after all, used as a figure of speech), its usage could have (had) adverse impacts on the views of blind people, as semantic prosody theory would argue. Similar expressions occur across many genres, including news, magazines and fiction, even to date:

Table 4.6   Keyword in Context View for *Blind* and *Dumb*

Robots were effectively	**blind**, very **dumb**,	and did repeated actions following
on the verge of going deaf,	**dumb** and **blind**,	" according to NSA historian
"You'd have to be deaf,	**dumb** and **blind**	not to see that he was leaving bread
She just thinks that Americans were too	**blind** and **dumb**	to see all the amazing,
children's and teenagers' cottages, and the	**blind** and **dumb**	cottages, gathered for the
woodpecker tapping the hollow tree!	**Blind** and **dumb**	might well be envied

(3)   "You'd have to be **deaf, dumb and blind** not to see that he was leaving bread crumbs the size of Volkswagens …" (USAToday, News, 2013)

(4)   dead and 2 million displaced, but the world stands by **deaf, dumb and blind**. (Atlanta, News, 2008)

(5)   Her eyes flashed in anger. "How can someone so smart be so **blind and dumb**? You and your silly Opposition don't seem to understand …" (Analog, Fiction, 2010)

(6)   "My fucking word – did you ever hear of anything **so stupid, so blind**? When he was gone, long before he died …" (New England Review, Fiction, 2012)

(7)   its substance? To the words of the Constitution but not its neutered spirit? **Blind, stupid, deaf, and dumb** loyalty to shapes and colors (Esquire, Magazine, 2008)

In other cases, *blind* co-occurs with *disabled*, arguably because text producers like to make the distinction between physical impairments (e.g. wheelchair users), mental (e.g. learning disabilities), age-related and sensory impairments (such as blindness and deafness):

(8)   Guatemala, families are very close knit, so if one person is **disabled or blind**, the whole family is occupied with this person, caring for them. (OrangeCR, News, 2014)

(9)   formats and how to display the information in a manner accessible to individuals who are **blind or physically disabled** (Teaching Exceptional, Academic, 2014)

Crippled and *blind* mainly co-occur in fiction, especially science fiction and fantasy. Political correctness seems to be of less concern in these genres. If the story is about a medieval-type fantasy world, *crippled/cripple* and *blind* (rather than *person with physical/mobile impairment* and *visually impaired*) are probably considered more authentic terms since modern day equivalents feel out of place. Science Fiction, on the other hand, might employ derogatory terms to create unnerving effects for readers. For instance, the use of these words could be reflective of a dystopian world where compassion and support for disabled people have been abolished. Using that kind of language is a conscious choice rather than the result of a lack of awareness, neither is it borne of the intent to deliberately discriminate against VI people in our society. Nevertheless, I argue that everything is possible in the realm of fantasy worlds and that alternative ways of representing people with impairments are always an option if one does not wish to reinforce negative images of and harmful attitudes toward disabled people.

(10)   Some killers pursue a certain physical type. Especially sexual predators, with their specialized appetites for girls, boys, hookers, blondes, brunettes - even for dwarves, the **crippled**, or the **blind**. (Murder in the Flying Vatican, Fantasy & Science Fiction, 2007)

The German corpus DeReKo utilises a different algorithm. Instead of the MI score, which indicates collocational strength, it uses the Log-Likelihood-Ratio (LLR) that indicates collocational frequency. I cannot go into details how this measure is calculated. For the purpose of this study, it is sufficient to say that the higher the LLR, the more discursively significant the collocation (see also BAKER 2006: 101 f.). We can still compare LLR scores and consider how high the collocates rank in the lists.

Table 4.7   Relevant Collocates for *Blind* in the DeReKo Corpus

Rank	Collocates	English translation	Freq of collocates with *blind*	LLR
1	*sehbehindert*	*visually impaired*	10728	165232
3	Mensch	*person/human being*	3634	12618
13	gehörlos	*deaf*	424	5856
14	blind	blind	536	5346
17	lahm	lame	369	4736
31	taubstumm	*deaf-mute*	175	2057
33	sehgeschädigt	*visually impaired ("damaged")*	117	1787
39	Behinderte	*disabled (people)*	235	1432
41	gelähmt	*paralysed*	100	1378
107	Krüppel	*cripple*	25	441
117	Rehabilitation	*rehabilitation*	7	405
119	hilflos	*helpless*	31	401
132	schwerbehindert	*severely disabled*	44	344
194	verkrüppeln	*(to) cripple*	12	204
255	gebrechlich	*frail*	9	149
443	krank	*ill*	42	79
472	Person	*person*	82	74
496	dumm	*stupid*	33	71
617	blöd	*daft*	8	55
656	schwachsinnig	*feeble-minded*	4	51

When we compare the relevant collocates in COCA and DeReKo, a similar picture emerges. In both corpora, we find collocates such as *impaired/disabled*, *deaf*, *lame*, *paralysed*, *cripple/crippled*, *rehabilitation* and *stupid/dumb*, although some of them rank much lower in the German corpus, which is probably due to the size of the collection or lexical variety in German. The following two examples are representative of a similar expression in German already attested in the COCA, *blind and dumb/stupid* (11) or *neither blind nor stupid* (12).

(11)   Is everyone fat and lazy, **blind and dumb?** (Zwischendurch hatte ich in der Tageszeitung „Die Welt" aus purer Verzweiflung ein wenig um mich gepöbelt, hatte, beginnend mit dem Satz: „Seid ihr alle fett und faul, **blind und blöd**?", darum gebeten, dem Buch doch gefälligst einen Blick zu widmen.) (Focus, News, 22.03.2004, p. 64–66)

(12)   I am **neither blind nor stupid**. (Michalus: Ich bin **weder blind noch blöd**. Natürlich hatte ich schon im Vorfeld versucht, eine richtige Abrechnung zu bekommen.) (Niederösterreichische Nachrichten, News, 28.10.2008, p. 9)

Consulting the topographic view of the semantic proximity profile for *blind* allows for clearer distinctions of word senses by usage. This feature is available via the concordance database of the IDS Mannheim corpora and contains a 2.2-billion-word subset of the German Reference Corpus DeReKo (see BELICA 1995, 2001 ff.; http://corpora.ids-mannheim.de/ccdb). The model creates a so-called self-organising lexical feature map where proximity on the grid reflects similarity between collocation profiles. In other words, the boxes in the four corners in Figure 4.7 below are the most distinct usages of the word blind while the adjacent fields in the grid are more closely associated with one another, respectively.

The top left corner contains overall more positively associated combinations centring around moral behaviour and emotions such as *trust* and *sense of duty*. The upper-right corner is distinguished by more negatively associated usages of *blind* in connection to emotions like sin, greed for power and hatred (e.g. *blind hatred*). The bottom left corner reveals usages connected to actual sensory impairment and disability like *the blind*, *visually impaired*, *deaf*, *severely impaired* and *wheelchair*, *cripple*, *broken.* In the adjacent boxes, we also find illness-related lexemes (*gravely ill*, *cardiac*, *dead*). The bottom right corner reflects contexts around mental states, ignorance and foolishness, i.e. the previously mentioned proverbial usages of *blind*, like *stupid*, *headless*, *helpless* and *desperate*. While the meanings connected to impairment and disability are distinguished from the other three usages on the map, they can still reflect an influence on our perception of and attitude toward blind and partially sighted people in other contexts.

Figure 4.8   Semantic Proximity Profile for *Blind*

blind

bedingungslos	ungebrochen	grenzenlos	Fanatismus	Verblendung
unerschütterlich	entgegenbringen	unbändig	Begierde	Blindheit
Treue	Zuneigung	ungezügelt	Auflehnung	Sühne
soldatisch	Hingabe	voller	Triebfeder	Machtgier
Pflichtgefühl	voll	ausleben	pur	Missgunst
Familiensinn	Liebe	Leidenschaft	Affekt	Mißgunst
kritiklos	Idealismus	zügeln		Hass
Opferbereitschaft	Intuition	Zärtlichkeit		Haß
Vorsehung	fanatisch	übersteigern	übersteigert	Verzweiflung
Gott	alttestamentarisch	anstacheln	blindwütig	blank
schwören	durchdrungen	entflammen	gebiert	Wahn
messianisch	beseelen	zerstörerisch	getrieben	Wut
einimpfen	religiös	entflammt	aufkeimen	umschlagen
predigen	missionarisch	glühend	schüren	maßlos
geschworen	beseelt	flammend	geschürt	Paranoia
unverbrüchlich		erlahmen	krankhaft	Selbsthass
eifern	Scheich	verblenden	irrational	Anfall
erzogen	hingebungsvoll	verblendet	übertrieben	lauter
jungfräulich		sektiererisch	selbstzerstörerisch	treiben
zeitlebens		manisch	unreflektiert	Panik
Seher		verbohrt	hergerissen	
geschenkt		anstecken	hochkommen	
hineingeboren		getrübt	paranoid	
gehorsam				
Vorschulalter	autistisch	psychotisch	unfähig	blindlings
großziehen	Geburt	gesund		ohnmächtig
Bezugsperson	erwürgen	Peiniger		schreien
Adoptiveltern	erwürgt			kindisch
Schulkamerad	schwerkrank			unkritisch
Stiefmutter	tot			naiv
Eltern	herzkrank			blauäugig
begabt	gesunden			sprachlos
Blinde	spastisch	erblinden	debil	kopflos
sehbehindert	Rollstuhl	erblindet	willenlos	stumm
gehörlos	hochgradig	taub	apathisch	dumm
schwerhörig	gehbehindert	gelähmt	wehrlos	hilflos
körperbehindert	gebrechlich	verkrüppelt	kraftlos	verzweifelt
taubstumm	halbseitig	abgemagert	zerschmettern	blöd
Frühförderung	Krüppel	Sehkraft	bewegungslos	blöde
schwerstbehindert	querschnittgelähmt	verkrüppeln	ausgemergelt	schauen

One advantage of the TIME magazine corpus is that it is restricted to one genre. Additionally, it is a diachronic corpus ranging from the 1920s to the 2000s. The occurrences of *blind* suggest that the term has decreased in usage, even if only slightly (Figure 4.9). There is no straightforward explanation, however. It could simply be the case that journalists are less interested in the blind community now, although why exactly would be speculation. If an alternative word replaced the original term, we would expect expressions such as *visually impaired* to gradually rise to take its place, which does not seem to be the case either. There are only seven mentions of the expression *visually impaired* (five mentions in the 2000s, one each in the 1970s and 1990s); the word mainly occurs in specialist articles reporting new technologies such as a pair of digital glasses that use audio input to navigate assistance for blind and visually impaired people (*Genius or Useless?*, 25th April 2005).

A third possibility is that figures of speech containing *blind* (like *blind or stupid*) have decreased over time, which could also be connected to an increased awareness of political correctness and more sensitivity when it comes to labelling people. Some expressions gained more popularity toward the end of the century (such as *blind date/trust/faith/rage*) while others like *totally blind, blind alley* and *flying blind* have continually decreased. Taking a more detailed look at the contexts where these expressions occur is an option, but unfortunately, this procedure does not give many hints as to why they are absent in other decades. With 100 million words the TIME corpus is relatively small compared to most of the other corpora as well as the German corpus, so I would be hesitant to overestimate the significance of this development.

Figure 4.9   Frequency of *Blind* in the TIME Corpus per One Million Words (Including Trendline)
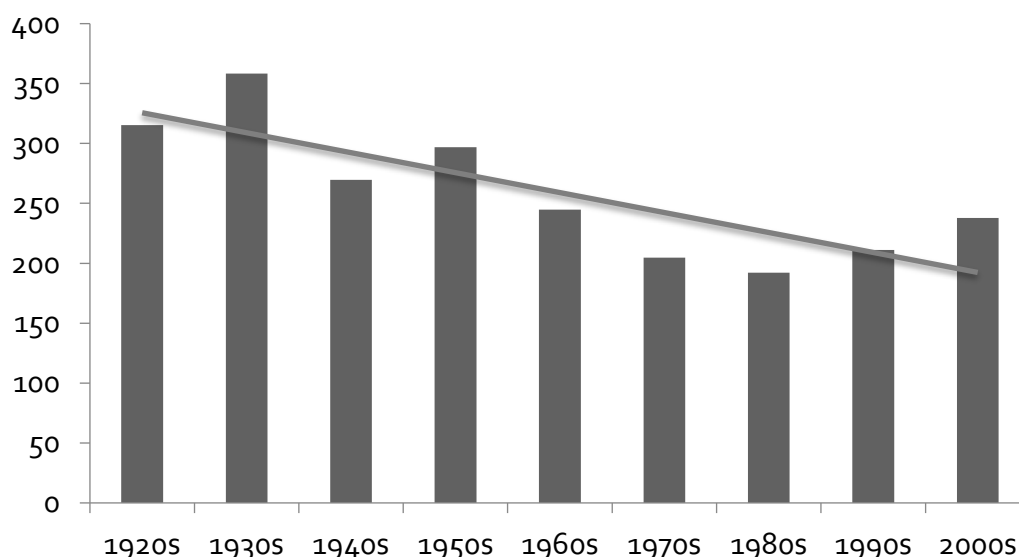
When we look at the term *visually impaired* in comparison, first, we find that it is much less common in COCA and, as stated above, it mainly occurs in academic genres (see Figure 4.10 below). For the term *partially sighted* and *(person) with visual impairment*, we get similar results: not a single mention in genres other than academic ones and a normalised frequency of 1.49 for the former and 9.11 for the latter per every one million words in academic texts.[19]

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[19] *With visual impairment(s)* appears more often simply because it also occurs in expressions that are not directly referencing persons, such as *To live **with visual impairments** means* … To

Figure 4.10   Normalised Frequency of *Visually Impaired* in the COCA Corpus per Genre and Period
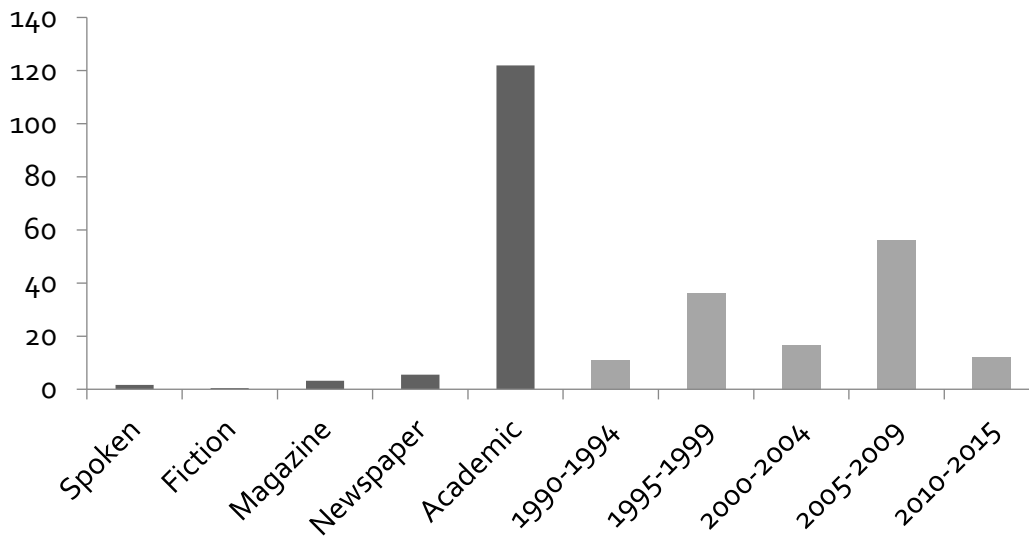
The collocates for *visually impaired* provide an altogether different picture. Here we often find words referencing people and individuals among the most frequent collocates, such as *students*, *children*, *persons*, *individuals*, *adults*, *participants*, *youths*. Those contexts are not fixating the impairment and its (negative) consequences as much as the usages for *blind* did. The expression *visually impaired* focuses on the individual as a whole and thus can be understood to have more positive (or at least neutral) semantic prosody.

Stupid, *dumb* and *lame* cannot be found in the list of collocates for *visually impaired*, admittedly because there is no conventional saying such as "you must be visually impaired and stupid not to notice this". *Visually impaired* has more restricted contextual variations than *blind* and is therefore almost exclusively used to refer to people with actual visual impairments.[20] I would argue that this is one reason why the term was introduced and gained popularity in the first place: It helps distinguish between impairment-related vision and the figurative expressions referring to sighted people in specific contexts of (self-)delusion. As the data suggests, the term *visually impaired* is more commonly used in education and academia, traditionally more 'enlightened' fields with arena-limited usages of the expression, which does not apply to mainstream society. However, blind people have not

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filter out these expressions would require several searches, which would be very time-consuming, so I hope the reader will be content with these findings.

[20] When it comes to referring to blind and partially sighted people, however, I would argue that *VI* is the more inclusive and general term of the two because it does not specify the degree of the visual impairment as *blind* does.

altogether stopped referring to themselves as *blind* – and I do not suggest they should –, so there remains some room for semantic conflict between the two alternative senses unless we add modifiers like *registered blind* (although in everyday interaction, of course, the situational context often makes sufficiently clear what is meant).

Table 4.11 Relevant Collocates of *Visually Impaired* in the COCA Corpus (Emboldened Types are Shared with *Blind*)

Rank	Collocates	Freq	Total Freq	%	MI
7	*persons*	111	17616	0.63	7.74
21	*youths*	17	6204	0.27	6.54
24	*infants*	14	5263	0.27	6.49
8	*individuals*	106	48718	0.22	6.20
9	*adults*	69	32011	0.22	6.19
25	*learners*	14	6678	0.21	6.15
57	***frail***	4	2228	0.18	5.93
41	***impaired***	8	4708	0.17	5.85
5	*students*	382	300143	0.13	5.43
27	*adolescents*	12	12350	0.10	5.04
6	*children*	235	296279	0.08	4.75
32	***elderly***	10	13548	0.07	4.64
55	***rehabilitation***	5	6774	0.07	4.64
13	*participants*	30	53595	0.06	4.24
35	*educators*	10	19676	0.05	4.11
61	***disabled***	4	8408	0.05	4.01
43	*respondents*	8	16955	0.05	4.00
36	*clients*	10	24932	0.04	3.76
44	*users*	8	20865	0.04	3.70
12	*person*	41	133011	0.03	3.38

If we compare frequencies of the expressions with a negative semantic prosody that do occur in the COCA corpus, we also find that they are much lower:

Table 4.12   Comparative Frequencies for Relevant Collocates and *Visually Impaired/Blind* in COCA

Collocates	Freq for *visually impaired*	Freq for *blind*
elderly	10	32
impaired	8	479
rehabilitation	5	68
disabled	4	79

The German corpus yields an almost identical picture (see Table 4.13). For the German equivalent of *visually impaired*, "sehbehindert", the words *dumb*, *stupid*, *weak*, *lame, helpless, cripple, ill* and *feeble-minded* do not show up amongst the collocates at all. *Person* ranks much higher at 53rd place instead of 472nd with an LLR of 333 compared to 74. *Pupil/student*, *child* and *relative* appear as new collocates not previously found in the list for *blind* – like the lexemes referring to individuals in the COCA corpus. The semantic topography model for *visually impaired* contains fields related to musical talent and sports enthusiasm, and even lists *highly talented* as a collocate, next to lexemes centred around support, housing, schooling and education, semantic fields which I could not account for when discussing collocates for *blind*.

Table 4.13   Relevant Collocates for *Sehbehindert* (Visually Impaired) in the DeReKo
Corpus (Embolden Types Are Shared with Blind)

Rank	Collocates	English translation	Freq of collocates with *blind*	LLR
1	*blind*	*blind*	7993	108828
2	***Mensch***	***person/human being***	871	10977
5	***gehörlos***	***deaf***	59	1478
6	*Kind*	*child*	292	1472
18	*Barriere*	*barrier*	47	715
22	*helfen*	*(to) help*	167	638
31	***Rehabilitation***	***rehabilitation***	4	497
33	*schwerhörig*	*hard-of-hearing*	9	479
36	*Schüler*	*pupil/student*	94	451
53	***Person***	***person***	47	333
57	*Angehöriger*	*relative*	18	302
59	***Behinderter***	***disabled person***	6	292
202	***schwerbehindert***	***severely disabled***	17	62
274	*Handicap*	*handicap*	5	42
279	***gelähmt***	***paralysed***	1	40

The German word "sehschwach" (literally *weak of sight*, probably best translated as *partially sighted*) is the last case I will briefly mention. Among the most common collocates for this term are lexical items originating in medical discourses, which was not as clear in the other collocation lists. Here, we find words such as *glasses*, *eye*, *dioptre*, *(to) correct* and *spectacled* among the most frequently used words. *Altersbedingt* (age-related) also ranks quite high at 15th place, which lets me assume that this term is used more frequently when discussing progressive eye conditions in older people rather than congenital visual impairments in youths and young adults.

4.3   Summary

> [T]he effects of media power are cumulative, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader.
>
> (FAIRCLOUGH 1989: 54)

We can draw almost identical conclusions in the comparisons between English and German corpora. Minor disagreements are probably down to morphological and semantic differences between the two languages. German has more lexical expressions at its disposal to refer to visual impairment than English does; typologically, German is also leaning more heavily toward the fusional end of morphosyntactic marking than standard English. Differences can also arise because of specific restrictions on how to use the corpora's search interfaces, what settings can be applied and, most importantly, how the text collections were compiled in the first place. What kinds of texts and genres were used as well as when the texts were written and how much they contribute to the overall size of the corpus has an impact on the comparisons as well.

Collocates with a negative semantic prosody prefer to co-occur with the word *blind* rather than any of the other near-synonyms, such as *visually impaired* and *partially sighted*, in both the English and German corpora. The main contributing factor here is that *blind* can be used metaphorically and in figures of speech when not referring to people with visual impairments but to sighted individuals suffering from temporary mental confusion or ignorance. In other words, the lemma is polysemous. Lexical fields that contribute to the negative semantic prosody of *blind*, when the word is used in discourses about disabled people, include mental disability, inabilities of some kind or other, or physical restrictions, old age and illness, thus enforcing the medical discourse of disability discussed in Subsection 2.2.1. Comparing the results from this corpus analysis to media representations discussed in Subsection 2.2.5, I can conclude that the spectrum of what mass media producers generally write about when they refer to VI people is similarly limited. If words with negative semantic prosody that focus on these discourses do occur with *visually impaired*, their frequency is much lower than for the collocates of *blind*.

At first glance, the phrase *blind and/or stupid* is used innocently to criticise someone's decisions or their incapacity to conceive flaws in their arguments and thinking. Following the semantic prosody account, however, the usage of *blind* in figurative expressions such as these can have adverse impacts on views about blindness and visual impairment

because of how robust and frequent those collocations are. Reversely, they may be reflective of such a view. This small-scale investigation thus supports assumptions from the literature that visual impairment in particular (and possibly disability in general) is viewed rather negatively in some instances (outside of educational and academic discourses), and that the words referring to impairment can be used as a symbol (or metaphor) for lack, tragedy or inability. The restricted contexts of 'blind' colour the term in a specific way, suggesting that blind people are incapacitated, dependent or a burden – which is concordant with one of MAUTNER'S (2007) conclusions for the representation of older people. These usages do not discredit the person per se; there is no direct negative evaluation of blind *people*, but the focus is put on the person's impairment at the exclusion of all other aspects. Such feelings of being devalued are also echoed by my participants. These views are especially transparent in negative evaluations of their own person or in the citation of others' judgments about them (Section 7.2), in affectedness constructions (Section 8.2) and in the rhetorical strategy of Self-Blame Attribution (Subsection 9.2.2).

Contrary to the remark in the research literature that disability can also be used as a rhetorical blueprint to argue about superhuman qualities of impairments and over-compensation of skills, these kinds of usages did not show up in the English corpora. The reason for this lack of evidence could also be that the mechanisms to search the corpora are not context-sensitive enough to provide us with such results or that those mentions are simply too infrequent in the texts that constitute the corpora. However, there is some hint to this claim in the semantic proximity map for *visually impaired* in the German corpora that list *highly talented* as a collocate. Whether VI people themselves have a voice in the mass media, for instance through activist groups, cannot be answered through the corpus analysis I carried out. Again, if there are alternative voices, they are probably too infrequent to show up in the substantial amounts of data analysed in a quantitative corpus study.

5   Discourse Patterns: Quantitative Queries in *Wmatrix* and *Sketch Engine*

In this chapter, I will look at the most frequent verbs in my narrative data and their collocational and grammatical behaviour. Although verb phrases would be considered part of predication strategies describing the actions that actors carry out or are involved in, I will also explore general patterns of highly frequent verbs at this stage (Subsection 5.2.3). Chapters 7 and 8 on evaluation and agency will deal with more in-depth qualitative aspects of predication strategies.

Narrative data from the German particpants were not used as a base for the quantitative analysis in the next two chapters because the texts are comparatively short providing a total of just close to 16,000 words, while the English texts have a total of 76,000 words. As we will see during the analysis below, even some of the suggested patterns in the English data stem from merely a handful of the seventeen participants, thus reflecting patterns meaningful only to certain groups of VI people. Trying to find similar patterns among the six German participants proved fruitless for a corpus-linguistic exploration. However, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, there are similarities between participants in other areas and when it comes to other linguistic devices and strategies.

The discourse domains and associated topics were identified using automatic corpus analytical methods. The categories were then refined by manual coding in NVivo (Chapter 6). I will start by demonstrating how corpus analytical software tools such as Wmatrix and Sketch Engine can be used to explore the distribution, frequency and keyness of content words in the narrative data and how these explorations led to the discourse domains in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1   Discourse Topic Domains and Subtopics in Employment Narratives

EMPLOYMENT

- Tasks and work experience
- Professional identity
- Job prospects
- Being unemployed or made redundant
- Being off work or sick
- Retirement
- Education and training
- Changes and promotions
- Money and income
- Importance of work
- Future plans and aspirations
- Employment situation generally

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

- Accessibility for VI
- Mobility and transportation
- Various other challenges and problems
- Suggestions for improvement
- Discrimination, stigma and stereotypes

SOCIAL ACTORS

- Employers and line managers
- Colleagues
- Other people at work
- Partners, family and friends
- The public

OTHER IDENTITY ASPECTS: RACE, AGE AND GENDER

ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

- Support in work and Access to Work scheme
- Support before work
- Mobility support
- Legal support
- Peer support
- Assistive technology outside of work
- Personal assistance and support

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

- The condition and its impacts
- Disability identity
- Advantages of being visually impaired at work

5.1   Semantic Annotation in Wmatrix Using USAS

The semantic analysis in Wmatrix utilises the following domains in USAS (UCREL Semantic Analysis System) to group and sort the corpus data by the most frequent topics, which are emboldened in the chart below.

Table 5.2   The UCREL Semantic Analysis System: Main Discourse Fields

A General and abstract terms	B The body and the individual	C Arts and crafts
E Emotion	F Food and farming	G Government and public
H Architecture, housing and the home	I Money and commerce in industry	K Entertainment, sports and games
L Life and living things	M Movement, location, travel and transport	N Numbers and measurement
O Substances, materials, objects and equipment	P Education	Q Language and communication
S Social actions, states and processes	T Time	W World and environment
X Psychological actions, states and processes	Y Science and technology	Z Names and grammar

As we can see from Table 5.3 below, the most common discourse field is *Work and employment* (I3.1, as well as I3.2 and I2.1), a subcategory of *I Money and commerce in industry*, which led to the conception of the discourse domain Employment. This field is followed by discourse markers and grammatical words which are considered part of the category *Degree boosters* (A13.3, also *Degree compromisers* A13.5) in USAS. This occurrence can be explained by the nature of the data belonging to a spontaneous spoken register.

People (S2) and *Helping* (S8+) are also relatively frequent categories, emphasising that participants talk a lot about social actors of various kinds (the second major domain) as well as support mechanisms, the domain later labelled *Assistance and Support*. Social actors are also contained in the *Employment* category, for instance employers and colleagues; however, for the subsequent analyses it is more consistent to code all social actors in one category.

Sensory sight, *Unseen* (X3.4 and X3.4-) and *Mental object: conceptual object* (X4.1) are subdivisions of the *X Psychological actions, states and processes* category and often encompass words related to visual impairments, the next domain that emerged from the manual coding. The field of *Information technology and computing* (Y2) yields 253 hits and contains words such as *screen reader*, which VI people also talk about in terms of assistive technology and reasonable adjustments in the workplace. As I discussed at the beginning of Section 4.1, technological adaptations are an important link to people's employment prospects.

Medicines and medical treatment (B3) has two distinct points of relevance for the interviewees: Some share their experience of being in treatment for or being diagnosed with an eye condition, others work in a medical profession (for example Ali, who is a massage therapist). In my corpus, this field can also be related to a category labelled *Disease* (B2-) in USAS, comprising disability- and impairment-related lemmas. Parts of this field feed into the Health and Wellbeing category, although the majority will be associated with the Visual Impairment domain. Finally, *Difficult* (A12-) appears as a reasonably frequent semantic category, which was later renamed Challenges and Barriers in my model.

Table 5.3   The Most Common Discourse Topics in the Narrative Data by USAS
             Subdivision Categories (with Frequency and Examples)

USAS discourse field by subdivision	Frequency	Examples
Work and employment generally (I3.1)	1,235	*occupation, work placement, work, employment, job, profession, employee, employer, staff*
Degree boosters (A13.3)	925	*very, really, more, much, so*
People (S2)	624	*people, person, individual*
Objects generally	562	*thing, lamp, clock, model, equipment*
Helping (S8+)	436	*support, help, guide, encourage, charity, counselling, benefits, encouragement*
Sensory sight (X3.4)	435	*visual, see, eyesight, look at, visually, observation*
Education in general (P1)	423	*studied, college, train, qualification, teaching, teacher, diploma, students, A-levels, academic, classroom, lesson*
Change (A2.1+)	375	*happen, change experience, get, transition, make a difference, become, (to) affect*
Information technology and computing (Y2)	253	*computer, internet, IT, screen reader, programme, software, e-mail*
Time beginning (T2+)	249	*start, beginning, begin*
Medicines and medical treatment (B3)	234	*massage, therapy, hospital, doctor, GP, occupational health, treatment, eye test, optician, diagnose*
Mental object: conceptual object (X4.1)	221	*idea, vision, (to) think, issue, perception, perspective*
Disease (B2-)	200	*disabilities, impairment, cataracts, ill, patients*
Difficult (A12-)	192	*difficult, problem, challenge*
Business generally (I2.1)	184	*company, business, office, corporation*
Unseen (X3.4-)	183	*blind, visually impaired, partially sighted*
Degree compromisers (A13.5)	174	*quite, in some way, rather*
Able/intelligent (X9.1+)	126	*able, intelligent, skills, capable, competent*
Understanding (X2.5+)	124	*got it, realise, understand, make sense*
Inability/unintelligence (X9.1-)	80	*disability, unable, incompetent*
Work and employment: professionalism (I3.2)	48	*secretary, colleague*

The semantic annotation helped define the categories used in the manual coding of discourse topics in NVivo in Chapter 6. While the automatically tagged semantic categories shed light on common discourse topics, as we can see from the figure below, there is still room for errors in the algorithm. Manual coders would, for instance, probably not code computers in general and screen reader software in the same category of *Technology* because screen

readers are a special kind of assistive technology and fulfil a distinct purpose in blind and partially sighted people's daily lives that goes beyond what a computer can do for the average sighted person. Similarly, we need finer distinctions regarding disability-, impairment- and health-related issues in VI people's stories rather than grouping them in the same overall category of diseases or perception. Also note that disability is tagged as *incompetence/unintelligence* (X9.1-) in USAS, which reflects potentially disablist beliefs and reiterates the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter, Section 4.2.

Figure 5.4   Contribution of the Semantic Analysis in Wmatrix to the Discourse Domains in the Narrative Data
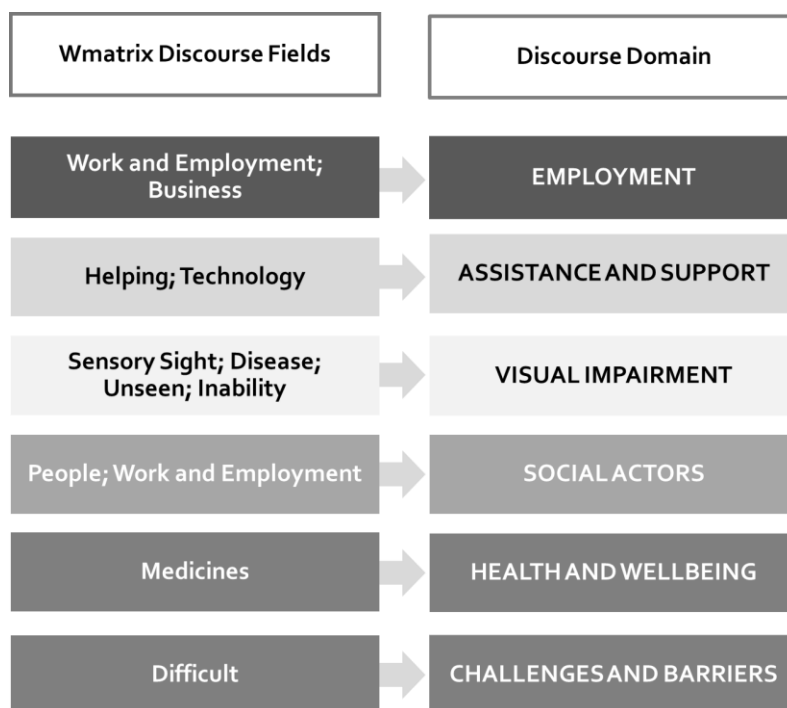
I will continue by discussing automatic corpus analytical techniques in Sketch Engine and show how Word Sketches can be utilised to further explore grammatical patterns in the data and develop the analytical categories for subsequent chapters.

5.2 Sketch Engine

5.2.1 Frequency Lists

The frequency analysis in Sketch Engine further supported the development of the discourse domains discussed above. Among the most common lexemes in the list, we also find words associated with WORK/EMPLOYMENT such as *work*, *job*, *employment*, *company* and *interview*. The most important social actors are *people*, *person*, *employer* and *manager*. Further, we find lemmas arguably related to access technologies and employment support schemes like *use*, *help*, *support* and *computer*. People also relate their employment experience to their disability and reflect on how this impacts on their work, hence the high frequency of *blind*, *disability*, *sight*, *vision*, *eye*, *visual* and *impairment*. Lexical items I did not necessarily expect to show up amongst the top 100 were the three lemmas associated with problems and difficulties, namely *problem*, *issue* and *difficult*. Although most participants talk about barriers and challenges they were facing in employment in some form or other, it is still remarkable that these lexemes would rank so high up on the list.

Table 5.5   The Most Frequent Content Lemmas in the Narrative Data Corpus Sorted by Average Reduced Frequency (Items in Bold Face are Discussed in the Text)

Rank	Lemma	Average Reduced Frequency	Rank	Lemma	Average Reduced Frequency
1	*know*	537.10	43	*different*	41.10
2	*get*	356.70	44	*support*	39.40
3	*work*	323.40	45	*week*	37.20
4	*think*	269.90	46	*put*	36.50
5	*people*	221.50	47	*point*	36.40
6	*thing*	211.60	48	*sight*	35.70
7	*say*	208.90	49	*talk*	34.30
8	*well*	160.20	50	*never*	33.70
9	*time*	123.30	51	*big*	33.30
10	*job*	113.60	52	*end*	33.30
11	*good*	101.50	53	*issue*	32.30
12	*need*	93.00	54	*long*	31.90
13	*make*	92.80	55	*move*	31.60
14	*come*	90.80	56	*happen*	31.40
15	*see*	86.90	57	*ask*	31.20
16	*year*	85.20	58	*few*	31.00
17	*start*	83.80	59	*still*	30.80
18	*want*	78.50	60	*last*	30.40
19	*way*	78.50	61	*realise*	30.20
20	*take*	76.20	62	*change*	29.70
21	*find*	74.40	63	*manager*	29.40
22	*use*	71.50	64	*life*	29.00
23	*give*	70.70	65	*own*	28.20
24	*help*	70.50	66	*enough*	28.10
25	*look*	65.50	67	*become*	27.90
26	*mean*	64.80	68	*pay*	27.40
27	*feel*	59.40	69	*vision*	27.00
28	*person*	58.30	70	*stuff*	26.70
29	*try*	53.60	71	*company*	26.60
30	*blind*	52.50	72	*leave*	26.40
31	*day*	52.20	73	*eye*	26.30
32	*employer*	49.60	74	*difficult*	26.00
33	*experience*	48.70	75	*contact*	25.80
34	*call*	47.60	76	*visual*	25.20
35	*able*	45.20	77	*part*	24.60
36	*place*	43.90	78	*interview*	24.60
37	*disability*	43.20	79	*speak*	24.60
38	*employment*	42.50	80	*computer*	24.30
39	*tell*	42.30	81	*area*	23.90
40	*right*	42.20	82	*read*	23.60
41	*problem*	41.90	83	*impairment*	23.30
42	*month*	41.60	84	*keep*	23.30

While not always providing deep insights on their own, frequency and keyword tables can hint at important aspects of the corpus that warrant further analysis. For instance, it will be interesting to see what kind of evaluations are combined with these lemmas, i.e. are people referring to employers and managers or access technologies as mainly being good, bad, helpful/supportive, accessible, challenging, etc.? The frequency list can also be used to look up Word Sketches of any given target word that warrant a more detailed analysis of the word's grammatical and collocational configurations (see Section 5.2.3). This helped develop the focus for the qualitative analysis of predicational strategies in the chapters on Evaluation (Chapter 7) and Agency and Affectedness (Chapter 8).

5.2.2   Keywords

As already mentioned in the Methodology chapter, I looked for key lemmas in the data and compared them with the *English Web 2013* corpus to provide the following Table 5.6.

Table 5.6   List of Keywords with Minimum Frequency of 10 and Minimum Keyness Scores of 25 (Sorted by Keyness Score)

	Narrative Data		English Web 2013 (enTenTen13)		
Lemma	Frequency	Frequency/ Mill	Frequency	Frequency/ Mill	Score
Nystagmus	20	223.6	642	0.0	218.5
magnifier	13	145.4	9,174	0.4	104.3
eyesight	35	391.4	63,337	2.8	103.6
braille	11	123.0	7,356	0.3	93.7
sighted	11	123.0	10,746	0.5	84.2
impairment	50	559.1	132,957	5.8	81.8
impair	47	525.6	127,867	5.6	79.5
visually	47	525.6	176,462	7.8	60.1
gonna	100	1118.2	451,073	19.8	53.7
Access	59	659.8	266,792	11.7	51.9
magnification	10	111.8	29,511	1.3	49.1
blind	124	1386.6	636,135	28.0	47.9
VI	22	246.0	105,062	4.6	43.9
cane	25	279.6	131,628	5.8	41.3
yeah	66	738.0	418,460	18.4	38.1
disability	103	1151.8	687,440	30.2	36.9
wanna	28	313.1	177,208	7.8	35.7
somebody	72	805.1	649,077	28.6	27.3
redundant	12	134.2	90,390	4.0	27.2
kinda	28	313.1	241,061	10.6	27.1
realise	57	637.4	528,424	23.2	26.3

In this table, we see even more clearly than in the simple frequency list that participants devote a lot of discourse space to means providing access to information for VI people such as *magnifier*, *braille* and *magnification*. The second most common topic overall seems to be disability- and impairment-related (*Nystagmus*, *eyesight*, *sighted*, *impairment*, *blind*, *VI* and *disability*), consolidating what I have discussed earlier. This is not surprising given that I specifically asked people about their impairment if they had not already mentioned it in their narratives (which most people did). *Redundant* promises to be a more interesting case, however. Although it is only mentioned 12 times overall by four different participants (namely Stuart, Linda, Chris and Mack), it is overrepresented in my corpus.

Table 5.7 below shows the most frequent specialist terms in my data regarding keyness scores. From this table, we can gather that terms related to visual impairment and

sight loss as well as expressions around access technologies (*screen reader*) and mobility support (*guide dog*, *public transport*) are the most salient multi-word terms in the corpus.[21]

Table 5.7   Key Multi-Word Units in the Narrative Corpus versus English Web 2013
             Reference Corpus Ordered by Keyness Score

	Narrative Data		English Web 2013 (enTenTen13)		
Terms	Frequency	Frequency/Mill	Frequency	Frequency/Mill	Score
visual impairment	39	436.1	6,231	0.3	343.1
sight loss	24	268.4	1,775	0.1	249.9
support worker	22	246.0	2,984	0.1	218.4
blind person	22	246.0	4,015	0.2	210.0
guide dog	17	190.1	4,019	0.2	162.5
screen reader	10	111.8	4,410	0.2	94.5
public transport	15	167.7	68,408	3.0	42.1

5.2.3   Word Sketches and Concordances

Word Sketches are types of queries unique to Sketch Engine that can shed light on grammatical and collocational patterns of chosen target words. To exemplify this feature, consider the most frequent verb in the corpus which is not an auxiliary verb. (*To*) *Know* ranks first on the list because it is used as a discourse marker (*you know*) in the overwhelming majority of cases (733 times out of 806, as shown in Figure 5.8) where it takes the second person as a pronominal subject of the clause. *You know* either fulfils discourse-pragmatic functions (e.g. retaining listener attention) or it is used simply as a filler in spontaneous spoken registers, but it is probably not very revealing for an analysis of discourse topics and narrative structure of employment stories.[22] Its main function is to create rapport with the listener. As the Word Sketch shows, most of the remaining uses (58 hits) take the first-person singular *I* as pronominal subject. Moreover, 98 out of 126 instances contain *not* as a modifier of *know*. The expression *I don't know* seems to have some significance in the stories and warrants closer inspection which can be done by consulting concordance lines (however, note that this expression can likewise be used as a filler).

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[21] Three terms were deleted from the list because they only occurred in one interview transcript each. These were *head teacher* in Delta's story, *work placement* in Ali's account and *equality act* in Stuart's. The remaining terms were mentioned by at least three participants.

[22] *I think* and *I mean* fulfil almost identical functions in that regard, which is why I will not discuss them further.

Figure 5.8   Word Sketch for *Know* in the Narrative Data Corpus

know (verb)
DisablismatWork freq = 962 (10,757.49 per million)

modifiers of "know"		
	126	**13.10**
not	98	10.90
, I do n't know		
never	5	9.71
exactly	3	9.42
about	3	8.97
really	5	8.57

pronominal subjects of "know"		
	806	**83.78**
you ✚	733	13.49
, you know ,		
i	58	8.71
I know		
they	10	7.70
it	3	5.68

objects of "know"		
	98	**10.19**
people	13	10.65
you know , people		
area	5	10.52
thing	6	9.70
somebody	3	9.57
lot	4	9.31
something	3	9.21

wh-words following "know"		
	66	**6.86**
what	33	12.55
do n't know what		
how	21	12.35
do n't know how		
why	5	10.76
where	3	10.10

If we narrow down the search, we find that *what* and *how* are the most frequent interrogatives (or wh-words) that combine with *know* and the negative to form the phrases *I/They don't know how/what*. Displaying sample concordance lines for these expressions gives us a more comprehensive insight into their meaning in relation to the phrases' co-texts.

Table 5.9   Sample Concordance Lines for *Know + How*

1.	within my power to do, so I **don't** really	**know**	*how* I'm supposed to use the training to
2.	any advantage for the company but I **don't**	**know**	*how*, I get there - I'm so, when we have
3.	they're in that situation - people **don't**	**know**	*how* to handle it and don't know how to
4.	their career, so when it happens they **don't**	**know**	*how* to deal with it themselves. It can
5.	people don't know how to handle it and **don't**	**know**	*how* to handle you. And they kind of - rather
6.	of training, lack of things. They **don't**	**know**	*how* - - it's not a case of they don't know
7.	know, the attitudes could change. I **don't**	**know**	*how* - I hope this happens but it's only
8.	because they didn't seem to me - I **didn't**	**know**	*how* I could do any better. And they were

Table 5.10   Sample Concordance Lines for *Know + What*

9.	disproportionate number are unemployed. I **don't**	**know**	*what* the statistics are for disability
10.	people see that that recognise that, they	**know**	*what* 's going on, you know - people just
11.	haven't been trained on that so they **don't**	**know**	*what* their responsibilities are. The training
12.	didn't have any result as yet, so I **didn't**	**know**	*what* would happen to me for the next few
13.	lower-level tasks that they had given me, I **didn't**	**know**	*what* they expected me to do about it.

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| 14. | of it is down to me being proactive. Me | **knowing** | *what* I need, not being a victim. Not |
| 15. | in employment as well. Being proactive, | **knowing** | *what* you need. Also being interested in |

As the concordance lines show, there is mention of other people (presumably managers and colleagues) not knowing how to handle the narrator or how to deal with their disability or needs for reasonable adjustments (lines 3–6), or the employers do not know what their responsibilities are when it comes to disability legislation, equal opportunities and providing people with workplace adjustments and guiding them through the processes (line 11). Some people also talk about their own limitations (lines 1, 8 and 12). On the other hand, at times, participants will use the phrase *knowing what I/you need* to show that they know well what they need and how to achieve it, indicating a sense of initiative and managing their own adjustments (lines 14–15). This pattern will be discussed further in Section 8.1 on Narrative Ownership.

The collocational pattern indicates some of the problems, issues and challenges for VI people in employment that revolve around people at work not having sufficient knowledge or experience when dealing with blind and partially sighted people and their needs. This assumption will be reconsidered when performing a more in-depth analysis of the narratives that pays closer attention to the unfolding structure, development of topics and the narrators' personal history and evaluative point of view. However, it should be clear that corpus analytical queries open avenues to the data that warrant further qualitative exploration. I should mention that I looked up the Word Sketches for all the lemmas in the frequency list shown above (Table 5.5). Some of them proved promising enough to explore their collocations further – these will be discussed below. Others were either not yielding any interesting insight or their usage was too widespread to arrive at a conclusive interpretation. The Word Sketches pointed me to the following categories of analysis (Figure 5.11). In the next section, I will explain how I arrived there.

Figure 5.11   Contribution of Sketch Engine Keywords to Discourse Domains and
Analytical Categories
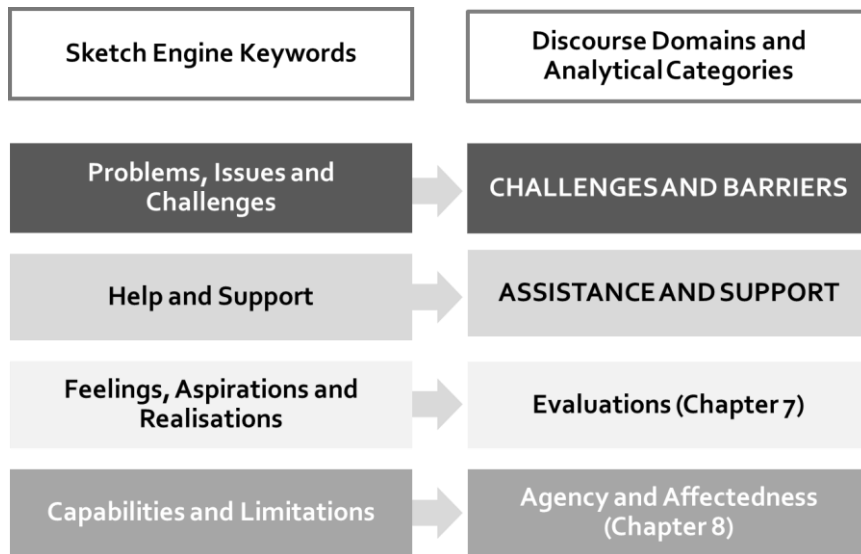
I grouped the lemmas under investigation by semantic properties to help construct a more coherent line of argumentation. The four categories include 1. problems, issues and challenges (consolidating the discourse domain Challenges and Barriers), 2. help and support (relating to the Assistance and Support domain), 3. feelings, aspirations and realisations (suggesting an analysis of Evaluations; see Chapter 7) and 4. capabilities and limitations (associated with Agency and Affectedness; see Chapter 8). While there will always be exceptions in contextual word usage, these were the general tendencies I identified in the lexemes' Word Sketches and concordance lines. *(To) know* can be considered part of the subsection about problems and challenges because of its appearance in negated sentences.

Problems, Issues and Challenges

Since the narratives are about people's experience with employment, it is reasonable to start this section by looking at the word *work*, which was the third most frequent lemma in the list (323 hits). *Work* occurs 242 times as a noun and 394 times as a verb. Frequent modifiers for *(to) work* were prepositions like *in* (37 occurrences), *for* and *with* (24 each). These pairings can be expected to occur in such a genre. However, another common and more interesting modifier regarding VI people's employment experience is *not* (28 occurrences):

Table 5.12   Sample Concordance Lines for *Work + Not*

1.	many times, you know, that when we're ***not***	**working**	it's like you're not really part of society
2.	out and buying (bits) that then would ***n't***	**work**	and, you know, (laughs) and then I would
3.	I would say 'well, I know that does ***n't***	**work**	, cause I've tried it myself before in the
4.	they know what works and what does ***n't***	**work**	in our environment, so we get to the solution
5.	are unemployed. Something is clearly ***not***	**working**	and something really drastic needs to change
6.	strong-willed person I felt I could ***n't***	**work**	with her. And I voiced it to my, you know
7.	explain, you know, 'Instagram does ***n't***	**work**	like that. Instagram - you have to come
8.	that might happen, I mean, but it did ***n't***	**work**	out. But basically led onto this in some
9.	feedback when I spot ways in which are ***not***	**working**	or things could be improved. But it takes
10.	you know, the way we're doing it is ***n't***	**working**	, let's find a better way to do it'. Cause

Well, used as the adverbial form of *good* (rather than *as well*), only had five co-occurrences in phrases such as *things **working well** with screen reader software* or *it **worked** really **well** for me because with my vision driving was not a very good option.* These usages can be considered evaluations. To summarise these patterns, people are much more likely to comment on things that are not working or are not working as expected – hence the prevalence of negative evaluations attested in Chapter 7. A lot of those issues are tied in with adaptive technologies such as screen reader software that would not always work with specialist equipment or company software people were expected to use at work (lines 2–4, 7 and 9–10; see also Subsection 7.2.3.3 on Written Information). Other occurrences of *(to) work* in combination with *not* relate to the narrator not being in employment or having difficulty working with a colleague (lines 1 and 6), but looking at the concordance lines, this is a more infrequent case overall. Most problems arise from objects not working rather than people not working or not being able to work with each other. The lemmas *problem, issue* and *difficult* are almost exclusively used in affirmative sentences, thus confirming that certain things were indeed a problem for people or were *very*, *quite* or *incredibly* difficult. This pattern can be expected when considering the employment situation of VI people as laid out in Section 4.1. Where the problems lie exactly and how they arise will be discussed in the manual analysis of discourse topics in the next chapter and in the Evaluation Chapter 7.

Help and Support

Help ranked 24th on the frequency list. The most common pronominal object of *help* is the first-person singular *me* (23 times), followed by second-person *you* (15 times). Usage patterns in terms of the subject of the sentence are varied, ranging from specialist equipment or

technology (lines 2 and 7), colleagues and volunteers (lines 3 and 5) to advisors or counsellors (line 6).

Table 5.13   Sample Concordance Lines for *Help + Me*

1.	I'm still learning but, you know, it has	**helped**	*me* in some ways. But, yeah, the difficulty
2.	try and get some specialist equipment to	**help**	*me* do my job. With this, the head teacher
3.	able to get, you know, other employees to	**help**	*me* with that. And again, they've never
4.	example that there's stuff out there that can	**help**	*me* and I absolutely, even though things
5.	suggested recently for me to get a volunteer to	**help**	*me* . Then I feel, you know, I'm not earning
6.	's not a lot of use. I wanted somebody to	**help**	*me* get in. (pause) Trying to get jobs with
7.	it's important for me, you know, how it	**helps**	*me* in many ways, basically. Maybe that
8.	extent of actually not helping - not actually	**helping**	*me* but actually causing me more problems
9.	feel sorry for myself but that's not gonna	**help**	*me* . I had that approach in the past and
10.	say. And now which obviously, it doesn't	**help**	*me* . They have been flaunting the equality

An assumption related to agency and passivisation is that people are more likely to use the second-person pronoun when either talking about negative experiences (see Table 5.14 below, lines 3, 4, 6 and 8) or when making more general statements about situations that apply to other people as well (*various little devices that help you make a drink*, line 9). However, these generalised statements can also derive from personal experience (*They really weren't equipped to help you look for a job*, line 3, which would have worked equally well in the first-person singular). I will discuss the case of such pronominal switching again in Chapter 8.2.1.

Table 5.14   Sample Concordance Lines of *Help + You*

1.	gonna be ready to find work and they'll	**help**	*you* to find a six months work placement
2.	National Institute for Blind will be able to	**help**	*you* . We'll get somebody out to come and
3.	at all. They really weren't equipped to	**help**	*you* look for a job as much as they were
4.	to come outside the station so they can't	**help**	*you* either. To be perfectly honest I feel
5.	Because they give you an outreach worker to	**help**	*you* try and find a work placement and they
6.	was why they wouldn't employ me. Nobody	**helps**	*you* find jobs either. The job centre are
7.	cannot guide you. Basically, a cane is -	**helps**	*you* , prevents you from having accidents
8.	technology is very, very good but it doesn't	**help**	*you* when you're going out and about to
9.	watches and various little devices that	**help**	*you* make a drink so that you don't overfill
10.	really tell you where shops are. It just	**helps**	*you* to cross roads and get to places safely

Another common modifier for help is *people* (18 occurrences). Most of these cases appear in an affirmative context and are about peer support, for instance, blind and partially sighted people engaging in staff disability groups and thereby helping other disabled people by sharing their knowledge and experience. The manual analysis indeed suggests that peer support is a vital factor when it comes to VI people's work experience. Not only does it contribute to a more positive and friendly atmosphere at work, but it can also help in effectively keeping disabled people in work in the first place by strengthening professional relationships and developing a common voice when negotiating needs with employers (see also Subsection 7.2.2.4 on Other Social Actors).

Table 5.15   Sample Concordance Lines of *Help + People*

1.	a good thing, so, you know. It's nice to	**help**	***people*** **,** really, just so you can help others
2.	always wanted to do something where I'm	**helping**	***people*** . I've always wanted to do
3.	jobs amongst the people who are trying to	**help**	disabled ***people*** and VI people in particular
4.	etcetera. And I kind of wanted to use that to	**help**	other ***people*** . So I spent the last few
5.	network and learning about disabilities,	**helping**	***people*** stay in work, get on with their
6.	a lot of work, get a lot of things done,	**help**	other ***people*** get things done, you know.
7.	visually impaired lawyers, don't seem to	**help**	***people*** who haven't got started. They only
8.	more proactive and a lot more involved in	**helping**	***people*** to search for jobs, helping people
9.	forms in accessible format, you know,	**helping**	***people*** once they've got the jobs to actually
10.	on in the Eighties. Which doesn't exactly	**help**	***people*** . And that's not just people with

(To) give, which ranked 23rd on the list, is also often related to support in the general sense of the word. The most frequent prepositional object is the first-person singular *me*, the most common subjects are employers or Access to Work advisors (see especially Subsection 7.2.3.6). Many instances revolve around participants being given help (line 2), an opportunity (3), good training (5), advice (6), independence (7) or access technologies (9). There are a few negative cases as well, such as not being given time to learn the way from work (line 1), giving someone problems (4) or not being given enough hours to work (10).

Table 5.16   Sample Concordance Lines of *Give + Me*

1.	got less and less friendly. They didn't	**give**	*me* **time to learn** my way from work to the
2.	the transition period. And then she still	**gives**	*me* **lots of help**. So, does that, do you
3.	donations he believed in giving me a job and	**giving**	*me* **an opportunity**. So that was my first
4.	actually hear it. So that's what's gonna	**give**	*me* **a problem** later on. Okay? As I say I
5.	this? We will show you how to do it'. And	**gave**	*me* **some quite good training**, really. That
6.	bottom and stay in it. They - probably could	**give**	*me* **some advice**. I've had a good trouble
7.	just completely opened up my world and has	**given**	*me* **a huge amount of independence**. And it
8.	initial point, actually.) The Access to Works	**gave**	*me* - told me to buy a package called Magic
9.	bring what I needed close to my face. They	**gave**	*me* **a special cassette recorder** and access
10.	really have that kind of like - they couldn't	**give**	*me* **the hours**. They just didn't have, yeah

Support also ranked relatively high on the frequency list, in 44th place. In most cases, it is used as a noun in object position. Many participants express the view that they have received good or excellent support in their jobs or training, however, there are also some more negative or critical assessments such as lines 1, 5 and 9 (*Had I had the support; We need more support*). Again, the in-depth analysis will provide more conclusive evidence as to how people evaluate the kind of support they are getting (or the lack thereof) and who they feel is responsible for the situation (see Subsections 7.2.3.4 and 7.2.3.6).

Table 5.17   Sample Concordance Lines for the Noun *Support*

1.	actually, because I thought that had I **had** the	**support**	that I feel I should have had, I could
2.	, you know. So I've **had** very, very solid	**support**	from colleagues. And then when I got
3.	in [place] I couldn't wish to **have** more	**support**	of colleagues. When I first had my -
4.	started to require people to **have** the	**support**	from Access to Work. One of the issues
5.	of working. They are - if **given** the right	**support**	- the right support is provided then they
6.	disabilities and does **provide** excellent	**support**	. I thought it was interesting. I don't
7.	they don't understand that Access to **Work**	**support**	is available, they fell that there will
8.	and I was lucky because I **got** some good	**support**	all through my three year degree, and I
9.	to do too much by ourselves. We **need** more	**support**	than we're getting. There just isn't
10.	on the courses as well. **Facilitating** peer	**support**	, really. I: What's your view on VI people

Feelings, Aspirations and Realisations

In this section, I will discuss the Word Sketches of the verbs *feel*, *want* and *realise* in turn. Out of the 96 hits for the verb *feel* that have a pronominal subject, 72 are first-person singular (i.e. *I feel/I felt*). Sketch Engine only identified 16 instances when the verb is modified by *not* (e.g. *I didn't feel*). There are two instances of something negative being negated in order to form an affirmative: *They've **never** made me **feel uncomfortable** about* [my visual impairment] (Gary) and *I **didn't feel** that the children* [I taught]*... were **suffering*** (Delta).

Conversely, *(to) feel*, even when used as an affirmative, can express negative meanings: feeling sceptical (line 1), discriminated against (line 4) or insulted (line 6). But there are also positive expressions such as the feeling of belonging in a company (line 8) and feeling to be able to keep looking for jobs (line 10). I will discuss the role of emotions in more detail in the chapter on evaluation, as the case of *feel* clearly demonstrates that a context-sensitive approach is necessary to uncover these usages and differentiate between them. Additionally, people do not necessarily use the verb *feel* when they talk about their feelings (e.g. they might just say *I was sad, I cried* or they might simply describe a situation without using any emotional trigger words, which is referred to as evoked attitude in the Appraisal framework).

Table 5.18   Concordance Lines for Affirmatives of *Feel + I*

1.	his limbs and he can't speak'. Now, *I*'m	**feeling**	quite sceptical about this. And I actually
2.	looking and I was making applications, *I*	**felt**	, at least I was making an effort. So I
3.	. And so that's why I don't work. So, *I*	**felt**	, because it was such a painful, abrupt
4.	things for me. So I find all of those - *I*	**feel**	discriminated against as a visually impaired
5.	happier if I was paid less cause *I* just	**feel**	that I'm not very good value for money.
6.	of the choir to come in', you know. So *I*	**felt**	quite insulted (laughs). And then the vicar
7.	I'm not really sure what it was. *I* just	**felt**	that there was - I suppose part of it was
8.	really encouraged me and motivated me and *I*	**felt**	- belonged in that company. A lot of times
9.	supermarket, and so on. And also, so *I* just	**feel**	now I've got to sort out my studying. So
10.	able to set myself goals, and as long as *I*	**felt**	I was able to keep looking and I was making

The most common pronominal subject of *want* is first-person singular *I* followed by third-person plural *they*. *Want* in combination with the third-person plural is used mainly to narrate what employers and managers were asking of participants during work-related tasks (*they wanted me to do X*). The most frequent infinitive objects of *want* are *to do* (*I've always wanted to do X*) with 14 attested usages and *to be* (9 occurrences). Both are overwhelmingly used when people talk about (past) career aspirations or future plans in work. These examples later fed into an Employment subcategory labelled Professional Identity (see Section 6.1).

Table 5.19   Sample Concordance Lines for *Want + I*

1.	'm also keen on radio broadcasting, so *I*	**wanted**	**to do** - I thought I wanted to do that
2.	to get a bit twitchy really, thinking *I*	**wanted**	**to do** something a bit different. And a
3.	dispatching was something I wanted to do. *I*	**wanted**	**to talk** on the radio. And she told me that
4.	already in. Well, that's not a lot of use. *I*	**wanted**	somebody to help me get in. (pause) Trying
5.	the company paid for it. So wherever *I*	**wanted**	to go, whether it was back and forth to
6.	more. So at the time I thought 'Hmm, *I*	**want**	**to have a job** which is music-related'.
7.	I've had experience with that. When *I* was	**wanting**	**to leave support work** and go and do
8.	something like that I wasn't really sure what *I*	**wanted**	**to be**. I'd been at university but we had
9.	today, nothing at all on those lines. So, *I*	**wanted**	**to get a job** in that field of work originally
10.	earning a lot. To get a volunteer I feel if *I*	**want**	a dedicated person to do it, then, you

Realise, which ranked 61st on the frequency list, most often combines with the first-person singular (24 occurrences). Structurally, these cases occur at a crucial point in the narratives where people talk about emerging experiences or insights (i.e. realisations). The phrase *I realised* is often used to indicate a turning point in the story and their identities. The most common modifier of *realise* is *not* (12 occurrences). Nine of the twelve instances where *realise* is used in a negation also combine with the first-person singular (the other three take *he*, *she* and *they* as pronominal subjects). Although these sentences are formed using negation, they can still express a very similar meaning to the affirmative cases because they imply that the person had not realised something at some point in time, but being able to express this retrospectively means that they do realise something now (e.g. *I hadn't realised how much impact that had*).

Table 5.20   Sample Concordance Lines for *Realise + I*

1.	uncomfortable talking about myself. But *I*	**realised**	now like in adulthood that it's sometimes
2.	IT to a group of students. And *I* suddenly	**realised**	that these guys hadn't got the same opportunity
3.	And I went and did her assessment. And *I*	**realised**	there were similarities to vision impairment
4.	probably in about 1995 something like that, *I*	**realised**	that I would have to do something about
5.	struggle. That's when I think *I* probably	**realised**	that my visual impairment is maybe got
6.	transportation options, you know. And *I*	**realised**	with my minimal education - I've only got
7.	thing, you know. And I guess that's where *I*	**realised**	that I wasn't a normal person with really
8.	guide dog, that might help. But then *I*	**realised**	actually a guide dog can't really tell
9.	talking about another point but then *I*	**realised**	I was going a bit - I: What point was that
10.	originally but as I came out of college *I*	**realised**	that, because we're in quite a lot of recession

Capabilities and Limitations

The last category I will discuss is related to capabilities and limitations. While words like *know*, *work* and *give* are relatively common in virtually every discourse type, *able* stands out, ranking at 35th place and therefore even higher than *disability* or *employment*. Many instances of the word deal with being able to do a certain job, passing a test or carrying out other work-related activities. If we list the occurrences of *able* according to their meaning, we see that participants talk more about what they are/were *able to do* (87 occurrences) than what they were *not/never able* or *unable to do* (13 occurrences). But again, some cases in the first category cannot be clearly differentiated by an automatic search if they are, for instance, embedded in the clause (e.g. ***I couldn't*** *work as quickly as I used to* **be able** *to*). This pattern will be discussed in more detail in Section 8.1.

Table 5.21   Sample Concordance Lines for *Able to* (Affirmative Cases)

1.	and I'm really not interested. And ***being***	**able**	to reading off on a Snellen chart to enable
2.	written originally and so on. And I ***was***	**able**	to do all of that, and working with colleagues
3.	role because of my disability. But ***being***	**able**	to do a role but I just have to do it differently
4.	agenda, you are about half a line off ***being***	**able**	to drive. And if we can get you that through
5.	that. But I thought, hopefully, I'd ***be***	**able**	to do that in speech and audiobooks and
6.	could do in terms of work. And again, I ***was***	**able**	in that particular job to develop my computer
7.	margins of being able to drive. So I might ***be***	**able**	to pass the test one day, read a number
8.	made my employment easier. And I've ***been***	**able**	to sit down with my employer in the last
9.	being firm about the fact that I felt I ***was***	**able**	to do the job and I would decide whether
10.	demand an Apple Mac cause I know I'll ***be***	**able**	to work on that because of what it has.

Usages of the phrase *not able to* often express the experience that people were sometimes unable to find things, do certain tasks, see enough to do things, drive a car or get a job they applied for. So, it certainly is not the case that all people were satisfied with their employment situation or able to overcome the barriers they faced, although the focus is still clearly on highlighting areas they managed to complete successfully, perhaps to their own as well as their employers' surprise.

The verb *get* can sometimes express a meaning similar to the phrase *be able to.* Interestingly, in contrast to *know* and *work* the verb *get* is more than twice as likely to be used as an affirmative (e.g. *I got*, 125 occurrences) than a negative (*I didn't get/haven't got*, 47 occurrences). Most cases for affirmative usages of *get* deal with getting a job, getting an interview or being given access technology (lines 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 and 9).[23] The pattern is very similar in the English Web reference corpus where the verb is predominantly used in combination with the first-person pronoun *I* and the object *job*. However, *interview* and *access technology*-related lexemes do not appear as the top object modifiers in the general corpus.

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[23] Occurrences where *get* was used with the meaning of 'become' (e.g. *I got angry*) were discounted from the analysis, since I was more interested in the MATERIAL processes of the verb.

Table 5.22   Sample Concordance Lines for *Get + I*

1.	I could see. But I got an interview. *I*	**got**	the job. I think they were interested in
2.	when I was - I think I was sixteen. And *I*	**got**	myself this Saturday job. And I remember
3.	left it for about a week. I think *I* was	**getting**	a bit negative again at that point. Because
4.	waiting for me. But, you know, I mean *I*	**got**	some really neat technology from them too
5.	that off on the Thursday night. Friday *I*	**got**	a phone call saying 'Can you come in for
6.	phoning to speak to him, and eventually *I*	**got**	him. And I just said to him, fairly bluntly
7.	used to make one follow-up. So this time *I*	**got**	another lady and she then said, you know
8.	similar kind of jobs that I could see. But *I*	**got**	an interview. I got the job. I think they
9.	and about. So if I can just say, when *I*	**got**	the job where I work, that was fine. And
10.	devices for textbooks and things. And when *I*	**got**	to my late teens, my first employment interactio

The reverse is true for negated uses of *get*, i.e. not getting a job or interview or not getting information in an accessible format (examples 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8, see Table 5.23).

Table 5.23   Sample Concordance Lines for Negations Containing *Get*

1.	was to put people in work. So they wo *n't*	**get**	the funding and so it's basically to do
2.	you know, 'Oh gosh, sorry, we have *n't*	**got**	it in a suitable format for you, so you
3.	computers. This is Friday, you have *n't*	got	a job on Monday'. So I was made redundant
4.	other, which would have been fine, had *n't*	got	a problem with that. Only in that, it was
5.	a graduate and a top student, I did *n't*	**get**	a job after more than a year. So it came
6.	happen. And you'd start to wonder 'Am I *not*	**getting**	it - even for an interview because I'm
7.	still. I got to a stage where I did *n't*	**get**	- why, I suppose, well, it's quite interesting
8.	they've got, oh, I don't know, they're *not*	**getting**	things in a format they can access, stuff
9.	clue what any of that means, they have *n't*	**got**	a clue what the impacts are, why it's important
10.	quite often the disabled person has *n't*	**got**	a champion. And they're very much on their

The verb *make*, which, on its own, is rather underspecified in meaning, can occur in various patterns. Aside from combinations such as making adjustments (13 occurrences), making decisions (13; see also Section 8.1), making changes (12) and making a difference (11), the most common modifier in the data is *not*. The negative contexts express people's personal or professional limitations. We find phrases such as not making much progress (lines 1 and 10), not making eye contact as a consequence of partial sight (line 2) and not making a map in one's head when navigating streets (line 3). There are also examples of employers not implementing changes or making reasonable adjustments (lines 4, 5, 6 and 7; see especially Subsection 7.2.2.1 on Employers as Social Actors in Judgment Appraisals).

Table 5.24   Sample Concordance Lines for Negations of *Make*

1.	while to improve things for myself and ***not***	**made**	much progress, then I've come - I just
2.	situations. I really, you know, if I was ***n't***	**making**	eye contact I would focus on something
3.	n't work out where I was because I ca ***n't***	**make**	a map in my head. I got into trouble for
4.	make this change. She just said 'I ca ***n't***	**make**	them. I can just sign-post them to where
5.	to to do study and things, they do ***n't***	**make**	reasonable adjustments for people. So picked
6.	. And that must mean that they have ***n't***	**made**	the change because they haven't made contact
7.	n't made the change because they have ***n't***	**made**	contact with me about the fact that they
8.	well. Cause I'm not used to - I had ***n't***	**made**	all these calls and contacted that many
9.	management there, they've, you know, ***not***	**made**	it an issue one way or the other. (5 sec
10.	people's body language. Because I did ***n't***	**make**	eye contact, especially in work situations

5.3   Summary

The corpus analytical queries have provided a general insight into the data. As a result of these queries, the problems, issues and challenges category has been carved out in the manual coding as one of the main discourse topic domains. The same applies to assistance and support as another major domain. Both were further divided into several subtopics. As we see from the examples provided above, the category on feelings and aspirations is often concerned with people's emotions and attitudes toward people, things or experiences which is why I will analyse these aspects more thoroughly in the chapter on evaluation. Aspects related to people's capabilities and limitations will be discussed further in Chapter 8 on agency and affectedness. The category is also relevant in the subdomain of Tasks and Work Experience within the general Employment domain (see Section 6.1) because people talk about what they do at work.

6 Discourse Topics: Qualitative Explorations in *NVivo*

Discourse topics can provide answers to the questions *what* people talk about and *who* the main social actors are. While discourse topics can also be realised by predication strategies such as evaluation (see Chapter 7), for the sake of methodological clarity, this chapter will mainly consider discourse topics as realisations of nomination strategies as discussed in Chapter 2. The analysis presented in the following sections focuses on the kinds of topics that participants talk about in their narratives and will provide a more in-depth view of the data than the automatic analysis. As such, the following discussion resembles a qualitative content analysis. Linguistic aspects, means of verbalisation, evaluation and rhetorical strategies indicative of a rigorous discourse analysis will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Figure 6.1   Discourse Topic Domains and Subtopics in Employment Narratives

EMPLOYMENT

- Tasks and work experience
- Professional identity
- Job prospects
- Being unemployed or made redundant
- Being off work or sick
- Retirement
- Education and training
- Changes and promotions
- Money and income
- Importance of work
- Future plans and aspirations
- Employment situation generally

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

- Accessibility for VI
- Mobility and transportation
- Various other challenges and problems
- Suggestions for improvement
- Discrimination, stigma and stereotypes

SOCIAL ACTORS

- Employers and line managers
- Colleagues
- Other people at work
- Partners, family and friends
- The public

OTHER IDENTITY ASPECTS: RACE, AGE AND GENDER

ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

- Support in work and Access to Work scheme
- Support before work
- Mobility support
- Legal support
- Peer support
- Assistive technology outside of work
- Personal assistance and support

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

- The condition and its impacts
- Disability identity
- Advantages of being visually impaired at work

Table 6.2   Discourse Topic Domains by Coverage in Percent

Discourse Topic Domain	Coverage in percent
Employment	28
Challenges and Barriers	20
Assistance and Support	18
Social Actors	17
Visual Impairment	8
Health and Wellbeing	3
Other Identity Aspects	1

In total, seven discourse domains and a total of 32 subtopics were identified. The seven main categories were Employment, Challenges and Barriers, Assistance and Support, Social Actors (normally considered the primary focus of nomination strategies in CDS), Visual Impairment, Health and Wellbeing and various other Identity Aspects like race, age and gender not previously covered in any of the categories. The percentages were calculated by comparing the word count of longer stretches of annotated text (across participants) dedicated to any one topic such as Employment to the word count of the narrative data as a whole. As long as the narrator's main focus remained on one of these (sub)categories, the utterances were coded as belonging to the same coding node in NVivo.

While the first five domains have several subtopics associated with them, Health and Wellbeing and the miscellaneous Identity category were not diverse enough or consisted of too few text references to justify further subcategorisation: Aspects of Health and Wellbeing were mentioned by six participants, Other Identity Aspects by five. Text examples for each of the subcategories will be analysed below. Five percent of the transcripts were not coded in any of the categories due to the respective parts being unrelated to the topic at hand. These could be questions from participants or other discourse organising and metalinguistic comments like thinking aloud (*Yeah, trying to think if there's anything else I can say*), or questions or clarifications from the interviewer himself. In the next subsections, I will discuss the discourse domains and the most important subcategories in more detail by order of their prevalence starting with the largest category, which is the Employment domain.

6.1 Employment

As expected, the Employment domain is the largest and most talked about domain covering 28 percent of the narrative data. It also has the most subdomains, twelve different topics, which are explained in more detail below. The first two topics (*Tasks and Work Experience* and *Professional Identity*) are mentioned by all or almost all participants while the number of references decreases with subsequent topics.

Table 6.3   Employment Domain Subtopics by Coverage in Percent

Subdomain	Coverage of Main Domain
Tasks and Work Experience	37
Professional Identity	18
Job Prospects	14
Employment Situation Generally	8
Education and Training	7
Importance of Work	5
Changes and Promotions	3
Being Unemployed or Made Redundant	3
Being off Work or Sick	2
Money and Income	2
Future Plans and Aspirations	1
Retiring	1

Tasks and Work Experience

The most common subdomain within this category is labelled Tasks and Work Experience and covers over a third of the whole domain. This subdomain is about general aspects of participant's job roles and activities at work. This can also include activities carried out in a voluntary capacity (see Nada).

(13)   And then last year a make-up artist, whom I used to know from my previous company, contacted me and said he needed someone to handle the social media, the marketing side of stuff. (Jessica)

(14)   And I've been volunteering with one counselling organisation or another since [2007]. So, you know, I've been with about four different ones, on and off, continuously since then up until the present day. (Nada)

Since it was left to the participants how they interpret the starting question, participants can put a different focus on particular aspects of their story. There are several reasons for this shift in focus: 1. Participants do not find it worth elaborating on because they assume that the listener knows, for instance, the basic tasks involved in their role, 2. they have more pressing issues to talk about such as being made redundant, disagreement with line managers or the impact of their visual impairment, or 3. they have not been in their current form of employment for long enough to give a detailed insight. In any case, these four participants spend less than two percent of their time on this subtopic. Melissa, Jessica and Chris devote most of their discourse space to talking about specific tasks and overall work experience. All three are in paid employment and are overall satisfied with their current jobs and career paths, so these factors seem to have an influence on the prevalence of this discourse topic as well.

Professional Identity

This subdomain is the second most common one and covers around 18 percent of the Employment domain data. *Professional Identity* is of course strongly related to the previous category. However, in contrast to the facts and concrete experience of what people do in employment on a daily basis, this coding category is about how participants perceive themselves and their identity as employees, that is how they reflect on their employment path and their choices and what it means to them as individuals. This coding node also strongly reflects the biographical aspect of the interview, what kind of meanings people give to their employment stories (see also Subsection 2.3.2).

(15)   And I've always wanted to do something where I'm helping people. I've always wanted to do something and like benefitting people in some way. (Ali)

(16)   So, I decided that I was gonna find a job, but I would look for something with a trainee type touch to it, trainee manager's type job. I've always been interested in the retail side of things. (Emma)

Job Prospects

The category labelled Job Prospects is the third most frequent type of discourse topic (covering 14 percent of Employment related topics) and encompasses both researching job positions and the process of applying for jobs, filling out application forms and attending interviews. Some participants did not mention applications at all (namely Brian, Delta, Isaac and

Jon). Others, however, spend considerable time on this topic, especially if they have applied for a range of different jobs in their life. It is worth noting that this subtopic is closely linked to the Challenges and Barriers domain, suggesting that application processes are often problematic for people or result in undesirable outcomes (see Subsection 7.2.3.5 on Job Prospects in Appreciation Appraisals).

Being Unemployed or Made Redundant

Participants explicitly talk about being unemployed or made redundant: Linda, Salma and Stuart were not in employment at the time of the interview, Nada was working as a counsellor, but in a volunteer capacity and not as a paid employee, and expresses fears of coming off her benefits when going into self-employment. The other narrators have been unemployed only for a short amount of time or were able to find a new job soon after being made redundant. Since we can imagine that unemployment and being made redundant are very unpleasant or even anxiety-provoking experiences, the impact of those situations will be discussed further in the following chapter on evaluation, specifically Subsection 7.2.1.2 on Insecurity Appraisals, and in Subsection 8.2.1 on Affectedness.

Changes and Promotions

Change must be understood in terms of direct changes to one's job or role, not in terms of emotional or mental changes of viewing one's position. This category includes retraining, restructuring of roles, transfers to different offices or moving areas as well as promotions. The assessment of the change can be either positive or negative. It has most relevance in Ed's, Jessica's, Jon's and Kelly's stories, but is also mentioned by Gary and Isaac. For the rest of the participants, it bears no special meaning. Aspects of this topic will also be discussed in Section 8.1 on Agency and Narrative Ownership.

(17)   But with this new IT company, they– when we transferred in 2010, I was doing– well, they gave me a work laptop to use. (Ed)

(18)   Originally, when I went back to work I started on reduced hours. (Kelly)

Importance of Work

The importance of work and its contribution to one's mental wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence is mentioned by four participants explicitly. Being in work can inspire feelings of

pride and fulfilment. Participants talk about being valued and having a purpose. Conversely, not being in work can make someone feel like they are not contributing their share, being a burden to, or not part of, society, as Ali elaborates. It is thus not just or not even primarily the monetary aspect of work that matters to people. This was also obvious in Nada's account because she does not feel appreciated and valued as an employee even though she is working, albeit in a voluntary capacity.

(19)   [W]e often feel– and I've often felt many times, you know, that when we're not working it's like you're not really part of society, you're not really part of, you know, normal– yeah, just not really, you don't feel an active member of society, basically. So, work is actually a lot more than just financial considerations. (Ali)

(20)   And that pride of being in work, of earning money, that is– you can't put a price on that. (Chris)

(21)   And, but I don't know, I feel very pleased to have my job and I think I'm very grateful for having my job. (Ed)

(22)   [I]t's important to have a positive role and a purpose, a reason to get up. And, for me, it's important in work to feel that I'm doing something which is valuable. And also, you know, it's about self-esteem and it's about your identity, and it's social. (Mack)

Employment Situation Generally

The final part in this section is concerned with the employment situation for blind and partially sighted people more broadly. Personal experience can play into the accounts presented here, but normally, people would be describing what they think the situation on the labour market is like for others who might be even less fortunate in finding jobs than themselves. More than half the participants have commented on this topic, some more extensively than others. Nada talks about this topic the most covering more than seven percent of her narrative. By comparison, Ali, Anthony, Brian, Isaac, Mack and Melissa spend two or three percent of time talking about this subdomain while Chris, Jessica, Kelly and Stuart just mention it briefly.

(23)   I just feel like the whole system results in vulnerable people being the ones that are unemployed and under-resourced and having to put themselves, you know, in voluntary positions to try and get experience, which doesn't really get anybody anywhere. (Nada)

Nada is further discussing a documentary on television that showed success stories of two people with visual impairments in employment which, as she points out, does not reflect her experience and is not "her voice":

(24)   And I felt really angry with that documentary … Because you've just got the happy-go-lucky white men in there that are like 'Oh, it's great, Britain's done so much for us to get jobs.' And it's just like 'That is not my voice. You are not speaking my truth. That is a lie. And, you know, just because it's worked out for you guys doesn't mean it's worked out for everyone else'. (Nada)

Many participants said that there is a disproportionate number of VI people (as well as disabled people in general) being unemployed. Some also cited official statistics. This view was expressed by Ali, Brian, Chris, Kelly, Mack, Melissa and Stuart in the following (or in a similar) way (see also Subsection 9.3.1):

(25)   I think, statistically, at the moment seventy-three percent of working-age blind and partially sighted people aren't working. So, you know, something isn't right there. (Melissa)

Most notable is the absence of positive general assessments in this subject. While some people do have overall positive working experience, have managed to find a job that they enjoy and have stayed in the position, they will nevertheless be hesitant to generalise over the rest of the population. The only example of a more optimistic view can be found in Anthony's narrative:

(26)   I believe that things are a lot better these days like than they were a few years ago for– certainly [for] blind people. (Anthony)

(27)   Yeah, thing(s) have changed. If you look at it, there's a lot of positive things. But– And there are people now questioning it and arguing their points. (Stuart)

Stuart is more reserved and careful in voicing too much optimism as the reality for him is certainly different. Isaac expresses a more positive view, but his appraisal is a local one that applies to the company that he is working for, not necessarily to workers or jobseekers in other businesses. Assistance and support as well as employers and line managers are the most important factors in these assessments, since they have a crucial influence on the employment situation for blind and partially sighted people.

6.2　　　　Challenges and Barriers

Covering a fifth of the narrative data, the Challenges and Barriers category is perhaps even more relevant to people's stories. While only containing five subdomains it ranks second after the Employment domain, which contained twelve subcategories. The subdomains in this section are Accessibility Issues directly related to people's visual impairments, Mobility and Transportation, Various Other Challenges not immediately related to someone's visual impairment, Suggestions for Improvement and Discrimination, Stigma and Stereotypes. The wide use of this domain is unsurprising considering the situation I described in the Contextual Background Chapter, especially Section 4.1.

Table 6.4　　　Challenges and Barriers Domain Subtopics by Coverage in Percent

Subdomain	Coverage of Main Domain
Accessibility for VI People	34
Various Other Challenges and Problems	25
Suggestions for Improvement	15
Discrimination, Stigma and Stereotypes	13
Mobility and Transportation	12

Accessibility for VI People

This topic is concerned with problems and challenges in work related to VI people's visual impairments, that is barriers and accessibility issues that primarily arise from the nature of people's visual impairments (when certain tasks are more difficult or impossible to do) or because employers and society at large fail to make the necessary adjustments that allow access and equal opportunities. This topic is especially relevant in Brian's, Chris', Isaac's, Kelly's and Ed's stories (covering 5–9 percent of their narratives), but it is mentioned by all participants. The most common issue people talk about has to do with inaccessible printed material such as reading paper files and labels or scanned images on screen, doing bookkeeping at work or filling in forms including application forms (both electronic and paper-based; see also Subsection 7.2.3.3 on Written Information).

(28)　　　I used to go to staff meetings, and nothing would be enlarged, I used to say 'please could I have this thing a bit larger and photocopy it or send it (to) me electronically … Nothing was ever done like that and everything was always in small print. (Delta)

(29)   [S]ome situations require immediate action and that can create some issues in terms of if I need access to a paper file and someone to read the paper file for me. (Brian)

In Delta's case, it seems to be the employer's or manager's neglect or disregard for adjustments that is the cause of the problem. Brian, on the other hand, does not hold his employer responsible for not providing accessible files. The degree to which blind and partially sighted employees will be able to overcome these kinds of barriers also varies depending on their vision impairment. For partially sighted people like Delta, it is often enough to provide large print documents while blind people or people with more severe sight impairments need an electronic file or a support worker's help to read the information.

The RNIB offer a service where people can request audiobooks of printed material, but the process can take time, sometimes several months, and is quite expensive for the individual if they want to have a publication transcribed which is aimed at a specialist rather than a general audience. In Ali's case, this was a book for the physiology course he was considering enrolling on before he decided to do massage therapy at a college for the blind. He describes having serious doubts whether he could afford using this service to complete a full course.

Another common issue relates to incompatibilities between screen reader software or other assistive technology like magnification programmes and the corporate computer environment. This is mentioned by Marco, Chloe, Marie, Kelly, Isaac, Ed, Linda, Melissa and Nada. According to some of those participants, it is not always the businesses themselves that are responsible for the problems but the IT firms producing the corporate specialist software. Large companies also have a high digital security environment that can block or interfere with screen readers.

(30)   [A] lot of the new access technologies coming on the market or more up-to-date versions will not run on our systems at the moment. Which is causing a few headaches. (Brian)

Besides, not every person might have the skills required to effectively operate assistive technology in the first place. As Chris points out, one has to be a "high flyer" in IT to make the most use of the software before one can function on a similar level as a sighted colleague. The last problem in this category concerns the physical work environment. If a person is using a screen reader (even with headphones on), it can still be quite difficult to use that software properly in a noisy environment such as an open plan office:

(31)   It's quite a difficult business to be in dealing with customers on a face-to-face basis when you put the technology I need to use into the mix. It just makes it quite difficult to give good customer service that way. (Isaac)

Partly related to this topic are difficulties with face-to-face interactions in group settings, both in and outside of work, such as talking to people in busy environments like pubs (*there's a lot of people talking, and you can't always remember who you were talking to*, Ali; Jon raised a similar concern).

Various Other Challenges and Problems

In this subtopic, we are looking at challenges and problems that people encountered which are not directly related to their visual impairment or at least not expressed as related in this way. A total of 14 participants raised issues here. Because everybody's employment story is different, and people work in different areas, the experiences are unique to the individual and their situation.

Some participants express difficulties about applying for certain jobs or getting into a (new) area of employment. These issues are partly related to lack of support structures that would help the person gain access into these fields of work.

(32)   I've had a good trouble getting into the law. I even tried the society of visually impaired lawyers, don't seem to help people who haven't got started. They only help people that are already in. (Linda)

(33)   In the small companies where you can sort of get in and it's not that difficult, they have the issue that they just didn't really have that kind of like– they couldn't give me the hours. They just didn't have, yeah, that many clients. (Ali)

Some of the problems can also be connected to one's personality, resilience and a low level of self-confidence (see also Section 8.2). These can in turn be influenced by negative experiences with discrimination, stigma and inequality, but the primary cause can be of a personal rather than systemic nature – although one could argue that the systems in place should lend more support to people who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged:

(34)   And it's, you know, it's hard for people. You've got to be the person who is willing to be out there sticking your neck out and stop saying 'I'm rubbish' is not good enough, you need to change it. And it's hard for people to do that when people are generally speaking quite lacking in confidence and quite frightened really, quite intimidated. (Melissa)

Discrimination, Stigma and Stereotypes

The subtopic of discrimination was discussed by more than half the participants, especially by Anthony, Kelly and Stuart. The views and subjective experiences in this area can differ. Some have directly been confronted by hostile attitudes (Chris, Delta), others can only assume that disablist attitudes were the cause for being treated differently (Salma, Kelly, Stuart and Ali), and some have never had contact with any form of discrimination (Jon) (see Subsections 8.2.1 and 9.4.1):

(35)   And I got a phone call from the secretary of the manager concerned, saying, 'Don't bother coming for interview', basically, 'because of your sight our manager thinks you can't do the job'. (Chris)

(36)   And I think people see people with visual impairments as less capable. And that's what I've experienced in my employment is that people assume because I can't see properly I'm less capable. (Kelly)

(37)   In terms of employment, I wouldn't have said I faced any particular discrimination in my employment because of my eyes because, for the most part, I didn't even understand it was an issue. (Jon)

Feeling discriminated against on the grounds of one's visual impairment is not the only form of discrimination that people face. Unequal treatment and stereotyping can also be directed at someone's age or (in)experience (Anthony), gender and ethnic background (Nada) or even the kind of job that one has (Mack). Some of these issues will be discussed in the last discourse domain on Other Identity Aspects (6.7) as well as in Chapter 9.

(38)   So, I have to say that I don't think they were going against my sight loss, they were going against my age. (Anthony)

(39)   I feel discriminated against as a visually impaired person anyway. So, when I– and then twitted with other visually impaired people, it's then other forms of inequality that come into play for me as an individual. (Nada)

(40)   And sometimes people, I think, sometimes look at sight loss charities and think that's a bit of a soft option for people with sight loss. (Mack)

Mobility and Transportation

Issues around transportation and physical mobility are mentioned by eleven participants. The most common topic in this category – which is incidentally often raised by male participants – is not being able to drive a car (Ali, Anthony, Ed, Gary, Isaac, Jon), which would provide fast and reliable transportation to and from the workplace. Depending on the area people live in, public transport can be an alternative, although this often presents its own challenges for

some blind and partially sighted people, as Marco, Jon and Linda explain (see Subsection 7.2.3.4).

(41)   [Y]ou do have to do a lot of planning if you gonna travel by public transport and you wanna get there the same time as the car drivers then, inevitably, you have to set off at least one journey before the journey you'd want to take. (Jon)

VI people have a considerable disadvantage over their sighted colleagues and peers, especially when they are visiting unfamiliar places. With time constraints normally in place in employment contexts, learning the route beforehand (whether with a guide dog or on their own with a long cane and navigation software or with the help of a support worker) might not always be viable options and therefore prevent some people from carrying out parts of a role such as home visits to clients, as in Brian's case.

Suggestions for Improvement

After discussing challenges and barriers, participants will sometimes offer solutions to specific problems as well as more general strategies that could improve the critical situations. Nine participants discussed this subtopic. The suggestions mainly focus on education and training both for employers and people providing employment services as well as for VI people looking for jobs.

(42)   Maybe more awareness, more education for employers to tell them that– to put the message out there that blind and partially sighted people can contribute and can work, can function in normal working environments, you know. (Ali)

(43)   And one of the things I've done a lot of over my time is job redesign. Where I've helped an employer to restructure a job so as to make it better fit a person with a disability. (Chris)

Chris, who has substantial experience as a disability and employment consultant working for Access to Work carrying out assessments, raises the possibility of job redesigns in which roles would be restructured by removing parts of a role that cannot easily be fulfilled by a VI person. Of course, these job redesigns have limitations and they also cost the employer time and money. Legislation and requirements around providing equal access and opportunities are mentioned, too. Crucially, the law needs to be implemented, communicated and enforced which seems to be lacking in the views of some participants (Salma, Nada and Stuart). Points of call for reasonable adjustments and support with providing these adjustments also need to be made sufficiently clear to employers (Emma). These aspects also feed into prognostic critique, which will be reviewed in the Conclusion (Chapter 10).

(44)   There needs to be tough sentencing when somebody doesn't meet reasonable requirements. This needs to be a government priority. (Nada)

(45)   Lots of employers, in my experience, make the decision that they can't make the reasonable adjustments or don't know how to make the reasonable adjustments, don't know who to ask for help to make reasonable adjustments. (Emma)

Introducing and promoting reasonable adjustments, however, extends beyond the managers of a company and must often include training and raising awareness in colleagues, as Stuart suggests. The role of charities in supporting and guiding these processes in accord with the requirements of the blind and partially sighted community are discussed as well:

(46)   I think in my case RNIB and Action should be a lot more proactive and a lot more involved in helping people to search for jobs, helping people to fill out application forms, helping people to get application forms in accessible format, you know, helping people once they've got the jobs to actually negotiate their needs with their employer. (Emma)

While some believe educating employers should not be the only or even the main strategy to improve prospects for VI people, others indeed see this factor as the most critical barrier that prevents visually impaired job seekers from being as successful as their sighted peers.

6.3   Assistance and Support

Assistance and Support aspects are mentioned by all participants and cover 18 percent of the overall data. The most frequently mentioned subtopic was labelled *Support in Work and Access to Work Scheme* (see also Subsection 7.2.3.6), which accounts for 66 percent of the whole domain and contains many references to access technologies. The remaining subtopics can be relevant for the individual and their experience but might not be in the focus of everyone's attention.

Table 6.5   Assistance and Support Domain Subtopics by Coverage in Percent

Subdomain	Coverage of Main Domain
Support in Work and Access to Work Scheme	66
Peer Support	9
Mobility Support	8
Support Before Work	5
Assistive Technology and Equipment Outside of Work	6
Legal Support	4
Personal Assistance and Support	2

Support in Work and the Access to Work Scheme

GOLD et al. (2012: 25 f.) differentiate three areas of accommodations for disabled people in work: job application procedures (see the earlier section on *Job Prospects*), physical features of workplace settings and modifications of workplace rules and culture to ensure equal benefits and privileges. There are several support mechanisms available to VI people in work. More specifically, these can include assistive technology in various forms, making documents and files available electronically to employees, receiving help from sighted colleagues or support workers, the government's Access to Work scheme as well as providing a work environment that best works for the blind or partially sighted employee and allows them to be maximally independent and productive. Anthony, Emma and Kelly talk about this subtopic the most; between ten and sixteen percent of their narratives is concerned with support in work.

In terms of electronic assistive technology and equipment, we find mentions of audio textbooks or electronic files that can be read with screen reader software, magnification software and manual magnifying devices, twin monitors or larger screens and movable monitor arms, adjustable office desk lamps to illuminate the area better, large print books and keyboards with large print letters. While software can certainly make a difference in VI people's day-to-day tasks, it is often not enough, as Chris points out, and as we have seen when discussing problems and challenges, assistive software and corporate computer environments can cause incompatibilities (see also Subsection 7.2.3.3). The person also needs to have sufficient technical knowledge to make the best use of these devices, and the employee needs to feel confident enough to use the technology, which was especially problematic for Kelly. Other measures could include allowing extra time as well as a computer or a scribe

for written exams and job application tests. The working environment and location of the office desk can also be a crucial factor:

(47)   So, we moved offices and I had a choice of two different offices to go into and I was very, very insistent that I had a particular office and I had a particular position because that would be the best use of the natural light from the window for me. (Jon)

If access technology and reasonable adjustments are not provided by the employer or if their implementation falls short of the employee's expectations, they might end up managing their own adjustments (see Section 8.1). This was mentioned by Emma, Isaac and Stuart. While this shows people's agency and initiative, they naturally need to *have* a job before they can bring their software and tools to work.

(48)   And I simply bought things from the visually impaired society that I could use at work. So, you know, making my own reasonable adjustments. (Emma)

Emma also mentions that she has shorter but more regular breaks to prevent her eyes from being put under too much strain by extensive computer work. Other adjustments in the workplace can include handrails and signage which "don't cost a fortune":

(49)   You know, somebody may only have a problem when, I don't know, going down stairs for example. So an extra handrail, you know, yellow markers on the floor, slightly larger signage, that sort of thing or signage in good contrasting colours. Simple things like that that don't cost a fortune can make a big difference. (Emma)

Access to Work is mentioned by eleven participants, most notably by Anthony. Since most comments regarding the scheme are tied in with evaluation, this topic will be discussed further in the next chapter. Overall, the views are quite mixed. Some people are clear advocates of the scheme with very positive experiences, other participants were rather critical of the programme and the processes one must go through to receive the required support.

While adjustments are certainly an important part of any inclusion attempts, the corporate culture plays an equally crucial role. Simply providing technological support will not be enough as long as toxic attitudes toward disabled people remain in people's belief systems. This aspect was also stressed by social and affirmative approaches to disability in Subsection 2.2.2 and 2.2.4.

Peer Support

Peer support can be provided by several different bodies or organisations depending on the person's situation. These organisations include disability staff groups and employee resource groups at work, other blind and partially sighted colleagues and friends as well as charities and associations like Guide Dogs UK, the RNIB, Action for Blind People and Blind in Business (see Subsection 7.2.2.3). Aspects of peer support among blind and partially sighted people are mentioned by seven participants, covering nine percent of the data in the Assistance and Support domain. Gary, Isaac and Mack pay most attention to this category. There are several ways in which peer support can be woven into the stories: Some express appreciation for the help or advice they have received from others (50), some have taken the role of offering this support *to* others (51) and some contemplate the benefits that peer support would have provided if they had known about it at a time when they were grappling with certain issues (52).

(50)   People who, you know, their eyesight was much worse. They were just very positive and, you know, I just saw them doing really well. And, you know, and it made me feel like I'm not the only person really with sight problems. (Ali)

(51)   I spent the last few years getting involved with an employee resource group, leading that, helping change our employer to be better around disability for other people. (Isaac)

(52)   Something that would have helped me, I think, in the early days when I came to Newcastle would have been perhaps to meet some other blind and partially sighted people that were at a similar stage at my life. (Mack)

As we can see from the quotes, peer support is mainly constituted by emotional and mental support rather than specific advice on, for instance, how to find a job. This is what distinguishes it from the category labelled *Support Before Work*, which will be discussed further below. Charities can be a platform where both peer support and employment advice are given, so we need to distinguish between these two forms of support.

Mobility Support

This subtopic is mentioned by ten people, equivalent to eight percent in the overall domain. It is directly linked to the Mobility and Transportation category in the previous domain on Challenges and Barriers as it shows what kind of support people have used or would like to use to become more mobile and independent. There are several means which can improve VI people's mobility and independence (see also Subsection 7.2.3.4), such as the different

guide or identification canes, guide dogs, support workers, taxis and public transport (facilitated by rail cards and disabled people's travel passes). This kind of support is not available to everyone, either because they do not always fulfil certain requirements or because they were not aware that these measures exist or that they would need or benefit from them. This has been a learning process for some people.

Support Before Work

In comparison to the first category on support in work, this topic is concerned with support mechanisms that people use before they get into work in the first place. Service providers can offer specific or more universal support and strategies on how to prepare for and enter employment as a blind or partially sighted person. Support before work can be provided by employment schemes, outreach workers and employment advisors in job centres. Most quotes in this category are tied to evaluation, which is why I will discuss it in Chapter 7, Subsection 7.2.3.6.

Assistive Technology and Equipment Outside of Work

The kinds of software and equipment people use in the workplace can also often be used outside of work and at home to support people in everyday activities, such as screen readers, navigation software on smartphones, monocular and binoculars, for instance for reading timetables at bus stops, page magnifiers and additional lighting. I will not go into much more detail here because even though these devices are certainly useful on a day-to-day basis, they do not tell us much about blind and partially sighted people's professional identities and are not directly linked to the main research question.

Legal Support

The subdomain of legal support is mentioned by eight participants, but only makes up four percent of the total narrative data in the category of Assistance and Support. Legal advice can be offered by some of the same organisations and institutions already mentioned, that is charities and staff disability groups, although workers' unions are typically the first port of call for someone who has to raise legal issues with an employer, for example when being made redundant:

(53)   [I]t's actually dubious why they're making me redundant. Which is the unions are getting up in arms about. Not only my union rep, also the union branch manager, branch representative is also. (Stuart)

Another key area that people discuss is disability rights and legislations introduced by the government. These can include employment support allowance as well as the Equality Act, which replaced the Disability Discrimination Act in the UK in 2010.

6.4   Social Actors

Table 6.6   Social Actors Domain Subtopics by Coverage in Percent

Subdomain	Coverage of Main Domain
Employers and Line Managers	**54**
Other People at Work	14
Partners, Family and Friends	14
Colleagues	13
The Public	5

Social actors are cross-referenced in all the domains discussed so far (see Table 6.7 below), which is not surprising. Interestingly though, the most common domain to feature social actors, and employers more specifically, is the Challenges and Barriers domain, which would suggest that problems people encounter in the workplace are often human-made. The third most common domain in the cross-tabulation is the Assistance and Support domain. However, it does not follow that support has always been provided to people or that they positively evaluate the help they received if they did; the mere mentioning of subtopics of this domain would have been enough to indicate a co-occurrence. The evaluation chapter will provide more clarity in this respect (see especially Subsection 7.2.2.1).

Table 6.7   Cross-Tabulation of Discourse Domains and Social Actors and
                Employers and Line Managers by Within-Domain Coverage in Percent

Discourse Domains	All Social Actors	Employers and Line Managers
Challenges and Barriers	**33**	**44**
Assistance and Support	31	21
Employment	23	28
Visual Impairment	14	7

Employers and Line Managers

Employers, line managers and supervisors are mentioned by all participants and make up half of the references in this domain (54 percent). These actors play the largest role in Delta's, Gary's, Jessica's and Stuart's stories. Regarding their function in the narratives, we can distinguish three contexts. Employers in the workplace figure as line managers and supervisors interacting with the participants, sometimes providing access to and funding assistive technology, organising the VI person's workload and feeding back on tasks and achievements as well as initiating disciplinaries or restructuring job roles when goals are not met. They can also be considered gatekeepers of the world of work in general that decide whether someone will be employed or not. Before or soon after they are employed, the applicant has to negotiate their needs and adaptations – where necessary – with employers. Finally, some participants speak of employers in abstract terms generalising and hypothesising for instance about employers' views of and attitudes towards VI people and their impairments or employers' willingness and openness to employ a blind or partially sighted person (see especially Subsections 9.2.1 and 9.3.3). Whether employers are overall viewed to have more negative or positive attitudes towards VI people and how the participants evaluate this fact will be discussed in the next chapters. Employers are the only social actors mentioned in accounts of discrimination, stigma and stereotypes. They are also by far the most commonly referenced actors in the main domain of Challenges and Barriers.

Colleagues

Twelve participants mention interactions with colleagues. These agents constitute 13 percent of the references in the Social Actors domain. The longest stretches of talk about colleagues appear in the narratives of Brian, Delta and Emma. While colleagues working alongside the

disabled person are not usually in positions of high power, their attitudes and interactions can have an impact on the atmosphere at work and make the participant feel either valued in the company or ostracised and disregarded. Again, this will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Other People at Work

This miscellaneous category comprises other staff at work not necessarily working in the immediate vicinity of the VI person, such as receptionists, clients, human resources and occupational health officers, union representatives and volunteers, with HR being the most commonly referenced entity. I also coded general mentions along the lines of "other people at work" as belonging to this subtopic.

Partners, Friends and Family

Partners, friends and relatives are typically associated with private rather than work-related contexts, and notably, with the Assistance and Support domain. In Jessica's and Gary's cases, for instance, family members provide transportation to and from work. Parents can also play a role in shaping their child's job aspirations and provide a source of inspiration or encouragement. The same can apply to partners and spouses. Family members might also feature if the person is affected by a genetic eye condition passed on from parents or grandparents.

6.5 Visual Impairment

The Visual Impairment domain covers eight percent of the data and is subdivided into three topics: the condition and its impacts, disability identity and advantages of being a visually impaired person in the workplace. The relatively low occurrence of this domain compared to the other four mentioned so far seems to hint at the fact that the participants do not see their visual impairment as defining their employment stories or lives more generally – even when the disability has an impact on them. This fact contrasts with how some employers and society perceive visually impaired people (see also Subsection 3.6.6 and Chapters 4 and 9). However, we still need to recognise the existence of people's impairments and the

consequent impairment effects if we are to understand "complexly embodied" identities (see Section 2.2).

Table 6.8   Visual Impairment Domain Subtopics by Coverage in Percent

Subdomain	Coverage of Main Domain
The Condition and Its Impacts	51
Disability Identity	40
Advantages of Being VI in Work	9

The Condition and Its Impacts

This subtopic was established on the basis that most interviewees also talk about the nature of their visual impairment and how it impacts on them at any given point in time (Melissa), but most crucially in the workplace (Stuart and Gary). Related subjects might include the process and time of diagnosis (Jon) or the underlying causes for the condition and how it developed over the person's life course, whether genetic, congenital or acquired through accidents or illness. The topic covers 51 percent of the data in the overall domain.

(54)   Can't really see a great deal in the dark. And can't really see a great deal in bright sunlight. But kind of on a dull day, I'm not too bad. (Melissa)

(55)   A lot of my stuff has largely been indoor work because of the nature of my vision. I don't do well in bright sunlight. That's what the achromatopsia is, if you're not familiar. (Gary)

Eleven participants are partially sighted, which means that they will have some useful sight that allows them to use magnification devices and magnifying software or large print rather than mainly relying on screen readers. Twelve are located more toward the blind end of the spectrum, although this does not necessarily mean that they are fully blind. They might see colours, shapes or shadows and thus still have some sight that allows them to see enough to navigate streets with an identification cane instead of a long white cane. But their level of sight might prevent them from reading printed documents, for instance. Comparisons between these two groups will be discussed in in the following analysis chapters because the distribution of topics themselves did not prove to differ in a significant way.

The most common condition mentioned in my data is retinitis pigmentosa. Furthermore, some participants report being affected by nystagmus, ocular albinism, macular dystrophy, achromatopsia, uveitis/iritis, idiopathic interconal hypertension, optic atrophy and/or

retinopathy. There is, therefore, a broad range of possible conditions and underlying causes, which are not always widely known or talked about in public. In addition to the immediate impacts the condition has on a person's visual acuity, there are some participants that also report related health issues such as migraines, ulcers or just general discomfort caused by wearing contact lenses, as well as tiredness, exhaustion and stress when navigating streets or looking at a computer screen for an extended period. Mental health issues, on the other hand, were coded as part of the Health and Wellbeing domain because these are usually not a direct consequence of people's eye conditions but arise from a mix of personal and situational factors (see Section 6.6).

Disability Identity

This category transpired from a similar distinction as the Tasks and Work Experience versus Professional Identity topics in the Employment domain. While the previous coding node about The Condition and Its Impacts is concerned with the bare facts of the impairment, Disability Identity was developed as a topic to reflect the participants' views and relationships with their visual impairment as well as other people's reactions toward it. Narrators have for instance discussed whether they "admit to" or "hide" their impairment, how they compare themselves to other VI people and whether they can "pass" as being sighted in different situations. Some people probably feel the need to disguise their impairment or avoid open conversation about it because the majority discourse on blindness and disability in general is so negative, as mapped out in Section 2.2.5 and Chapter 4.

(56)   It's very difficult to sort of talk about visual impairment because I've always been visually impaired. I tend to see my world in that context rather than something I have lost or acquired. (Brian)

(57)   But in some ways I think I don't think I would have even admitted that I was visually impaired when I was sixteen or eighteen. I don't think I'd even talk about my eyesight and just used to get on with my life. And hide it, really, as well, 'cause I didn't have a cane back then. And my eyesight wasn't that bad, so I could kind of get away with it. (Ali)

Advantages of Being VI in Work

The last coding node in this domain is about advantages of being a visually impaired person in the workplace. At first glance, this may be an unexpected finding because, so far, I have examined a lot of challenges and barriers that VI people face in employment as well as

highlighted support mechanisms they might need. However, advantageous aspects are perfectly in accord with the affirmative model of disability discussed in the literature review chapter (see Subsection 2.2.4 as well as 9.4.2). This approach promotes focusing on one's strengths rather than weaknesses. It is important to point out these kinds of insights because they can inspire confidence in people, reveal skills that they might not have thought they possessed and show employers that VI people can be a valuable addition to a team. Seven participants have talked about this aspect.

I have already mentioned that the effective use of assistive technology can prove problematic for people that lack the necessary IT skills. Conversely, people that have learned to use the software to their best ability may excel in this area, which can be an advantage in a work environment where IT skills become an increasingly crucial talent, as Chris points out:

(58)   [I]f you are a person who has to use adaptive technology you have to be more capable than your fully-sighted colleagues in order to use that IT effectively. (Chris)

The other two key areas that Chris mentions where VI people can excel are verbal communication and tasks requiring employees to be tactile. This in accord with Gary's experience as a volunteer firefighter. His boss told him that being visually impaired might be an advantage "because when you go into a fire you can't see anything anyway". Gary later worked as a dispatch officer in a taxi company where the experience that stemmed from his impairment also proved to be an advantage. Since he used to be able to drive a car himself, he would have to memorise street names and speed limit signs because he could not see well in the dark. As a dispatch officer, he could use that knowledge to quickly give taxi drivers instructions over the radio rather than relying on information on printed maps:

(59)   And, you know, so I knew the area back and forth. If somebody called in and told me where they were, you know, I knew. I didn't have to look it up in a map. (Gary)

Before his job as a project manager in a national charity, Mack worked as a consultant for a company doing building surveys around access for disabled people. Being disabled himself, he hypothesised, was one of the reasons the company employed him:

(60)   I got the job. I think they were interested in perhaps employing disabled people because of the nature of the project. (Mack)

Finally, Brian who works as a probation officer says he uses his disability as a positive example to encourage clients that are feeling pessimistic and express doubts about whether they will be able to find work:

(61)   [G]iven that my Clients would have a view that in terms of gaining meaningful employment, [their] situation is hopeless because of their lack of skills and criminal record. I can use myself as an example of another group of people for whom employment prospects and expectations are also low and that I have risen above them. (Brian, email communication)

(62)   I began to turn it on its head, I suppose, and use my experience as a point of differentiation, as an advantage to help other individuals going through similar circumstances across a range of disabilities. (Isaac)

Finally, while some employers see guide dogs as a liability and a distraction in the workplace (according to Linda's account, for instance), they can also have a positive impact on the team spirit, as Emma describes:

(63)   And that has– it has lifted morale in the office enormously. [Lola, the guide dog] doesn't realise this but, you know, whilst I've been going through changes and great difficulties at work over the last twelve months, she's been a huge morale booster. (Emma)

6.6   Health and Wellbeing

The domain of Health and Wellbeing covers two aspects: physical health or illness not directly related to someone's visual impairment and mental health issues such as forms of depression or anxieties which can have some connection to the eye condition but are not seen as a direct consequence of it. Both Ali and Delta report having had counselling to help them deal with depressing thoughts and emotions. While Ali does not explicitly mention the cause of his negative feelings but only hints at family issues that were taking place, Delta talks about this subject at length. It becomes clear that her emotional pain results from being bullied and discriminated against at work, which cumulated in losing her job as a teacher in a school for children with learning disabilities. This facet of the discourse again sheds light on the psycho-emotional consequences of disablism and is reflected in negative judgments of the self (Subsection 7.2.2.2) and in the argumentative strategy of self-blame (9.2.2). It also bears on the higher number of passivity and affectedness markers in the stories (Section 8.2).

(64)   [I was] trying to deal emotionally with my eyesight problem. I would be strong at work and then I would get home and I would just be an emotional wreck. (Delta)

(65)   As I was having counselling and I'd done few months of counselling and, you know, I started to see life a bit more positive. (Ali)

6.7   Other Identity Aspects

The miscellaneous identity category comprises various aspects including participants' upbringing and ethnic origin (Ali and Nada), age (Stuart), gender (Nada) and religion (Ed). Some of these are related to experiences of discrimination or differential treatment, as in Nada's and Stuart's cases (see also Section 8.2 and Subsection 9.4.1). Especially Nada's assessment is highlighting the importance of considering the impact of intersectional identities and "multiple oppressions" (VERNON 1998) for people of colour mentioned earlier. What follows from this is that opportunities to participate in the labour market might not be distributed evenly, even within the group of blind and partially sighted people. The gender gap in the VI population (see Nada) was also confirmed by several studies (GOERTZ et al. 2010: 412). I will come back to this point in Sections 7.2 and 9.1.

(66)   I also find I'm ostracised at work. That is not totally to do with my disabilities, but it is to a certain extent. … I'm also the oldest by a long way. (Stuart)

(67)   [W]hen I said to the employer, you know, like 'why have I not got the jobs', it was never because of my sight loss. … they were going against my age. … They said that it was because I was inexperienced. (Anthony)

(68)   Now I'm from a South Asian heritage. And I think white men get a much better deal in employment in the visually impaired world than what anybody else does. (Nada)

Over the next chapters, we will see that each of the discourse domains and associated subtopics can have some bearing on the linguistic choices that participants make to evaluate and reason about their experience, for instance, when participants encounter problems and challenges while dealing with line managers or frustrating job application processes. The next chapters will look at different forms of predication strategies starting with evaluation and continue with agency and the use of active and passive voice before turning to larger rhetorical structures and patterns in argumentation schemes.

7 Evaluation

7.1 Macro-Structural Evaluation According to Labov

In Subsection 3.6.4, I pointed out the distinction between the Labovian model of narrative analysis and Martin and White's APPRAISAL framework in the field of systemic functional grammar. Labov's model follows a rather rigid formula of identifying parts in the narrative that can be categorised as Evaluations. In the narratives I collected, I also found this kind of macro-structural evaluation of the participants' experience, although this is not the only time that participants use evaluation to express their point of view. In addition to the Labovian Evaluations, people also employ what I call micro-functional forms of evaluation which express more localised and context-dependent stances or assess the behaviour of social actors or characteristics and qualities of objects, processes and phenomena.

Macro-structural evaluation typically occurs toward the end of a story between Complication and Resolution, but this is not always the case in biographical narratives. First, some participants might be less vocal than others and thus need more guidance from the interviewer, e.g. to ask questions and support narrative flow. This interaction, however, can lead to the narrator adjusting the topic currently in the focus which can, in turn, give rise to several self-contained narrative parts each comprising the (partial) structure of Abstract to Coda. These narratives therefore often only contain some of the elements in Labov's model. Second, we are dealing with a spoken register that is rather spontaneous and allows participants to add aspects to the story at any point which can bring some "disorder" to the narrative structure – at least when compared to typical written accounts.

As we will see below, all participants have at some point evoked what can be classified as macro-structural evaluation in Labov's sense. During Evaluation, the narrator expresses a stance summarising their personal view on their overall employment experience. Table 7.1 shows the participants' Evaluations classified as negative, mixed and positive. It seems especially revealing that the six purely or predominantly negative assessments are provided by female participants. The other four women I interviewed evaluated their experience either in a more ambivalent (Marie) or positive way (Emma, Jessica and Melissa). We can also note that positive Evaluations outweigh negative ones, even if only slightly (however, see Section 7.2). It is also important to remember that the participant's age can have an

impact on the assessments: Older participants who are close to retirement or have already retired can be more definitive in their Evaluations because they have a long history of employment to look back on, whereas younger participants might judge their experience so far in a certain way, but their views are likely to change as the rest of their careers unfold.

Table 7.1   Macro-Structural Evaluations by Polarity; German Participants marked by (D)

Negative	Mixed	Positive
Chloe (D)	Anthony	Ali
Delta	Ed	Brian
Kelly	Gary	Chris
Linda	Isaac	Emma
Nada	Jiri (D)	Jessica
Salma (D)	Marie (D)	Jon
	Stuart	Mack
		Marco (D)
		Melissa
		Tom (D)

In terms of the participants' country of residence, there is an even spread between negative, positive and mixed Evaluations for both English- and German-speaking participants. I will analyse these Evaluations in some more detail in the following sections, starting with negative assessments.

7.1.1   Negative Evaluations

Kelly, Linda, Nada and Salma were without paid employment at the time of the interview. Therefore, their narratives focus on their experiences when applying for jobs, going to interviews or looking for support that can help them get into work. Delta has been forced to take early ill health retirement, and while Chloe has a job at a call centre, this was not what she was originally aspiring to do – her story reveals many setbacks. She has been trying to apply for other positions that would allow her to deliver training to people or take up management responsibilities, but she has not been successful yet in securing such a job.

(69)   [I]t has been **very difficult**. ... A visual impairment makes being in the workplace more difficult, and there's a **constant fear of vulnerability**. (Kelly)

(70)   I'm sorry to have been such a whinge bag cause **I haven't got anything** very negative– **very positive to say**. (Linda)

(71)   And I can't express to you **how unimpressed and disgusted I feel at the whole system**, at the lack of support. I just feel like I'm on my own. (Nada)

(72)   Yeah, my employment experience. **I am jobless at the moment**. Looking for a job. … And often I get the feeling that, well, **I only get invited to interviews because it's the law anyway** and not because they genuinely want to meet me. (Ja, meine Arbeitserfahrung. **Ich bin derzeit arbeitslos**. Bin auf Arbeitssuche. … Und oft hab ich das Gefühl, ach, **ich werd' sowieso nur eingeladen wegen dem Gesetz** her und nicht, weil die mich wirklich kennenlernen wollen.) (Salma, D)

(73)   Unfortunately, this **isn't** a **happy** story for you, but I do wish it was a story of success, but it's not really. … **sadly**, yeah, my work experience, the end of my career, **was not good, was not positive**, for me. (Delta)[24]

(74)   Yeah, and **I am a bit frustrated** because I have really imagined my professional life to be entirely different. (Ja, und bin 'n bisschen frustriert, weil ich wirklich so mein Job-Leben mir komplett anders vorgestellt hab.) (Chloe, D)

Pre-empting part of the following sections, we can observe that some participants express strong negative feelings about their employment history, the lack of support and the situation for blind and partially sighted people on the labour market in general (see Nada). The participants directly express emotions of disgust, sadness, fear, frustration and loneliness or helplessness. The assessments' strength and certainty are often amplified by adverbs and generalising comments such as *haven't got anything very positive to say, very difficult, constant fear of vulnerability, really … entirely different* and *only … anyway*.

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[24] It is interesting that Delta also reflects on the listener's expectations of what a good story is. I tried to be as open-minded as possible throughout the interview, telling every participant that it was their story, and that I would not be judging them. However, her comment that hers is not a happy story seems to stem from the assumption that people prefer to listen to happy stories, even though the negative ones are more enlightening in this case, because they show where the problems lie that keep VI people from realising their potential at work.

7.1.2   Mixed Evaluations

Seven assessments were classified as mixed Evaluations. There is some room for debate as to how close these are to either the positive or negative end of the spectrum. What they all have in common is that negative and positive aspects are mentioned either side by side or an overall positive statement is mitigated by introducing negative aspects. Isaac's assessment is interesting because it suggests that the barriers he faced (in terms of access to information and mobility) have contributed to his personal strength and resilience and could thus also be interpreted to have had a positive impact.

(75)   I guess my story is fairly typical of someone with a progressive condition over the span of the career. It's definitely had both, you know, **negative and positive impacts**. So, you know, the **negative ones are the actual practical issues** that you're faced with, mobility and being able to conduct the parts of your role. The **positive ones are actually what you learn from going through the experience and the strength** that that brings you. (Isaac)

Anthony, Ed, Gary and Jiri are overall satisfied with their jobs, but there are certain aspects that they judge to be detrimental to a greater level of satisfaction, such as a feeling of low productivity (Ed), not making enough money (Gary), struggling with Access to Work scheme regulations (Anthony) or the employment situation for blind and partially sighted as well as disabled people in general (Jiri). Jiri has first-hand experience of being rejected for a job on the grounds of his visual impairment prior to applying at the company he currently works for. Grammatically, mixed evaluations are often formed by including adversative conjunctions like *but* or idioms such as *apart from* or *both X and Y*:

(76)   And yeah, so **I'm quite happy with my work apart from my productivity**, and that's it really. (Ed)

(77)   Well, **I'm happy with my current employment** for the work that I do. **I'm not very happy with the money** that I make. (Gary)

(78)   So I would say that **the employment process was a positive thing** for me, but it's **the Access to Work thing which hasn't always been that positive**. (Anthony)

(79)   I am **working where I wanted to work**, have got good perspectives and cannot complain, you see. But I would view the **situation in general as being difficult**. (Ich **arbeite dort, wo ich arbeiten wollte**, habe gute Perspektiven und kann mich nicht beklagen, ja. Aber ich würde die **Situation im Allgemeinen als schwierig** betrachten.) (Jiri, D)

Lastly, we find two comments that resemble negative rather than positive evaluations. However, I coded these in the mixed category because they either contain mitigating modal verbs (*might be*) alongside a more positive or hopeful outlook on future employment (as in Stuart's case) or because it is not the employment situation as a whole which is negatively evaluated but only certain aspects of the person's current or previous job (in Marie's case, the monotony of the tasks).

(80)   So **it might be the end of the working life for me**. On that. But you never know. **I'll be hopeful**. I might find someone out there who's a good employer. (Stuart)

(81)   And, yeah, there are **many things there that don't go all that well** … And it is, well, I would say **fairly monotonous**. (Und, ja, also es ist **vieles, was dort nich optimal läuft**. … Und es is halt schon, ja, sag ich mal **relativ eintönig**.) (Marie, D)

7.1.3   Positive Evaluations

Ten participants positively evaluated their careers or their current roles, expressing emotions of content, happiness and comfort. Similar to the negative assessments, the positive ones also often demonstrate the use of modal adverbs with a higher degree of Force, such as *very*, *always*, *really* and *quite*.

(82)   But at the moment I **feel very comfortable** by now, I must say. (Aber ich **fühl mich** mittlerweile momentan **sehr wohl**, muss ich sagen.) (Marco, D)

(83)   In terms of work, I **always enjoyed** it. I always **enjoyed going** [to work]. (Arbeitsmäßig habe ich **immer Freude gehabt**. Ich bin immer **mit Genuss** hingegangen.) (Tom, D)

(84)   **I do feel established in terms of my work** and my relationship with my employer, which is important. (Mack)

(85)   They wanted to start a leisure class, piano leisure class, for their trainees. … So I've been teaching for past three weeks, and have been– **has been very good**. (Jessica)

(86)   So they were– my experience of reasonable adjustments and help and support at work **is really quite positive**. (Emma)

(87)   So, I mean that's pretty much the history. I actually think **my narrative is quite a positive one**. (Jon)

(88)   So my experience has probably been **a lot more positive** than most visually impaired people's. … But I'd say that **I've been very lucky** with, you know, sort of all my employment life sort of. Managing to find stuff. (Brian)

Mack and Emma explicitly mention which factors have contributed to their positive views, in Mack's case a good relationship with his employer, in Emma's the implementation of reasonable adjustments, support and use of access technologies. Brian's comment above stands out insofar as he directly compares his own understanding to other visually impaired people's experience, which can be more negative. To qualify this further, he points out that it could have been down to chance. Lexemes such as *lucky* and *fortunate* will be considered in the judgment category below as they describe the narrator's behaviour rather than their emotional dispositions per se.

Strictly speaking, the final three comments below cannot be counted as inscribed (or direct) macro-structural Evaluations. Their categorisation as positive assessments rests on the activation of context-sensitive background knowledge and the presentation of the narrative as a whole. From Chris' statement, for instance, we infer that not having to actively apply for a job and being approached (or "poached") by potential employers instead, is fortunate for him. Furthermore, when looking at the rest of his narrative, it becomes clear that he is proud of his achievements and passionate about the projects he has been involved in as an employment advisor over the span of his career.

(89)   I haven't had to apply for a job since I was just past the age of twenty. But that's been **more by good luck**, more by being in the right place than anything else. (Chris)

Similarly, Ali did a work placement at the time of the interview which took him a while to find and which he is ultimately grateful for having. In his story, he also positively appraises his new employer and the staff at the clinic. From the quote below, we can gather that his outlook on life and his mindset have improved since applying for the massage qualification at a blind college. He is now focusing on his strengths rather than weaknesses.

(90)   '**What can I do really with my life? What can I do with myself?**' Rather than what I can't do. So it's just a very simple change, but it's a huge change at the same time. … **That's how I try to look at life now**. (Ali)

(91)   [T]he opportunity arose to work for Action for Blind People again. So I applied, and **that's kinda where I've been ever since**, really. (Melissa)

Melissa's case presents a challenge to a definitive interpretation. Most of the time, she talks about her job in a neutral way by providing the bare facts and cornerstones of her career,

hardly using any qualitative descriptors that could be read as positive or negative evaluations. Melissa's opinion on the employment situation for VI people more generally, however, is much more critical and does include inscriptions of negative evaluation, as we will see below. It is thus the absence of a negative judgment that contributes to the sense of a positive assessment of her current role.

To conclude, blind and partially sighted people's employment experience and the overall evaluation thereof ranges from mostly negative to mixed or ambivalent as well as enthusiastic and positive assessments. To arrive at a final verdict about the role of evaluation in employment stories, we also need to consider local evaluation strewn throughout the narratives: Linguistic structure has to be investigated side by side the thematic development in the narratives (see Subsection 2.3.1). Crucially, micro-functional inscriptions can be negative even for those people who have indicated that they are overall satisfied with their own employment paths.

7.2 Micro-Functional Evaluation: Martin and White's APPRAISAL Framework

In this section, I will investigate the three categories of AFFECT, JUDGMENT and APPRECIATION within the APPRAISAL framework. I will analyse both inscribed and evoked (that is, indirectly expressed) attitude. The attitude system branches out into more fine-grained subcategories. By way of illustration, I have reproduced the figure of the attitude system below.

Figure 7.2   The Attitude System (Based on Martin and White 2005)
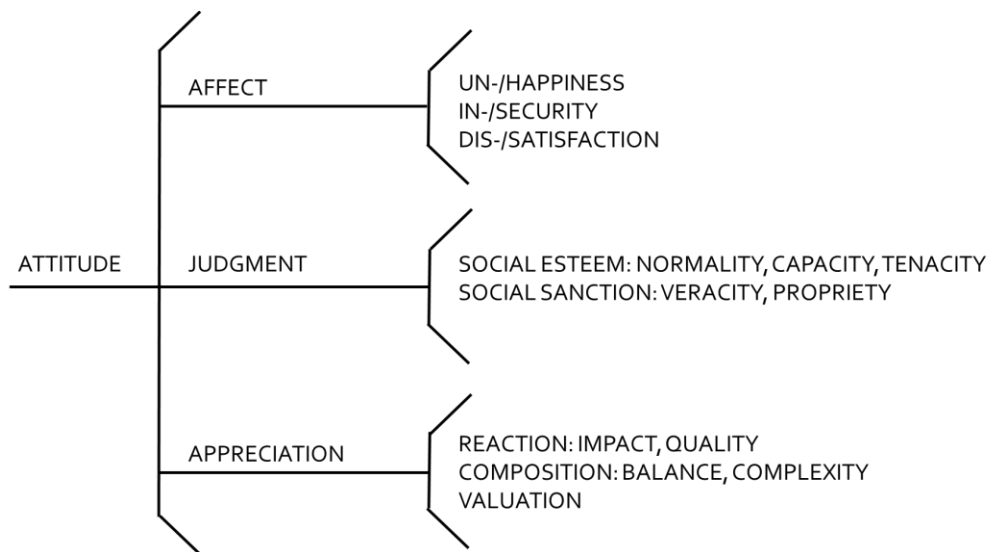
First, I will discuss general tendencies of the distribution of attitudinal assessments. Mixed evaluations were not considered further since they make up no more than 17 cases (i.e. less than five percent) per attitude subsystem. As we can see from Table 7.3, negative evaluations are overall more frequent than positive ones (59 versus 41 percent): People spend a considerable amount of time criticising various aspects in the employment context. JUDGMENT is the most commonly referenced category (39 percent), followed by appreciation (35 percent). AFFECT was found in 26 percent of all evaluations. However, note that JUDGMENT is balanced both in terms of polarity and inscribed versus evoked evaluation: 156 positive and 157 negative references were found as well as 163 inscribed and 150 evoked evaluations (I will expand on this fact in Subsection 7.2.2.). The other attitude subsystems are more often employed through inscribed than evoked and negative rather than positive accounts. 68 percent of evaluations are inscribed, 32 percent are evoked, and negative attitude is more likely to be evoked than positive attitude (23 percent compared to nine percent).

Table 7.3   References per Attitude Subsystem for Negative and Positive Inscribed and Evoked Evaluation Including Percentages

Attitude	AFFECT		JUDGMENT		APPRECIATION		Subtotal		Total
	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	
POSITIVE	48 (6)	14 (2)	110 (14)	46 (6)	97 (12)	15 (2)	255 (31)	75 (9)	330 (41)
NEGATIVE	95 (12)	57 (7)	53 (7)	104 (13)	145 (18)	26 (3)	293 (36)	187 (23)	480 (59)
Subtotal	143 (18)	71 (9)	163 (20)	150 (19)	242 (30)	41 (5)	548 (68)	262 (32)	
Total	214 (26)		313 (39)		283 (35)		810 (100)		

Similarly, inscribed attitude is the more common choice in all subsystems except for negative JUDGMENT, where evoked references outweigh inscribed ones by almost a factor of two. I will discuss this further in Subsection 7.2.2. The prevalence of inscribed attitude can be explained by the nature of the communicative setting. Although participants and interviewer did not know each other beforehand, the situational context of a (semi-)private conversation that offers anonymity could have encouraged interviewees to share their feelings and opinions more openly. This might not be the case at more formal occasions where politeness conventions restrict what can be said in which manner. In those contexts, we would expect evoked attitudes to be more pronounced across all or most subsystems. JUDGMENT is also the category most drawn on because a lot of the issues people criticise are related to other people's behaviour and actions, most notably employers and managers'.

Table 7.4 provides comparisons of negative and positive evaluations between demographic groups. If we total inscribed and evoked evaluations across all three subsystems, we find that women have an overall more negative or critical stance: 70 percent of their evaluations are negative, whereas male participants use negative and positive evaluations to almost equal amounts. The difference between German and English-speaking participants should be regarded with care since the number of participants for the German sub-corpus is

lower. The same applies to employed versus unemployed and retired participants, although the scores could indicate a trend that participants who have been unemployed for a long time and have not managed to get a job, have more negative things to say.[25] A comparison between fully blind and partially sighted people is also revealing (the participant groups are almost of equal size): Negative assessments seem to be slightly more prominent in blind people's stories (64 versus 55 percent). Many of the people that were identified as blind here have not enough sight to interact visually with a computer or printed documents, which certainly presents an added challenge in the job market. Comparisons between age groups are difficult to draw because of the limited sample size in each cluster.

Table 7.4   Micro-Functional Evaluations (Inscribed and Evoked Combined) Across Different Participant Groups and Polarity Categories in Percent (of All Evaluations)

Evaluations in %	Positive	Negative	Number of Participants per Group
Females	30	70	10
Males	46	54	13
German	31	69	6
English	43	57	16
Employed	46	54	16
Unemployed or Retired	24	76	7
Blind	36	64	12
Partially Sighted	45	55	11
20–39-year olds	39	61	9
40–49-year olds	41	59	6
50+ year olds	43	57	8
All participants	41	**59**	**23**

We can also compare the distribution of negative and positive evaluations for each individual participant. The average number of evaluative references per story was 35. The interviews with Melissa and Salma were relatively short. Consequently, they only contained a total of four and five evaluations, respectively – a fact, which must be considered when drawing

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[25] Unemployed and retired participants were combined because the two people who had retired at the time of the interview did this prematurely: Delta was "bullied out" of her job and forced to take early ill health retirement, while Tom lost his job due to the factory shutting down and did not find new employment prior to retiring.

conclusions from the figure below. Ali's story, on the other hand, was the longest by far and contained a total of 134 evaluations. Most participants used between 25 and 45 instances of micro-functional evaluation.

Figure 7.5   Negative and Positive Micro-Functional Evaluations
(Inscribed and Evoked) in Percent of Participants' Total Evaluations
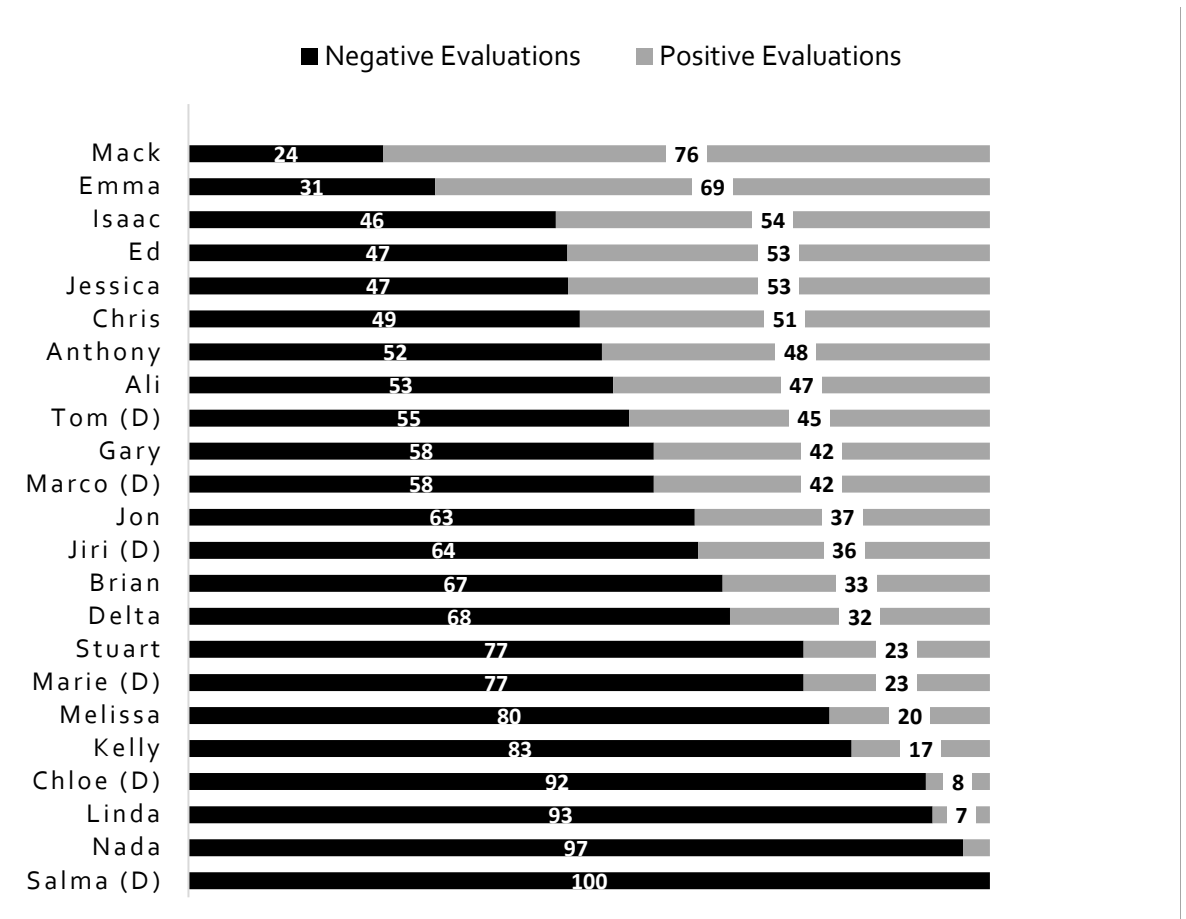
There is some overlap between the pictures emerging from micro-functional and macro-structural evaluations. Kelly, Chloe, Linda, Nada and Salma expressed the most negative experience in their summative assessment, which is also reflected by the scores in the bar chart. Ali, Chris, Emma, Jessica and Mack had a more positive experience in employment. Their stories contain a large amount of positive evaluations. Gary and Jiri's experience was more ambivalent; hence negative and positive evaluations are more balanced.

The best explanation for why the bar chart does not match the distribution in the macro-structural evaluations perfectly is that participants can have positive individual experiences – which they express in the macro evaluation –, but they can still criticise and

negatively evaluate the general employment situation for blind and partially sighted people throughout the rest of the narratives, or vice versa. They can also give personal negative examples that were not decisive enough to taint their overall experience. A slight negativity bias can be expected when it comes to the kind of topics that participants discussed in the interviews. Such a bias would account for the higher number of negative evaluations, even in participants that have had positive encounters in the employment sector.

The first attitude category I will explore in more detail is AFFECT. Positive, negative and mixed evaluations will be considered in turn where relevant, as well as inscribed and evoked attitude. The ENGAGEMENT system within the APPRAISAL framework is evident in the use of authorial versus non-authorial evaluations, that is reported speech or the rendition of somebody else's opinions about the narrators. GRADUATION as a means of amplifying or toning down evaluations will also be considered where relevant.

7.2.1   AFFECT: Un-/Happiness, In-/Security and Dis-/Satisfaction

The narrative data contains 150 (67 percent) inscribed and 73 (33 percent) evoked references that were classified as belonging to the AFFECT category. Recalling the classification from the literature review, AFFECT can be divided into UN-/HAPPINESS, IN-/SECURITY and DIS-/SATISFACTION. 73 of all inscribed usages were coded as UN-/HAPPINESS (32 percent of the total AFFECT evaluations), 51 as IN-/SECURITY (23 percent) and 26 as DIS-/SATISFACTION (12 percent). Evoked references were less frequent, amounting to 38 for UN-/HAPPINESS (17 percent), 21 for IN-/SECURITY (ten percent) and 14 for DIS-/SATISFACTION (six percent, see Table 7.6). Negative evaluations are most frequent in all three attitudinal subcategories amounting to 73 percent of all evaluations irrespective of whether they were inscribed or evoked (compared to 23 percent positive evaluations), although positive ones are almost as frequent as negative expressions of emotion in the UN-/HAPPINESS category (18 percent versus 14 percent).

Table 7.6   Affect: Number of References in the Narrative Data by Polarity (Negative and Positive), Inscription and Affect Subcategory and Respective Percentages of All Affect Evaluations in Brackets

AFFECT	UN-/HAPPINESS		IN-/SECURITY		DIS-/SATISFAC-TION		Subtotal		Total
	Inscr.	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	
Positive	**32** **(14)**	6 (3)	13 (6)	8 (4)	2 (1)		**47** **(21)**	14 (7)	61 (27)
Negative	**41** **(18)**	32 **(14)**	**38** **(17)**	13 (6)	**24** **(11)**	14 (6)	**103** **(46)**	59 **(26)**	**162** **(73)**
Subtotal	**73** (**32**)	38 (17)	**51** (**23**)	21 (10)	**26** (**12**)	14 (6)	**150** (**67**)	73 (33)	
Total	111 (**49**)		72 (**33**)		40 (18)		223 (**100**)		

As we can see from Table 7.6, UN-/HAPPINESS is the most referenced category (111 instances and 49 percent of the AFFECT evaluations). In most cases, the Appraiser, or in this case the Emoter, of the affectional evaluation is the narrating self, the participant (authorial perspective). The narrator becomes a social actor in their own story, which is to be expected in this type of narrative. In 38 cases, the evaluation is ascribed to a non-authorial third-person in the narrative by way of direct or indirect quotation. Negative evaluations outweigh positive ones in both authorial and non-authorial accounts (73 percent versus 27 percent). I will start by looking at UN-/HAPPINESS, which is related to feelings like happiness, sadness, love, hate and joy. To distinguish the three different facets of evaluations in the examples,

- the evaluative term itself will be presented in **boldface**,
- the emoter or appraiser of the evaluation will be <u>underlined</u> (where present) and
- the trigger of the appraisal (or the appraised) is given in *italics*.

7.2.1.1   Un-/Happiness

Most references to negative emotions of UNHAPPINESS are directly connected to a person's employment situation. Triggers can include the nature of the job as well as the experience of

being made redundant or applying for jobs or work placements without success. Lexically, these evaluations are expressed by words like *sad*, *negative*, *despondent*, *disheartened*, *pitiful* and *depressing/depressed* and negated usages of *happy*, the verbs *like* and *love* and *hate* and *resent*. While it can be argued that *not happy* does not equal *unhappy* or even *sad* (see also MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 73), the cotext makes sufficiently clear that participants talk about negative rather than neutral or positive emotional experiences.

(92)   The last company I worked for. By the end, I **wasn't** very **happy** with *the situation*. (Bei der letzten Firma, bei der ich beschäftigt war. Ich war am Ende **nicht** sehr **glücklich** mit *dem Zustand*.) (Jiri, D)

(93)   And now comes the **saddest** part of it all. Nineteen hundred – when was that again – 97 when I was 54 years old. *That's when we closed down* [the company]. Obviously, my world came crashing down then. (Und jetzt kommt das **Traurigste** von allem. Neunzehnhundert – wann war das jetzt – 97 da war ich 54 Jahre. *Da haben wir zugemacht*. Da war natürlich die Welt für mich zusammengeklappt.) (Tom, D)

(94)   Okay, I am now retired. *I had to take early ill health retirement* and I **wasn't**, at the time, **happy** about *that*. … I just feel quite **sad** about *it*, very **sad** about *it*, actually, because I thought that had I had the support that I feel I should have had, I could have carried on working. (Delta)

(95)   I think I was getting a bit **negative** again at that point. *Because I'd contacted that many people* and, you know, I was getting a little bit – (sighs) started to get quite **despondent**. (Ali)

(96)   I've just been so **disheartened**, *it*'s a crying shame, really. (Linda)

When it comes to analysing evoked attitude, we cannot be certain how the person exactly felt about the episode they are describing. However, people will sometimes choose a wording that can hint at contextual meanings and trigger implicatures. The scripts and schemas that are employed to arrive at these meanings are based on socio-cultural knowledge that the speech community shares (see Subsection 3.6.4).

As we have already seen in inscribed evaluations, two of the most common triggers for negative emotions of sadness and desperation are redundancy and failed job applications. Therefore, listeners can build on this knowledge, and speakers do not have to use direct evaluation to convey feelings of disappointment. In Mack' story, this reading gets validated to a degree, although *hard* and *rejection* express a quality and therefore inscribe APPRECIATION rather than AFFECT (see also Tom above, *my world came crashing down*). Negative experiences of being made redundant, being unemployed or not being offered a job were voiced by eleven participants in much the same way:

(97)   [T]hey were just *making <u>me</u> redundant*, didn't really give any reason why … So *that* was quite hard because well, one, it was rejection. (Mack)

(98)   And I guess they decided they want to go a different direction. And they let me off. So, for the first time in, you know, better part of fifteen years <u>I</u> *found myself unemployed*. (Gary)

(99)   <u>I</u> *generally didn't get anywhere with the employers' application forms* when they had asked about my disability, except with the civil service ones. (Ed)

(100)   [W]hen we're not working it's like you're not really part of society … it's **not a nice feeling** at all being on benefits. (Ali)

Ali talks about how it made him feel to be on benefits before he started his massage qualification. He also speaks out against the misconception that being unemployed is a desirable state because one has a lot of free time. In addition to UNHAPPINESS, we can also infer feelings of shame and guilt from his statement which would normally be considered under the INSECURITY category. In part, these negative feelings are connected to how he has been viewing his visual impairment as a barrier, although his opinion has changed drastically since then (see (90)).

(101)   <u>I</u> always saw *that* as a barrier *that I've got– I'm partially sighted*. And 'Oh', you know, 'Why have I got bad eyesight, I can't drive. There's lots of jobs I can't do'. (Ali)

(102)   So, at every step of the way <u>I</u> felt like I had *a battle*, and also trying to deal emotionally with *my eyesight problem*. I would be strong at work and then I would get home and I would just be an **emotional wreck**. <u>I</u>'d just sit and cry because it was so difficult, so **difficult,** mentally, *to carry on*. (Delta)

Delta's explanations illustrate how the choice of words can hint at negative contextual meanings. She uses metaphorical words and phrases like *battle*, *deal emotionally*, *emotional wreck* and *carry on* as well as *difficult* and *problem* (the latter an inscription of APPRECIATION), and words denoting behavioural emotional surges such as *sit and cry*. At a later point in her narrative, she talks more explicitly about medicating with anti-depressants, thus validating this analysis. As we can see from Ali's and Delta's quotes, the visual impairment itself can be a cause of emotional struggle and depression. For most participants, however, being made redundant and not being given a chance to show their abilities to a potential employer are the main triggers for negative emotions. This finding is supported by other studies in the field (see Section 4.1).

Non-authorial perspective is used to ascribe emotions of UNHAPPINESS to other social actors. These can include managers, colleagues or the public. Triggers of these negative

emotions can be specific, as in Ed's and Isaac's case, or they can be borne of a more general antipathy or arrogance toward disabled people, as Jessica and Stuart elaborate.

(103)   After maybe a couple of years the employer, or <u>my managers</u>, felt that they were **not happy** with *my performance in terms of like my productivity being low*. (Ed)

(104)   <u>[P]eople</u> were getting quite **despondent** about *what they were ending up with* [in terms of access technologies and software]. (Isaac)

(105)   [H]ow the <u>public</u> perceive *blindness*. So, it's very **pitiful**, very **sympathetic**. (Jessica)

(106)   And <u>he</u> [= the manager] was pretty anti-anyone who's disabled. And that's part of the reason why I think they wanted– he **doesn't like** *having disabled people around, or anyone who's visibly disabled*, I would say. (Stuart)

Next, I will turn to positive evaluations. As we have already seen from the macro-structural evaluations, some participants have found work that they enjoy. This can be linked to the nature of the work that suits their skillsets, the variety of tasks the job offers, the people they are working with, or they might enjoy it because they were offered a chance to build their professional experience (see examples below; Marco, Marie, Ed, Emma and Isaac expressed similar views). Common lexical choices to express happiness and appreciation include the verbs *enjoy* and *love* and adjectives like *happy* and *glad*.

(107)   And he [= the manager] *arranged an interview*, and I went to meet them but– <u>I</u>'m **glad** *he did that* 'cause this is how it led on to the work placement where I'm working now. (Ali)

(108)   So, it's *quite a varied kind of job*, and that's why <u>I</u> **enjoy** it, really, because no two days are often the same, you know. (Anthony)

(109)   But, you know, I'm still working. <u>I</u>'m still **loving** *the work*. (Chris)

(110)   <u>I</u> **enjoyed** *working with my colleagues*, you know. And then– It was a very, very **happy** *experience*. And <u>I</u> **appreciate** *each and every one of them*. (Jessica)

(111)   the thing that <u>I</u> **enjoy** about it is *the essence of the nature of the work*. <u>I</u> **enjoy** kind of *the project management style of work*, it suits my skills. (Mack)

(112)   I'm now on the employment and support allowance, supported group. And quite frankly, <u>I</u> **don't miss** *the rat race* at all. (Linda)

(113)   I think the only thing that keeps <u>me</u> going in that voluntary position are *my own clients*, you know. It's the *actual people that I work with*. (Nada)

Linda and Nada's views are more ambivalent. Their employment experiences are two of the most negative ones. Therefore, we can categorise these as mixed rather than positive

evaluations. Linda said that she would like to work but found the process of applying for jobs and going to interviews so frustrating that she is happier on support allowance. In (113), the mixed feeling is evoked by the phrase *the only thing that keeps me going*. Clients can be a motivating factor for a person to continue their (voluntary) job despite the barriers, rejection and negative attitudes they might encounter.

7.2.1.2 In-/Security

IN-/SECURITY is concerned with feelings of fear and anxiety, shock and surprise, stress, annoyance, shame, embarrassment, guilt, dis-/comfort and confidence. Depending on the cotext, positive evaluations can be expressed by lexemes like *amazed*, *surprised*, *comfort/comfortable* and *confidence/confident*, negative inscriptions by *worry*, *frightened/afraid*, *anxiety/anxious* and negations of the former. This category contains a total of 72 references (32 percent) of which 51 were coded as inscribed (23 percent) and 21 as evoked attitude (nine percent). Inscribed negative insecurity is almost three times as frequent in the narratives as its positive counterpart (38 versus 13 cases).

We can again sort the references by emoter and distinguish between first- and third-person inscriptions related to insecurity. The most common feelings narrators ascribe to non-authorial perspectives are fear and weariness of disabled people in society (see also Chapter 4), or more specifically in employment contexts, of hiring a disabled person and then finding that they are harder "to get rid of" because of legal protection like the disability discrimination act.

(114)   This **reserve** <u>of the seeing</u> *toward the blind* would have to be broken down somehow. (Diese **Berührungsängste** <u>der Sehenden</u> *den Blinden gegenüber* müssten irgendwie abgebaut werden.) (Salma, D)

(115)   I don't know whether sometimes <u>they</u>'re [= employers] a bit **weary** *of people with disabilities*. (Ali)

(116)   And what I find is that it's– it makes <u>companies</u> very **afraid** *of people with disabilities*. (Gary)

When authorial perspective is employed, we are dealing with personal in-/securities rather than general fear and discomfort due to legal factors. I have distinguished three triggers: 1. disability identity, i.e. how (or if) VI people engage with their disability, 2. managing their support needs at work and 3. the prospect of becoming unemployed.

Ali, Jon, Kelly, Mack and Tom have experienced these feelings when they did things that would make other people aware of their disability, such as holding a book close to their face, using access equipment or openly talking about their support needs with employers. However, at a later point in their narratives, Ali, Jon and Mack talk about how they have overcome these insecurities and have become more accepting of and confident in their identities as disabled people. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Kelly, one of the participants who acquired their visual impairment more recently, and who is still in the process of adjusting to it, causing her to feel embarrassed when using a screen reader.[26] Embarrassment is an interesting case in the appraisal framework because it construes an emotional reaction to a person's own or other people's *behaviour* and is thus reflective of both the AFFECT and JUDGMENT system (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 60), even though all AFFECT subcategories are to be considered reactional in nature since they construe emotional dispositions.

(117)   I **never** felt **comfortable** *talking to my line manager about it* [= the disability], and I think vice versa. (Jon)

(118)   And that maybe as a child I didn't need to acknowledge it so much, or I **wasn't** so **comfortable** *with the idea of*, I suppose, you know, *holding a book really close to my face with a magnifying glass*. (Mack)

(119)   Like **fears** and **anxieties** *about the future*, *about the unknown*, you know. 'What's gonna happen to my sight? Is it gonna get worse? Am I gonna become blind in the future?' (Ali)

(120)   And I wouldn't use *a software that spoke on the screen* because I was **embarrassed** by *it*. I didn't want anyone to hear that I needed that much help. (Kelly)

In Kelly's and Delta's cases, it is the process of adjusting to a reduced level a of sight and their recently acquired disability identity while feeling the pressure to perform as if they did not have a disability that caused the stress. Ideally, we would expect employees to go through rehabilitation to allow them to be reintroduced to the work routine at a reasonable pace. Evaluations of stress and anxiety as emotional reactions are evoked by pragmatic inference and contextual frames rather than directly expressed in these quotes (although appreciation is inscribed by "difficult"):

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[26] The situation Kelly talks about poses the question why she was not provided with headphones when using a screen reader, as most participants do. This could be down to mismanagement of her employer, but since I did not ask her I cannot be certain.

(121)   And while I was off work there was an– all the work that I would normally do when I was there was not done, so when I got back I had to try to catch up on the last six months as well as keeping everything ticking over as, you know, on a daily basis, which was quite difficult. (Kelly)

(122)   I felt I had to do not just my best, but over and above … to prove that I could do the job to the best of my ability. (Delta)

(123)   While they did relent after a while, it now means that we have to keep constant logs of what we're doing because Access to Work *can come calling at any time asking me what I'm doing and what my support worker is doing … when they do come calling*, it's **nerve-wrecking**. … *it*'s tough and *it* makes <u>you</u> more **stressed** in your work (Anthony)

Managing support needs has caused both Anthony and Nada stress or discomfort. Anthony elaborates on this by stating that he needs to keep logs about the tasks that he and his support worker are doing and that his support needs are regularly reviewed by Access to Work. Evoked ATTITUDE in this example concerns the behaviour of Access to Work advisors (*come calling anytime*) as well as Anthony's behaviour (*keep constant logs*). At first, there is no direct textual evidence of attitudinal lexis, which would apply, for instance, to appraisals of the service providers' actions as stressful, irritating or annoying. GRADUATION, amplifying one's attitude, serves as a textual trace, though. This is indicated by *constant* and *any time*. Anthony's emotional state, however, remains only indirectly accessible through inferences based on socio-cultural knowledge and emotive schemas, in this case the implicature could read 'expecting an institution that one financially depends on to call at any time to check the support needs is a very stressful process'. In some cases, we can find direct textual evidence. How Anthony felt during this period is revealed later in the narrative and thus validates the analysis from before (*nerve-wrecking*, *stressed*). Dealing with Access to Work applications and managing their support needs is one of the factors that non-disabled people do not have to worry about in employment, and which ultimately disadvantages VI people.

Nada's quote below is indicative of the power relations between job applicants and employers. Although reasonable adjustments in the workplace should be part of a company's policy and legally guaranteed, "shoving" these obligations in an employer's face can leave the applicant in an unfavourable position. While charities and blind people's associations can support employers in making decisions for reasonable adjustments, they normally do not take up a negotiating position; the blind person has to initiate the process. Moreover, some employers see service providers as biased toward the disabled person: "[S]ome employers

do not trust them to act as honest brokers for both employer and employee interests" (GOLD et al. 2012: 30).

(124)   And I also feel **awkward** *about shoving legal obligations in an employer's face* because it feels like it's already tarnished the relationship, you know, before we've even got started. (Nada)

Finally, we find mentions of worry and anxiety when it comes to the prospect of becoming unemployed or coming off one's benefits. Chronologically, these fears precede the sadness and disappointment of being made redundant or being unemployed as discussed in the previous section.

(125)   It took me a year to quit because I was very, very, very **worried** and **anxious** *of being unemployed*. (Jessica)

(126)   And I also feel really **anxious** *about coming off my benefits* … That's really anxiety-provoking as well. (Nada)

Positive evaluations of IN-/SECURITY are characterised either by the absence of anxiety or by feelings of surprise, amazement and confidence. Most of the examples are instances of authorial perspective. When third-person perspective is used, clients and colleagues rather than managers are ascribed emotional reactions of calmness or amazement. Brian's appraisal also highlights how he turned his disability into a strong point using it as a motivating factor for his clients, criminal offenders who view their employment prospects as being grim. As he clarified in an e-mail he wrote me, "I can use myself as an example of another group of people for whom employment prospects and expectations are also low and that I have risen above them". This testifies to the confidence he has in his coaching skills.

(127)   [S]ome [clients] are absolutely **amazed** and are– I'm able to use that as a motivator for them. (Brian)

(128)   [M]y teaching assistants had **no** cause for any **anxieties**, they kept saying 'Oh, you know, *everything's working fine'* (Delta)

(129)   I was very **surprised** cause not many people had contacted me back, especially the managers. (Ali)

Jon, Mack and Marco have also expressed that they feel confident with their disability identity and when using adaptations. Note that these self-affirming assessments are provided by male participants with an overall positive employment experience who have managed to establish a career for themselves:

(130)   [P]ost the surgery, I'm a very different person. I̲'m much more **confident** …
        And I̲'m incredibly **comfortable** with *it* and I have lots of little adaptations.
        (Jon)

(131)   So, for me that was again an important stage I think because my̲ **confidence** did
        grow and I started to get a sense, in my own mind, of *what my capabilities were*.
        (Mack)

7.2.1.3   Dis-/Satisfaction

The category of DIS-/SATISFACTION contained a total of 40 references (18 percent), of which
26 were classed as inscribed (twelve percent) and 14 as evoked attitude (six percent). The
majority of these were negative evaluations. Only two references were coded as positive and
three as mixed inscriptions. Examples classified as DIS-/SATISFACTION are related to feelings
of pleasure, curiosity and respect or anger, annoyance and frustration and expressed by
words such as *pleased*, *satisfied* and *grateful* on the one hand, and *angry*, *frustrated*, *an-
noyed*, *furious*, *fed up*, *bored* and *upset* on the other hand. Triggers include disablist attitudes
and hurtful comments as well as practical obstacles that keep the individual from realising
their full potential at work, for instance, when necessary adjustments are not made. Most
participants have expressed anger or frustration when someone dismissed them and denied
them equal opportunities on the grounds of their visual impairments. This anger can be seen
to echo in resistant discourse reasoning (see Section 9.4). Chloe, Delta, Gary, Jessica, Marie
and Nada evaluated different situations at work in this way.

(132)   'Because I keep forgetting that you're disabled now. So why don't you wear
        one of the hats that the children wear? With the padded hat.' *Which* I̲ found
        extremely **insulting** and **upsetting**. (Delta)

(133)   I had *somebody fail me on a physical because of my eyesight*, and I̲ became very
        incensed, you know. (laughs) (Gary)

(134)   And I arrange a lot for myself, and still *I get this no-go from this seeing world*,
        this so-called seeing world. *That*'s what **annoys** me̲. (Und arrangier mir viel und
        trotzdem *krieg ich von dieser sehenden Welt,* so genannten sehenden Welt,
        dieses No-Go. Das **ärgert** mich̲.) (Chloe, D)

(135)   I just feel like the whole system results in vulnerable people being the ones that
        are unemployed and under-resourced and having to put themselves, you know,
        in voluntary positions to try and get experience, which doesn't really get
        anybody anywhere. … I̲'m just really **tired** and **fed up** and **disillusioned** by *it*.
        (Nada)

For Ed and Brian, it is practical issues, accessibility of either digital data or paper files that can trigger a feeling of frustration because the blind person then has to rely on colleagues to assist them in accessing that information:

(136)   [A]nd that can create some issues in terms of– *if I need access to a paper file and someone to read the paper file for me*. *That* can prove a bit of a **frustration**. (Brian)

(137)   I think sometimes I get a bit **frustrated** by *how long things can take*. (Ed)

In Kelly's case, boredom and frustration result from a combination of adjusting to her visual impairment and being forced to take time off work because of her eye condition. Ali and Jiri also expressed dissatisfaction when they were recounting difficulties of looking for new jobs. These evaluations can be complementary to negative feelings of UNHAPPINESS people expressed when they became unemployed.

(138)   I've got so **bored** and **frustrated** *being at home* and, you know, just *dealing with the fact that I've lost some of my vision*. (Kelly)

(139)   As I said, I was **not satisfied**, and the search for a new job proved to be difficult. (Wie gesagt ich war **unzufrieden** und die Suche nach der neuen Arbeitsstelle hat sich als schwierig erwiesen.) (Jiri, D)

Non-authorial evaluations of VI people are less common in this category. Brian, Jon, Marie and Tom, however, expressed that colleagues, clients or employers were frustrated or angered by the fact that the VI person might not always be able to accomplish certain tasks on their own, such as driving a car or using visual interfaces at work.

(140)   I think my employer was a little bit **frustrated**, even though it practically made no difference. I think they were a little bit **frustrated** *that I was dismissive of the option of driving*, really. (Jon)

(141)   [T]hen sometimes the **resentment** of sighted colleagues. Not everybody, thankfully, but some who will then say *'Well, why can't you do that on the intranet?'* ([D]ann auch manchmal so der **Unmut** von den sehenden Kollegen. Also nich alle, gottseidank, aber einige, die dann sagen „Ja, wie, kannst du das nich im Intranet?") (Marie, D)

To conclude, narrators negatively evaluate problems in their employment histories, for instance, when managers or colleagues expressed concerns or even anger with their performance and productivity or when being made redundant or becoming unemployed. Participants positively evaluate the fact that they have found work they enjoy. It is also significant that people who have had overall very negative experiences will be much less likely to express any positive feelings at all.

Interviewees experienced insecurity and anxiety about stressful situations at work. This feeling can be brought about by line managers' expectations or by consultants from the Access to Work scheme assessing the VI person's need for support. Such feelings can arise from the impression that VI people need to somehow compensate for their sight loss in other areas. They might also feel a need to disprove the predominantly negative, "inability"-focused hegemonic discourse (see Chapter 4). Discomfort can set in when people are asked to explain the impacts and nature of their impairment, which can urge the individual to justify themself and any support needs they have. Some participants fear that people with visual impairments are less likely to find employment compared to their non-disabled peers and that being open and honest about one's disability can be damaging to a professional image.

DISSATISFACTION is triggered by the absence of reasonable adjustments in the workplace as well as other people's misguided judgments of VI people's capabilities and worth as employees. I suggest that these feelings are influenced by the prevalence of stereotypes and disablist attitudes because these misconceptions create an atmosphere where it is difficult to act openly and with self-confidence (see Subsection 9.4.1 on Other-Blame Attribution).

7.2.2 JUDGMENT: Social Esteem and Social Sanction

JUDGMENT appraisal is concerned with evaluating people's character and behaviour. In contrast to AFFECT, JUDGMENT analysis does not involve emoters and triggers. The respective terms are 'appraiser', in most cases the interviewee, and 'appraised', the target of the evaluation. Since the narratives recount interactions with other people at work or the general public, and their attitudes toward the narrator and how they were approaching and treating them, we should expect to find many references in this evaluative system. SOCIAL ESTEEM is concerned with CAPACITY (how capable someone is), NORMALITY (how special someone is) and TENACITY (how dependable someone is), and SOCIAL SANCTION with VERACITY (how honest someone is) and PROPRIETY (how far beyond reproach someone is).

The most referenced category within the JUDGMENT system is CAPACITY (120 references, 35 percent), closely followed by TENACITY (100, 29 percent) and then PROPRIETY (71, 21 percent). NORMALITY (46 references, 14 percent) is mentioned from time to time, while VERACITY only yielded nine references (i.e. three percent, see Table 7.7). Overall,

positive evaluations occur almost as frequently as negative ones (49 to 51 percent), although twice as many positive assessments are directly inscribed (33 to 16 percent), whereas the opposite is true for negative evaluations which are more frequently evoked (16 to 35 percent). Politeness conventions can explain this difference in direct versus indirect evaluation and polarity. I will return to this point below. Authorial stance is used in 90 percent of the examples, but nine references could be understood to simultaneously express personally held and other people's judgments.

Table 7.7   Judgment: Number of References in the Narrative Data by Polarity (Negative and Positive), Inscription and Judgment Subcategory

JUDGMENT	SOCIAL ESTEEM						SOCIAL SANCTION				Subtotal		Total
	CAPACITY		NORMALITY		TENACITY		PROPRIETY		VERACITY				
	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	
Positive	**25** (7)	16 (5)	**33** (**10**)	4 (1)	**36** (**10**)	23 (7)	**17** (**5**)	11 (3)	3 (1)	2 (1)	**114** (**33**)	56 (16)	**170** (49)
Negative	28 (8)	**51** (**15**)	5 (1)	4 (1)	**14** (4)	27 (8)	9 (3)	**34** (**10**)		4 (1)	56 (16)	**120** (**35**)	**176** (**51**)
Subtotal	**56** (15)	72 (**19**)	**42** (**11**)	8 (2)	**51** (**14**)	51 (**14**)	**28** (8)	45 (**13**)	3 (1)	7 (2)	**170** (**49**)	**176** (**51**)	
Total	**120** (35)		**46** (13)		**100** (**29**)		71 (21)		9 (3)		**346** (100)		

It is also worth investigating how recurring social actors are appraised in terms of polarity (see Table 7.8 below). The most common social actors functioning as the appraised target are employers and line managers, totalling 142 cases (37 percent). If we add up inscribed and evoked evaluations, employers are negatively evaluated almost twice as many times as positively (94 versus 48 cases). Negative judgment is commonly evoked for almost all social actors apart from the category *narrator*, where inscribed evaluation is more likely to occur than evoked evaluation. This difference can again be explained by politeness conventions or, in this case, the absence thereof: When people talk about their own character and

behaviour they can be frank because they do not have to fear the same repercussions that would apply to other people.[27]

The narrators evaluate themselves in a positive rather than a negative way (61 positive versus 41 negative examples). A similar picture emerges for colleagues (19 versus 13) and other people at work such as occupational health and human resources representatives (18 versus 4), although these actors are mentioned much less frequently.

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[27] Negative self-judgment therefore meets LEECH's (1983: 32, 123) modesty maxim of minimising self-praise, although it still threatens the interviewee's own face vis-á-vis the interviewer.

Table 7.8   Judgment: Number of References in the Narrative Data by Polarity (Negative and Positive), Inscription and Social Actors[28]

JUDGMENT	Positive		Negative		Subtotal
Appraised Social Actors	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	
Employers and Line Managers	**31** (**8**)	17 (4)	22 (6)	**72** (**19**)	**142** (**37**)
Narrator	**41** (**11**)	20 (5)	**24** (6)	17 (4)	**102** (**26**)
Institutions and Organisations	6 (2)	5 (1)	7 (2)	**15** (4)	33 (9)
Colleagues	**13** (3)	6 (2)	6 (2)	7 (2)	32 (9)
Undefined	6 (2)	5 (1)	3 (1)	**11** (**3**)	25 (7)
Other People at Work	**14** (**4**)	4 (1)		4 (1)	22 (6)
Other Disabled People	4 (1)		3 (1)	6 (2)	13 (4)
Partners, Family and Friends	3 (1)	3 (1)		2 (1)	8 (3)
The Public	3 (1)			2 (1)	5 (2)
Health Professionals	2 (1)			1 (1)	3 (2)
Subtotal	**123** (**32**)	60 (16)	65 (17)	**137** (**36**)	
Total	**183** (48)		202 (**52**)		385

The category labelled *Undefined* was created on the basis that evaluations can at times be so general that no specific social actor or group of actors could be identified, or the appraised

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[28] The scores in the different tables do not always total to the same number because some references were coded as belonging to more than one category (if more than one actor was mentioned in the same sentence, for instance) or they express two different attitude systems simultaneously, inscribing one system while evoking values in another.

social actor is specific to an individual story and does not easily fit in any of the other categories. Unspecified actors can be omitted, as in Tom's case below, or they can be referred to by forms such as (*a lot of*) *people*, *anybody*, *nobody/no one*, the impersonal use of *you* or *we*, or abstract entities like *the system*. *Undefined* was used as a coding category a total of 25 times (i.e. six percent). (For analyses of minimised agency see also Section 8.2).

(142)   It is indeed the case, you are disabled and time and again you are being downgraded a little … You can notice it continually. (Es ist halt schon so, man ist halt behindert und da wird man halt immer wieder bisschen zurückgestuft … Das spürt man immer wieder.) (Tom, D)

To give another example, Mack and Gary both talk about the working environment being supportive. This is a case of indirect judgment realised via direct appreciation of a "thing" (*the environment*) – it is after all people that exert behaviour which can be classed as supportive. It is difficult to identify specifically which people contributed to making the working environment supportive. This role could be fulfilled by managers, colleagues, clients or all of the above. Some usages are also ambiguous as to whether the narrators include themselves as the target or the appraiser.

Rather than looking at the different JUDGMENT subcategories, I have taken the approach of structuring the following sections around the social actors and targets as a guiding principle. In those sections, I will only address the most relevant JUDGMENT categories because, as we have seen in Table 7.7, not all of them are equally drawn on when describing people's character and behaviour.

7.2.2.1   Employers and Managers

Employers and line managers' actions and behaviour are evaluated negatively almost twice as often as positively. The most referenced category is CAPACITY. The only categories where positive evaluations are more pronounced are TENACITY and NORMALITY (however, the difference is not statistically significant).

Table 7.9   Judgment: Subcategories by Polarity for Employers and Managers

Employers and Managers	Positive		Negative	
Judgment:	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*
CAPACITY	3	4	8	**28**
	(2)	(3)	(6)	**(20)**
TENACITY	**15**	9	5	**16**
	(11)	(6)	(4)	**(11)**
PROPRIETY	5	2	6	**25**
	(4)	(1)	(4)	**(18)**
NORMALITY	7	2	3	2
	(5)	(1)	(2)	(1)
VERACITY	1			1
	(1)			(1)
Total	48 (34)		94 (66)	

Negative capacity is commonly evoked rather than inscribed. This can be achieved via direct appreciation (*a* poor *level of understanding*) or more detailed qualifying statements such as in (144)–(145). These comments allow the conclusion that many participants view managers and employers as ignorant, ill-informed or incompetent when it comes to disability-related issues and adaptations in the workplace.

(143)   There's a very, very poor level of understanding what the needs are. (Brian)

(144)   I don't necessarily think my *employer* gets it. …I would say over the last ten years *they*'ve become **anything but an excellent** *employer*. *They*'re **not good** to work for and *they* essentially **pay lip service to equality issues** [= VERACITY] and to disability issues. … *They* **know no more than their legal obligations** and what's the minimum they should do. (Jon)

(145)   But the problem is, I know for a fact the *managers* **haven't been trained** on that so *they* **don't know what their responsibilities are**. … *they* **don't even think** about it. (Stuart)

The biggest problem seems to be a lack of understanding or willingness to empathise with blind and partially sighted people rather than an outspoken aversion or antipathy manifested in direct discriminatory practice. However, we could argue that this lack of knowledge stems from disablist attitudes in society at large. After all, it is the employers' responsibility to

educate themselves if they are not knowledgeable, are unaware of their obligations or how to safeguard for equal opportunities. Seven participants also pointed out that employers are sometimes not able to see past a person's disability when judging their capacity as potential employees during job interviews.

TENACITY is the only category that yielded more positive than negative evaluations of employers when combining inscribed and evoked appraisals. Eight participants deemed their managers supportive or flexible (see quotes below, also Isaac, Anthony and Jessica). These evaluations, however, are provided by people who have had overall more positive employment experiences. Presumably, positive TENACITY judgments of employers stem from the participants' positive employment experiences.

(146)   The *organisation* at a local level is very **supportive**. … Luckily, my *managers* are very **flexible** with me. (Brian)

(147)   And *they*'re very **supportive** of that. You know, I can't say enough **good things** about *the management* there. (Gary)

(148)   And so, it's really great that my *manager* has been **supportive** and made these changes to my role. (Ed)

(149)   I guess I've just always had very– been very lucky that I've had **supportive** *employers*. (Emma)

(150)   But I've **never** felt that people have **thought that I couldn't do the job** that I was there to do because of my sight loss. (Mack)

On the other hand, people with mixed or overall negative employment experience assess their employers' TENACITY negatively by indirectly characterising them as weak, cowardly, timid, hasty, unreliable or obstinate for not wanting to take on an applicant with a visual impairment. These assessments also suggest that employers are prejudiced against or "afraid of" VI people (see Subsection 7.2.1.2). As Nada points out, some of the explanations that employers give for not hiring someone could be based on fears rather than an applicant's lack of skills (see Section 4.1). In addition to the quotes below, similar appraisals are made by Chloe, Linda and Marie.

(151)   A lot of employers think 'Well, if I employ a disabled person now I will never get rid of them', right. That's the popular opinion. (Viele Arbeitgeber denken ‚Naja, wenn ich 'n Behinderten jetzt einstelle, den werd' ich ja nie wieder los', ne. Is so die landläufige Meinung.) (Marco, D)

(152)   [T]he attitude that 'Oh, these blind people, they can't do anything.' You know. 'They can't cope with that, they can't cope with that'. (Chris)

(153)   I don't think *people* are malicious and purposely trying to make things more difficult. I think it's a case of **ignorance** and being **uninformed**. … rather than deal with it [*people*] just **try to push it away**. (Kelly)

(154)   And I on one hand feel like a lot of *employers* turn around and say 'Oh, you haven't got enough experience', because *they* just **don't want** to deal with all of that [=AFFECT: UNHAPPINESS]. (Nada)

This kind of judgment of employers' prejudice or refusal to accommodate the needs of blind and partially sighted employees is even more detrimental in the PROPRIETY category, where we find evaluations of rudeness, insensitivity or even hostility – at least, this seems to be the way that some participants (Anthony, Delta, Linda, Marie, Stuart and Tom) make sense of their experiences.

(155)   And I notice that I get invited to job interviews. And afterwards, *they* say 'We chose someone else'. ***Without any reason or anything***. (Und ich merke auch, dass ich eingeladen werde zum Vorstellungsgespräch. Und danach heißt es ‚Wir haben uns für jemanden anderen entschieden'. ***Ohne Begründung, ohne gar nix***.) (Salma, D)

(156)   I had numerous disciplinaries for being late due to either getting off buses in the wrong place and not being able to find my way back to work (Linda)

(157)   And I went for ten, fifteen, no, about ten jobs there. And *they*– basically, often I was the only candidate there, I didn't get a single one of those jobs. … And basically, *they* **wanted** [= AFFECT] to **get rid of me**. (Stuart)

(158)   I used to say, 'Please could I have this thing a bit larger and photocopy it or send it me electronically, and then I could read it beforehand'… **Nothing was ever done like that**. (Delta)

Ali, Delta, Kelly, Stuart and Tom have mentioned that their employers refused to make specific reasonable adjustments when being asked repeatedly to do so, which could indicate ignorance or even resentment. In (158), Delta describes her request to make necessary work documentation available to her, which is refused by the head teacher. Delta evokes both negative attitude in herself (DISSATISFACTION) and a negative judgment of the head teacher's behaviour, and paints her as someone who is rude, unfair and ultimately disablist. The recipient can infer Delta's feelings of frustration by employing socio-cultural knowledge and empathic reading skills. *Nothing … ever* intensifies the evaluation via GRADUATION. Although we do not directly get to hear Delta's stance on this event, we can infer her emotional experience. In terms of the overall narrative structure, this serves as one episode of many that express her viewpoint and is summarised in the conclusion "I just couldn't understand why I was being almost bullied out".

Positive PROPRIETY is expressed by evaluations of *generosity* when employers offer someone a job, seemingly despite the common reservations that other people have about employing a blind or partially sighted person. This appraisal was made by Ali, Ed, Emma and Tom.

7.2.2.2 The Narrating Self

Appraisals of the narrators can be carried out by other social actors as well as the participants themselves. CAPACITY is once more the most referenced category, making up almost equal amounts of negative and positive evaluations, followed by NORMALITY. In comparison to some of the other social actors, narrators are evaluated slightly more positively, and the appraisals are more commonly inscribed.

Table 7.10   Judgment: Subcategories by Polarity for Narrators' Evaluations (Counts Equal Percentages of 102 Total Evaluations)

Narrators	Positive		Negative	
Judgment:	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*
CAPACITY	**13**	10	**15**	11
NORMALITY	**20**	1	2	
TENACITY	5	3	5	2
PROPRIETY	1	4	2	3
VERACITY	2	2		1
Total	61		41	

Negative judgments of the narrators' CAPACITY and PROPRIETY are either directly derived from their visual impairments and the inability to talk about them or related to practical issues – although this is not to say that these barriers could not be overcome by adaptive technologies or role restructuring. Examples that fall into this category are given by Ali, Chloe, Emma, Jessica, Jon, Marco and Tom:

(159)   [I]n about 1995, something like that, I realised that I would have to do something about the **struggle** *I* was having **with the computers**. (Emma)

(160)   And at that stage *I* **didn't have the knowledge or the confidence or the ability** to talk to people about my eyes … people thought *I* was **ignoring** them, they thought *I* was looking **askance** at them, they'd sometimes misinterpret my body language with what *I* was saying as being overly **aggressive**. (Jon)

Negative judgments of the narrators are also performed by other social actors and then retold by the participants (see Jon above). Some managers and colleagues are said to misjudge and underestimate the VI person's capabilities based on presumptions rather than experience and without consulting the person about what their needs and abilities actually are. Anthony, Chloe, Kelly and Tom (see (142)) have expressed these kinds of experiences using lexemes like *struggle* and *(less) capable*:

(161)   [T]here was a module in the second year which <u>he</u> [= the module tutor] thought *I* was going to **struggle** with. (Anthony)

(162)   And I think <u>people</u> see *people with visual impairments* as **less capable**. And that's what I've experienced in my employment is that <u>people</u> assume because *I* can't see properly *I*'m **less capable**. (Kelly)

However, there are also examples of other people's positive judgments of the VI person's competence. Again, this mostly applies to interviewees who have had positive employment experiences such as Brian, Chris, Ed, Jessica, Jiri and Tom:

(163)   And, no, I believe *I*'m treated and viewed as a **competent** colleague <u>by both managers and colleagues</u>. (Brian)

Kelly evaluates herself in that way, too, but this only seems to apply to the kind of person she was before she was diagnosed with her eye condition. Delta's capacity to cope with her visual impairment in the workplace is appreciated by the occupational health advisor, but not by her supervisor, the head teacher.

(164)   I was **lucky** because I got some good support all through my three-year degree. (Anthony)

(165)   I suppose *I*'ve been **lucky** having a little bit of sight and being able to optimise the use of that sight. (Chris)

The NORMALITY subsystem is connected to positive evaluations of having been lucky, grateful for or fortunate with either getting the right support and having had understanding employers or retaining a level of sight that allows partially sighted participants to use magnification devices and technology rather than screen readers (Ed, Emma, Isaac, Jessica and Mack), which reveals a striking difference between the two groups.

7.2.2.3   Institutions and Organisations

Institutional bodies include, most notably, the UK government's Access to Work scheme and different organisations and charities for blind and partially sighted people. The total number of references for these actors is relatively small, amounting to 34, of which 22 were coded as negative and eleven as positive judgment appraisals. The most noted subsystem is CAPACITY, which is what I will be focusing on during the analysis below.

Access to Work will also be discussed here as well as in the next section: Whenever the programme was referred to as a thing or process rather than an organisation made up of people whose characters are being evaluated, it was coded as direct APPRECIATION. A reoccurring judgment about both VI organisations and Access to Work advisors is that they are at times ignorant of blind and partially sighted people's needs or "too removed from real life" (a sentiment expressed by Chloe, Emma, Jon and Nada). Advisors do not always see what areas within their employment services need to be improved.

(166)   I'm not really sure *they* [= job centre advisors] knew what to do with me and **couldn't** really offer, in my mind, anything **helpful** or perhaps even **useful**. (Mack)

(167)   And I will get blind people who will come to me and say, 'I don't wanna do an office job. I wanna do something else'. And **none** of the *VI organisations* really **face up** to this. (Chris)

Access to Work personnel are seen as having an approach that is too generic to meet the individual's needs. Because digital environments and requirements for adaptations in businesses can be quite variable, the solutions Access to Work assessors recommend are not always compatible with the internal software or hardware in the companies.

(168)   I mean, *Access to Work* is really **awful** because you just contact them at a contact centre. And *they* don't even know you. You know, *they* **don't know anything** about you or any of that. (Nada)

(169)   One of the issues <u>we</u> were finding was that the assessments that were being done and the equipment that was being recommended was so variable because the *assessors* **didn't understand** our environment. (Isaac)

(170)   *Access to Work* came along, suggested magnification software, got me a larger monitor, very **sensibly** suggested a moving monitor arm. (Jon)

Access to Work is also highly valued by Chris, Jon and Mack, who state that the scheme provides excellent support and appreciate that it is universal across all disabilities.

Participants who criticise the programme often express the opinion that Access to Work should provide more support for people looking for employment, actively negotiate applicants' needs with employers or that their approach should operate on a more personalised, case-by-case basis. Rather than disagreeing on the quality of the service per se, different participants thus have diverging ideas about what the programme should focus on in the first place to help VI people in(to) employment. This point can be used as an aspect for prognostic critique (see Conclusion, Chapter 10).

7.2.2.4 Other Social Actors

The last three groups of social actors I want to discuss are colleagues, other people at work such as clients, occupational health advisors and professionals who are external to the company the participants work for, and other disabled people in society. These three categories were mentioned less frequently than the ones I have analysed so far, so I will only give a summary of the findings.

Colleagues' TENACITY is often evaluated positively. They are deemed supportive, helpful, trusting and understanding of the person and their disability. Brian, Delta, Emma, Jessica, Jon, Kelly and Tom expressed assessments to this effect. However, there are also some mentions of colleagues being more reserved or distant to the VI colleague due to their visual impairment, and it is sometimes mentioned that they do not always know how to interact with the blind or partially sighted person. Still, the few negative evaluations do not reach the same level of intensity found in employers and managers who were often seen as lacking any understanding or being unwilling to deal with the participants. References to the character and behaviour of other people at work are often positive, too. Clients especially are viewed as understanding and friendly. Union representatives and occupational health advisors support the disabled person when disagreements with employers or managers arise and advocate for participants to continue to work provided that reasonable adjustments are put in place.

Other disabled people are viewed differently by the appraisers. To Chloe's mind, VI people need to take a more active role to change the employment situation. Nada also says that more blind people need to oversee the services that charities provide. Reported third-person evaluations by society are mostly negative: VI people are seen as less capable

or even lazy for not working.[29] By contrast, Chris points out that VI people can have advantages over their sighted peers in other areas such as verbal communication, which can inspire affirmative discourses on disability and resistance (see Subsections 2.2.4 and 9.4.2). Finally, Nada states that "the whole system results in vulnerable people being the ones that are unemployed and under-resourced". Kelly uttered a similar sentiment.

7.2.3   APPRECIATION: Reaction, Composition and Valuation

The third and last subsystem of attitude is APPRECIATION, the valuation of the impact, quality, balance and complexity of things and natural phenomena (MARTIN & WHITE 2005: 56). Following Martin and White, we can differentiate REACTION (IMPACT: 'Did it grab me?' and QUALITY: 'Did I like it?'), COMPOSITION (BALANCE: 'Did it hang together?' and COMPLEXITY: 'Was it hard to follow?') and VALUATION ('Was it worthwhile?').

Most evaluations in this category are realised via inscribed attitudinal accounts (244, 86 percent, versus 41, 14 percent), and the majority of these are negative (171, 60 percent, negative versus 114, 40 percent, positive evaluations). The most frequently mentioned subsystem is VALUATION (136 cases, 48 percent), closely followed by REACTION (118 cases, 41 percent). COMPOSITION only amounts to 31 references (eleven percent), of which most are concerned with how *in-/accessible* information and technologies are for VI people. VALUATION is expressed by lexemes such as *difficult* or *struggle*, REACTION is most commonly inscribed via the words *interesting, good, positive* and *nice* or *boring*, *dull* and *tiring*.

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[29] See DE FINA and GEORGAKOPOULOU (2012: 170) for references to studies that have investigated the use of reported speech in narratives.

Table 7.11   Appreciation: Number of References in the Narrative Data by Polarity (Negative, Positive), Inscription and Appreciation Subcategory

APPRE-CIATION	REACTION		COMPOSITION		VALUATION		Subtotal		Total
	Inscr.	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	
Positive	**68**	6	1	2	**31**	6	**100**	14	**114**
	(24)	**(2)**		**(1)**	**(11)**	**(2)**	**(35)**	**(5)**	**(40)**
Negative	**38**	6	**21**	7	**85**	14	**144**	27	**171**
	(13)	**(2)**	**(7)**	**(2)**	**(30)**	**(5)**	**(51)**	**(9)**	**(60)**
Subtotal	**106**	12	**22**	9	**116**	20	**244**	41	
	(37)	**(4)**	**(8)**	**(3)**	**(41)**	**(7)**	**(86)**	**(14)**	
Total	**118**		**31**		**136**		**285**		
	(41)		**(11)**		**(48)**		**(100)**		

The most commonly evaluated target within the appreciation system is covered under the label *Tasks and Work Experience* (108 references; 41 percent), followed by the *Visual Impairment* (32 cases), *Written Information* (30), *Mobility and Transportation* (27), *Job Prospects* (24), *Education and Training* (23) and different *Support Systems* like the Access to Work programme (18). Most categories are evaluated critically or negatively, apart from *Tasks and Work Experience* and *Education and Training*, which are more often seen as positive by different participants.

Table 7.12   Appreciation: Number of References in the Narrative Data by Polarity (Negative and Positive), Inscription and Appraised Objects and Processes

APPRECIATION	Positive		Negative		Subtotal
Appraised Objects and Processes	Inscr.	Ev.	Inscr.	Ev.	
Tasks and Work Experience	**57** (**22**)	1	32 (12)	18 (7)	**108** (**41**)
Visual Impairment	9 (3)		**22** (**8**)	1	32 (12)
Written Information	3 (1)	2 (1)	**21** (**8**)	4 (2)	30 (11)
Mobility and Transportation	6 (2)	1	**20** (**8**)		27 (10)
Job Prospects	4 (2)		**20** (**8**)		24 (9)
Education and Training	8 (3)	6 (2)	6 (2)	3 (1)	23 (9)
Support and Access to Work Scheme	6 (2)	1	**9** (**3**)	2 (1)	18 (7)
Subtotal	93 (**35**)	11 (4)	**130** (**50**)	28 (11)	
Total	104 (40)		158 (**60**)		262 (100)

7.2.3.1   Tasks and Work Experience

Together with the judgment of employers as social actors, this target of the appraisal has a major impact on a person's employment narrative and whether, on balance, they have made positive or negative experiences. In this section, I will focus on negative and positive REAC-TION and VALUATION as major categories.

Table 7.13   Appreciation: Subcategories by Polarity for *Tasks and Work Experience*

Tasks and Work Experience	Positive		Negative	
Appreciation:	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*
REACTION	**44**		**14**	5
	(41)		(13)	(5)
VALUATION	12		**15**	8
	(11)		**(14)**	(7)
COMPOSITION	1	1	3	5
	(1)	(1)	(3)	(5)
Total	**58**		50	
	(54)		(46)	

Ali, Chris, Gary, Jiri, Jessica and Marco evaluate their work quite positively, whereas Ed, Emma, Delta, Isaac and Marie make the distinction between particular aspects they like about their jobs and those which they do not take satisfaction in. Positive REACTION is commonly expressed by the words *interesting* (IMPACT) or *good* (QUALITY) or evoked by longer explanations such as Jiri's.

(171)   Because now it is a very **interesting** *field of work* as well, and with all the jobs that you get to see. (Weil es is' jetzt ein sehr **interessantes** *Arbeitsumfeld* auch und halt alle Berufe, die man so sieht.) (Marco, D)

(172)   I did fairly quickly move from the programming side of things into the *technical support side of things*, 'cause I found that was more **interesting** for <u>me</u>. (Chris)

(173)   <u>I</u> work where I wanted to work, have **good** *perspectives* and can't complain, right. (<u>Ich</u> arbeite dort, wo ich arbeiten wollte, habe **gute** *Perspektiven* und kann mich nicht beklagen, ja.) (Jiri, D)

Chloe, Isaac and Marie, who basically work in call centres, call their jobs *boring* or *dull*, thus also invoking negative AFFECT: DISSATISFACTION (see also Subsection 7.2.1.3). The distinction between evoked affect and inscribed appreciation is meaningful regarding the semantics and lexis of the expressions but less consequential for pragmatic meanings.

(174)   <u>I</u> was finding *it* quite **tiring** *to be working and studying and playing the cello*, and I had also started sailing. (Ed)

(175)   *The early morning*, like the half-four starts, were **killing** <u>me</u>. (Emma)

(176)   At times, *it'*s not been what <u>I</u> would have chosen, *it'*s been **dull** at times. (Isaac)

The examples given by Ed and Emma are not unique to disabled people, but more likely to be influenced by the nature of the work itself. Isaac's case is different, however, because he states that his visual impairment effectively prevented him from applying for roles in which he would have given face-to-face customer care and that he was therefore restricted to telephone-based activities (see the comment on differences between blind and partially sighted people at the beginning of this chapter). Negative VALUATION is inscribed by *difficult/difficulties*, *struggle* and *problem* (CAPACITY also plays a role here, since the interviewees focus on their personal difficulties):

(177)   [I]t was quite **difficult** *doing the bookkeeping type stuff* where you had to fill things in in columns. (Emma)

(178)   [I]t was quite **difficult** for <u>me</u>, personally, sometimes when they say, *'I highlighted that. Can you take a look?'* I'm like, which bit did he or she highlight? (Jessica)

(179)   And we work in an open plan office which can cause <u>me</u> **problems** occasionally *if things get a bit loud*. (Brian)

(180)   Trying to catch up with my work on the last six months and also trying to run a team of sales advisors which, you know, *trying to deal with all of that* and still hit target was a massive, massive **struggle**. (Kelly)

The aspects that participants view as problematic or difficult vary depending on the nature of the jobs and their disability, but a lot of the difficulties arise from a combination of their visual impairment and inaccessible files or data or a working environment that is not well adapted to the blind or partially sighted person (see also Section 6.1).

7.2.3.2 Visual Impairment

The *visual impairment* category is closely related to the previous one because a person's disability can have an impact on the kinds of tasks and jobs they can do. Examples were classified as an appraisal of someone's visual impairment when the condition or disability was directly mentioned as a target. Most of the assessments in this category go beyond the immediate impacts that the impairment has on a person's work experience as it can affect other areas in their lives as well. 23 inscriptions relate to negative VALUATION and REACTION, but there are also some positive examples of people for whom the visual impairment has been an advantage because they work in the disability sector or because the experience has

helped them to grow their confidence and skills. (This point will be discussed further in the next analysis chapters.)

Table 7.14   Appreciation: Subcategories by Polarity for *Visual Impairment*

Visual Impairment	Positive		Negative	
Appreciation:	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*
VALUATION	5 (16)		**13** (**41**)	
REACTION	4 (13)		**9** (**28**)	1 (3)
Total	9 (28)		**23** (**72**)	

Most participants mentioned that their eyesight was a problem when they were carrying out specific tasks. Many of these participants have a progressive eye condition that worsened over the span of their lives, and therefore their eyesight might not have been an issue at the beginning of their careers (Ed, Jon and Gary). The more general negative valuations are sometimes connected to the person's self-image (Ali) or disablist attitudes in parts of society (Jiri) rather than an objective shortcoming caused by reduced eyesight.

(181)   But I can't shake the feeling that a *disability* is **problematic** after all, right. (Aber ich werde das Gefühl nicht los, dass eine *Behinderung* doch **problematisch** ist, ja.) (Jiri, D)

(182)   For me *it* was always a **negative** thing in life. *It* was a huge barrier. (Ali)

Negative REACTIONS (QUALITY) to one's eyesight are expressed by four participants. However, Chris, Emma and Marco have managed to stay in employment and continue to work using assistive technologies, which Stuart said would not help because software programming and coding are visual tasks.

(183)   But when you haven't got very much to start with and *it* gets **worse**, then that makes a significant difference to you. (Chris)

(184)   I think really my *visual impairment* got **worse** substantially in my twenties. (Emma)

Positive REACTIONS can be triggered by participants gaining knowledge about the nature of their visual impairment and which factors impact their eyes at any given moment (Jon) as

well as by having had time to adapt to the condition and learn techniques which can be utilised to lead an independent life (Ed).

(185)　I probably learned more about my eyes than I have in the previous 45 years combined. And to me, <u>that</u>'s made for a very– a lot of very, very **positive** *changes* at home and in employment. (Jon)

(186)　So the **good** thing for <u>me</u> about that is that *I've known about it since I was twelve*. (Ed)

7.2.3.3　　　Written Information

We regularly use various forms of written information, both in and outside of work. Much of this data is provided by computers and other technological devices. Screen readers and magnification software can be used to access some of that information, but there are situations when the data will be inaccessible due to specific restrictions or incompatibilities.

Table 7.15　　　Appreciation: Subcategories by Polarity for *Written Information*

Written Information	Positive		Negative	
Appreciation:	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*
COMPOSITION			**11** (**37**)	2 (7)
VALUATION	2 (7)	1 (3)	6 (**20**)	2 (7)
REACTION	1 (3)	1 (3)	4 (**13**)	
Total	5 (17)		25 (**83**)	

Written information on computers or in printed format is the only category in the appreciation analysis that saw COMPOSITION rank first. Participants expressed problems of accessing specialist corporate software, certain websites and PDF files or a company's intranet (Chloe, Ed, Emma, Isaac, Linda, Marco and Marie).

　　　Jon and Nada also mentioned that application forms (print or digital formats) can cause problems and thus hinder a VI person from applying for jobs, by which stage the employer might not even know what the issues are that the person is facing. As Chris states, this can cause delays that can make the applicant or employee look unprofessional.

Furthermore, to circumvent these issues, the person needs to have sufficient knowledge of which conversion operations to perform to make the information available to them. Chris also points out that not every VI person should be expected to be a high flyer when it comes to technological proficiency.

(187)   I think even when it comes to applying for jobs, most *application forms* are **inaccessible**. *They're* either in hard copy or *they're* in PDF, which is a nightmare [= VALUATION]. Or *they're* live in some other image-based way to make it, you know, **inaccessible** to my screen reader. (Nada)

Negative VALUATION is related to software being old or out-dated rather than inaccessible per se, which can also cause compatibility issues with screen readers (Jiri and Brian).

7.2.3.4   Mobility and Transportation

VI people sometimes face issues concerning transportation. This category was evaluated negatively by inscribing VALUATION. The explanations given by participants show that the visual impairment, or rather the reduced level of sight, can cause problems both in and out-side of work and hinder people's career progression in some cases, for example when the job would involve driving a car.

Table 7.16   Appreciation: Subcategories by Polarity for *Mobility and Transportation*

Mobility and Transportation	*Positive*		*Negative*	
Appreciation:	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*
VALUATION	4 (15)		**14** **(52)**	
REACTION	2 (7)	1 (4)	6 **(22)**	
Total	7 (26)		**20** **(74)**	

Several participants stated that travelling to and from work is complicated by their visual impairments. Undertaking those journeys often takes longer and can put a strain on people's eyes. Careful planning needs to be done beforehand, especially when they have to travel to unfamiliar places. Depending on their impairment, some participants might encounter prob-lems to see well at night or in bright sunlight. The evaluative terms include *difficult*, *issue* or metaphorical expressions such as *nightmare*.

(188)   I have to *be away overnight for meetings or whatever down in London*. *That* tends to be a bit more **difficult** because you're trying to navigate hotels and stuff yourself. (Brian)

(189)   [T]he unit I was working with reattached to Birmingham and at that point, the *travel* became an **issue** for <u>me</u>. (Isaac)

(190)   [E]ven *using public transport* was an **issue** for <u>me</u> because it actually tired my eyes out as well. (Jon)

(191)   <u>I</u> would get interviews but find it a **nightmare** *to get there* because I didn't know where I was going. (Linda)

7.2.3.5   Job Prospects

Job application processes tend to be appraised negatively by participants, again inscribing VALUATION. I also considered the general employment situation for blind and partially sighted people in this subcategory because it is closely connected to not being successful when applying for jobs. Alternatively, as I have already discussed, the situation can be related to shortcomings of accessing and filling out application forms.

Table 7.17   Appreciation: Subcategories by Polarity for *Job Prospects*

Job Prospects	Positive	Negative
Appreciation:	*Inscr.*	*Inscr.*
VALUATION		**17** (**71**)
REACTION	4 (**17**)	3 (13)
Total	4 (17)	**20** (**83**)

Ali, Ed, Gary, Linda, Marco, Nada and Tom inscribed negative valuation using words such as *difficult* or *hard* to express their experiences, often combining them with lexemes for intensified force in GRADUATION such as *terribly* or *very*:

(192)   Must have made maybe twenty, thirty, forty calls, maybe more. And so many emails, just sending my CVs and my covering letter. And *it* was very, very **difficult**. (Ali)

(193)   <u>I</u> found it terribly **difficult** *getting a job*. I only ever managed to get one as a braille verifier in a transcription unit. (Linda)

When people talk about the employment situation for VI people in society, they often refer to statistics to support their arguments. In this context, we find phrases such as *isn't right* or the stronger assessment *clearly wrong* (and *drastic*):

(194)   I think, statistically, at the moment *seventy-three percent of working age blind and partially sighted people aren't working*. So, you know, something **isn't right** there. (Melissa)

(195)   [T]here is something clearly **wrong** because *there are so many blind people that are unemployed*. *Something* is clearly **not working**, and *something really drastic* **needs to change**. (Nada)

7.2.3.6 Support and Access to Work Scheme

The last category in this section centres around various support mechanisms to help people in employment, most notably the UK government's Access to Work scheme. Participants' views of this scheme are nearly evenly spread across the spectrum of polarity, with some appreciating the existence of the scheme and some criticising the limited scope of programmes focused on increasing people's chances at gaining employment.

Table 7.18   Appreciation: Subcategories by Polarity for *Support and Access to Work Scheme*

Support and Access to Work Scheme	Positive		Negative	
Appreciation:	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*	*Inscr.*	*Ev.*
VALUATION	3 (17)	1 (6)	**6** (**33**)	2 (11)
REACTION	3 (17)		3 (17)	
Total	7 (39)		**11** (**61**)	

Anthony and Isaac experienced issues when applying for support from Access to Work. Anthony said that the application forms are not very accessible and that the process is lengthy and requires the applicant to call the service centre repeatedly, providing detailed reasons for why they should be supported. Support systems are appraised as poor by Nada and by Brian's report. It would seem an important building block is missing that could bridge the gap to get more blind and partially sighted people into employment.

(196)   And I know, if I talk to <u>other visually impaired people</u>, you know, their *experience of the support systems* to help them get into work is very, very **poor**. (Brian)

(197)   <u>I</u>'ve been with this for such a long time. <u>I</u> know about everything that's out there, and **none** of *it*'s **good** enough. (Nada)

(198)   But overall, *Access to Work* is an **excellent** *scheme*, provides excellent support and in an **excellent** *way*. (Chris)

There are also some advocates of these schemes among my participants, particularly Mack and Chris (198). Ali also evokes positive VALUATION of a scheme for a so-called *temporary employment position* (TEP) that helped fund the first six months of his appointment as a massage therapist to provide him with work experience.

7.3   Summary

Narratives are a form of subjective truth that can be a point of access to a person's professional identity. Evaluation as a predication strategy in discourse is a central aspect of how

we make sense of our experience and of how we position ourselves in relation to the people we encounter: clients, co-workers, line managers and staff from support schemes. The JUDG-MENT system focuses on the actors' roles in the story, which can give an indication of problems related to disablist ideologies and discriminating behaviour. Expressing one's feelings via the AFFECT system, whether directly or indirectly, can serve to highlight the impact of those experiences on a personal level and validate them both for the narrator and the recipient. This fact also highlights the inherently interpersonal and socio-cultural aspects of narratives discussed earlier. The APPRECIATION system focuses on the quality of things, and in this case, has mostly to do with barriers and challenges in various forms: practical and emotional consequences of the visual impairment, inaccessible technology or visual information, mobility issues, struggles with job applications and the ineffectiveness of employment and support programmes available to date. I also showed how support management itself can be a source of stress.

In many categories, negative appraisals outweigh positive ones. Several participants have encountered forms of rejection in employment at some point. Mack referred to these as a "bruising experience" known to many others. Triggers of negative affect include unsuccessful job applications, employers and line managers' negative attitudes or ignorance about disability issues and their unwillingness to accommodate a disabled person, but also the narrator's self-image: the feeling of being slower than others or behaving differently in social interactions due to impairment effects, or seeing impairment as a barrier. Such thinking ultimately flows into the discursive strategy of Self-Blame, which will be discussed in Subsection 9.2.2. We have also seen that participants with positive experiences – in contexts where reasonable adjustments were made and employers and colleagues were being supportive and understanding – will express gratitude, happiness or joy when it comes to work. Support and positive attitudes can lead to a more positive self-image and an increased level of confidence in one's capacities, creating positive reinforcement, which can even lead to seeing the impairment as an advantage.

8 Agency and Affectedness

In this chapter, I will investigate two related notions: agency and narrative ownership, and affectedness and the use of passivity. As studies in talking therapy and related fields have argued, these tropes are connected to the stability of a person's identity. I will explore how these linguistic devices reflect the participants' professional and disability identity, their self-confidence and the severity of negative experiences at work and elsewhere. As discussed in the Literature Review Section 2.3. on Narrative Approaches as well as in the Methodology Subsection 3.6.5, it is crucial what kind of language a person uses when they tell their story, especially when they talk about themself: whether they see themself in the role of the hero, the survivor, the victim or the bystander (see also FRANK'S typology of illness stories, Subsection 2.3.5). I suspect a relatively strong link between agency and affectedness on the one hand and people's (professional) identity on the other.

A total of 269 examples were classified as belonging to the analytical category of agency and affectedness. 136 references were coded as indicating increased semantic agency and narrative ownership (for example, *I am proactive*; *I know what I need*) and 114 as indicating affectedness, where narrators take on the semantic role of PATIENT. Out of these 114 affectedness references, 38 were passive voice constructions where the narrator is being 'subjected' to an action (e.g. *I was being bullied*; *I was made redundant*), and 76 were constructions indicating affectedness and passivity by putting the narrator in the object position of the clause and thus assigning the semantic role of patient or making them the syntactic subject of a semantically passive verbal clause of limited agency grammatically formed in active voice (for instance, *I get a no-go*; *I ended up in the switchboard*, etc., see below). This subcategory often involves material processes where the narrator is grammatical actor but semantic patient. Seven instances were coded as expressing both agency and affectedness (so-called mixed references) and 12 as non-authorial expressions. Third-person accounts are less relevant here because they do not reveal as much about the VI person's sense of agency or lack thereof. I will also not consider action and agency of inanimate metaphorical actors, since I am mostly interested in the interviewee's first-hand experience.

Grammatical voice is a less frequently employed discourse strategy than evaluation. The latter is arguably employed more deliberatly than voice, action and agency because (inscribed) effects of evaluation are evident to language users, producers and recipients alike,

culturally highly significant and more readily available at a conscious level. Agency and affectedness, on the other hand, are more difficult to pinpoint during the analysis stage, afford higher degress of interpretation (see also DARICS & KOLLER forthcoming) and perhaps more open to debate, but because they reflect aspects of a person's self-image, these discursive strategies promise especially rewarding.

Figure 8.1   Agency and Affectedness and Their Associated Linguistic Means
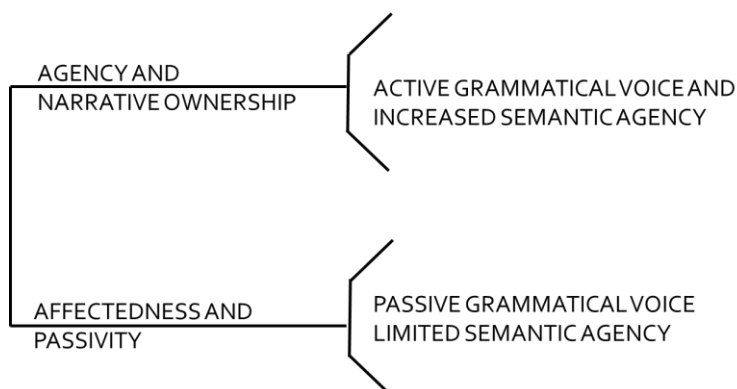
While I counted over 800 cases of micro-functional evaluation, notable instances of voice only make up about 250 references for all 23 participants. The average number of references per narrative interview is eleven. For comparison, Jon's narrative yielded 29 cases, followed by Ali and Mack (19 each). Ten participants used this discourse strategy less than eight times throughout, with Anthony and Jiri using it less than five times (two and four references respectively). This might not sound like much. However, there are often several markers indicating agency or affectedness in any one reference section. If we count these markers separately, the number will go up slightly. I refrained from coding these references separately for practical reasons: It would fragment and compartmentalise the sections, breaking narrative flow, and consequently, some of the contextual meaning would be lost. This was less of an issue for coding evaluation because micro-functional evaluation is expressed on a much more localised level than agency.

Regarding discourse functions, voice and affectedness indicators are connected to the assessment of a person's employment experience: The more negative the experience, the more markers are present that indicate affectedness (see also Figure 8.1 below). A Pearson correlation test resulted in a moderate positive correlation between negative evaluation and affectedness of $r=.43$ at $p<.05$. Affectedness scores are highest for Delta, Kelly, Linda, Nada and Salma, as well as Marie and Stuart, who have all had more negative experiences than

many of the other participants. Chris', Emma's, Gary's, Jiri's and Melissa's accounts were quite positive (see the previous chapter), hence their use of affectedness markers is lower, and their narratives rely more strongly on means indicating agency and ownership.

Figure 8.2   Agency and Affectedness for all Participants (Relative Occurrence of Agency and Affectedness Indicators (Passive Voice and Limited Semantic Agency) in Percent)
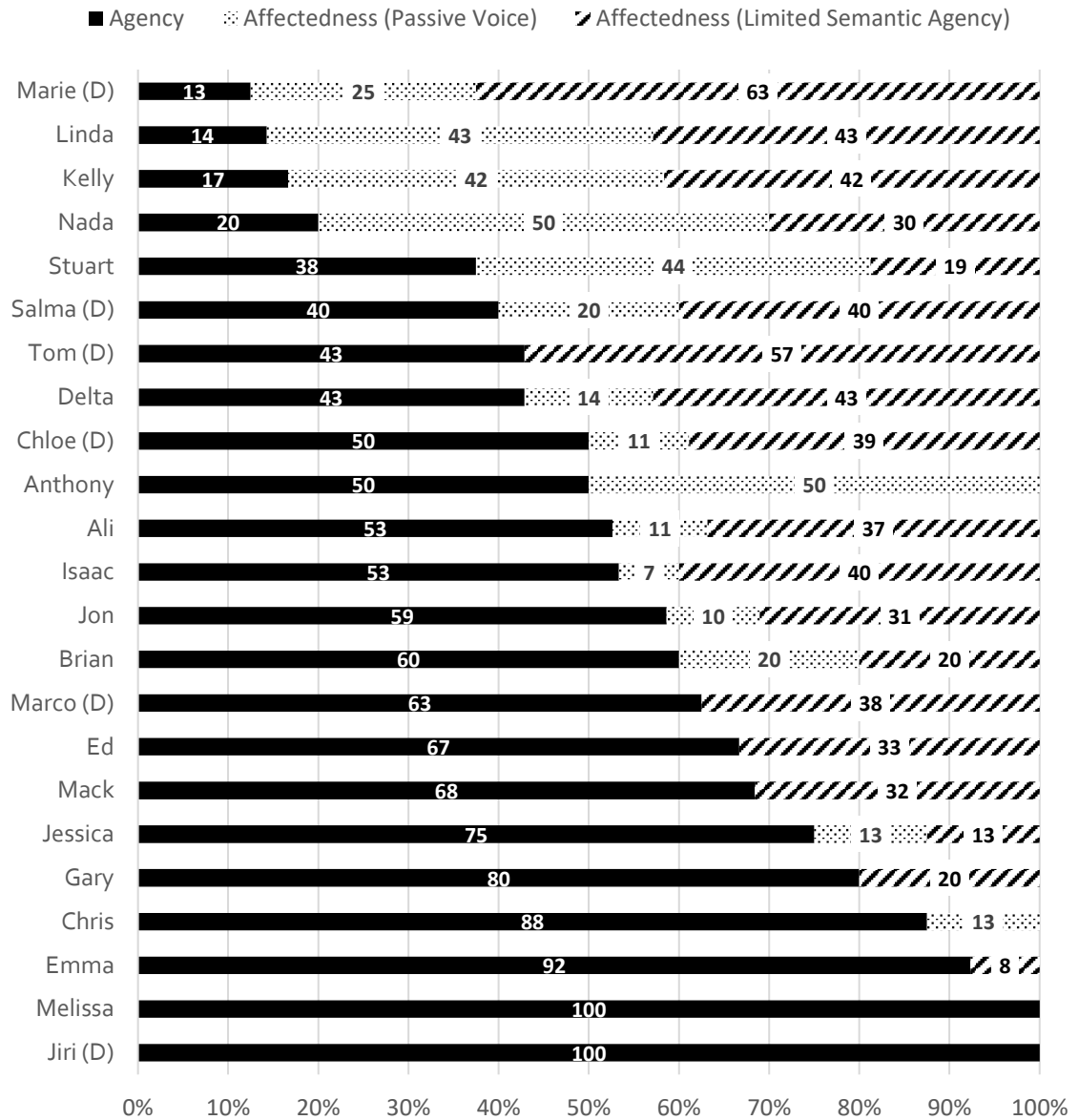
The use of active voice constructions expressing an increased sense of agency and narrative ownership is also related to the discourse-rhetorical model, that is whether the participant is more likely to endorse a resistant discourse reading (higher number of markers indicating

agency) or a compliant discourse reading (lower number of markers indicating agency). These interdependencies explain why someone like Chloe who has evaluated her employment experience negatively, ranks in the middle rather than at the lower end of the spectrum in Figure 8.1: She supports resistant discourse reasoning and employs as many agentic as passivised constructions (50–50 spread). Even though she has had bad experiences in employment, she realises that these did not "happen to her" by accident, through a fault of her own or due to personal shortcomings, but because she was denied opportunities and unjustifiably judged on the grounds of her visual impairment by powerful social actors who ultimately make decisions about people's careers.

Another influencing factor is the narrator's personal development, their identity. Ali and Jon, for instance, say that their self-confidence and sense of self, the relation with their visual impairment (that is how they view and evaluate their disability) and the perspective on what they can do, their capabilities, have drastically changed for the better over the course of their lives. During the interview, they recount memories of their old sense of self, so to speak, where they saw themselves as victims (Jon) or judged their visual impairment to be a barrier (Ali). These segments are more likely to be told using passive voice and affectedness indicators, which explains why both their stories contain over 40 percent of these markers. In contrast, Ali's and Jon's 'new' identities are more likely to lead to segments where agency and ownership are expressed in active voice and through agentic verbs. Jon's identity shift is evident in the following quote (it is also one of the mixed references of agency and affectedness):

(199)   [P]re-operation, I would **be** the person that would **have been** very self-conscious about **wearing** that binocular or **using** that binocular in public. And now, **I'm** actually quite upfront about it. I **need** this because I'm partially sighted, and **I'm gonna use** it. (Jon)

Jon directly compares his old approach of using assistive devices in public with his new-found confidence post-operation. *Very self-conscious* indicates a relatively low level of personal resilience, whereas the other RELATIONAL (*be upfront about*), MATERIAL (*gonna use*) and MENTAL processes (*need*) reveal a much more self-assured mind and increased sense of agency.

8.1 Narrative Ownership: Grammatical Action and Increased Semantic Agency

Agency and narrative ownership can be expressed in several ways. Grammatically, most of the examples employ constructions of active voice with the first-person narrator filling the subject position of the clause. Verbs and verbal phrases that indicate a heightened sense of agency and narrative ownership include MENTAL processes like *decide,* MATERIAL (metaphorical) processes such as *make progress, be able to do* (see also Subsection 5.2.3 and Chapter 6), *build (experience)* and *secure/land a job.* The topics of achievements, independence and making one's reasonable adjustments are also significant because they show VI people's initiative and creativity in the absence of an employer's support. I will go through these topics and constructions in turn, starting with the MENTAL/COGNITIVE process verb *decide*.

Making career decisions reflects agency and narrative ownership insofar as the participants have made up their minds about what they want to do in work and what they expect from their jobs, especially if they are not satisfied with their current situation (see Jessica and Marie). Some interviewees have expressed the opinion that it can be risky for blind and partially sighted people to speak up and demand change because there is a widespread fear of becoming a nuisance or 'making a fuss', which could lead to being fired. Raising these concerns thus requires a level of confidence or even bravery.

(200)   That is an exhibition in the dark. And I worked there for almost ten years, and then **I decided** to look for something within my field which is social work. (Das is ne Ausstellung im Dunkeln. Und dort hab **ich** fast zehn Jahre gearbeitet und **habe mich** dann **entschlossen**, irgendwas zu suchen, was in meinem Bereich liegt, also soziale Arbeit.) (Salma, D)

(201)   So, **I decided** that I was gonna find a job, but I would look for something with a trainee type touch to it, trainee manager's type job. (Emma)

(202)   So, after that **I decided** that it was time to move because I couldn't agree with my immediate supervisor. (Jessica)

Other expressions that indicate participants' self-confidence and strength of will include RELATIONAL, MENTAL and MATERIAL processes like *being proactive*, *knowing what I need*, *realise*, *I had capabilities*, *I could do stuff*, *engage*, *become*, *take advantage*.

(203)   And I think a lot of it is down to **me being proactive**. **Me knowing** what I need, not being a victim. (Emma)

(204)   I don't have to be able to fly to the moon so that sighted people accept me. **I can do** what I can do, and **I can do** that damn well. (Ich muss nich zum Mond fliegen können, damit die Sehenden mich akzeptieren. **Ich kann** das, was ich kann und das **kann ich** verdammt gut.) (Chloe, D)

Judging from the rest of their narratives, Chloe and Emma have always been strong personalities, whereas Jessica, Jon and Mack talk more about how their early employment experience has shaped their current self-concepts and empowered their sense of professional identity to a degree where they know their strengths and values as employees. For Jessica, Jon and Mack, it has been a learning experience to arrive at a point where they can be reassured of their capabilities. This is indicated by the MENTAL procceses *I realised, I started to know* and RELATIONAL procees types like *I was in charge, I have become* (*more demanding/clear-headed*), phrases which map the knowledge as a process rather than a pre-existing fact:

(205)   I did a lot of translation for them from Chinese to English and Malay. And then **I realised** I could be useful in many ways. And **I was** also **in charge** of answering calls, you know, inquiries. (Jessica)

(206)   **I** kinda knew– **started to know** my own mind that **I had** capabilities. So in a way, I felt it didn't matter what other people thought I knew. I started to sense that, yeah, **I could do** stuff. (Mack)

(207)   [I]t's really been more about **me engaging** with it and **me becoming** more demanding and saying '**I need** this, if you want me to function in the workplace …' **I've become** very, very clear-headed and very clear in what I ask. (Jon)

As I discussed in Chapter 5, Subsection 5.2.3, the phrase *I was able to do X* is significant for some people's stories as it highlights the fact that they have managed to fulfil or even surpass their own or their employers' expectations about what they can do in work. In terms of its semantics, *be able* appears to express meanings more closely related to a lexical rather than a mere auxiliary verb. Incidentally, it is also linked to the discourse of dis/ability as discussed several times throughout the thesis (e.g. Subsections 2.2.2, 2.2.4 and 5.2.3 on the Capabilities and Limitations discourse pattern – see also Subsection 9.2.2 on Sel-Blame for a contrastive view). To highlight one's personal abilities can thus be seen as another form of protest or an act of resistance implicitly refuting the dominant discourse of disability.

Chris and Mack use the phrase *be able* repeatedly throughout their interviews. For Chris, it is very much the practical side of fulfilling parts of his role that triggers the use of this phrase, whereas Mack puts more emphasis on being able to build his confidence,

develop his skills and set himself goals to keep motivated while searching for jobs (see also Chapter 6).

(208) **I was able** to do the Physics lab technician job because there were no nasty chemicals to pour or anything like that. … And **I was able** to do all of that. … **I was able** – because I had a lot of knowledge and expertise, and some useful contacts. (Chris)

(209) **I was** really **able** to start to build my confidence and get a sense of what I could do in terms of work. And again, **I was able** in that particular job to develop my computer skills. … **I was able** to set myself goals, and as long as I felt **I was able** to keep looking and I was making applications, I felt, at least I was making an effort. … I felt **I was able** to combine that with like the disability and access side of things. (Mack)

An even stronger sense of fulfilment is reflected in words related to semantic fields of *achievement* and *success*, although the examples provided by Delta and Jessica below are nominalisations rather than first-person active voice constructions. They nevertheless fall in the same category and express a very similar judgment to the quote provided by Tom. The expression is also enforced through idioms like *time and again* and the adverb *even*.

(210) [T]hat had to– be done very precisely, otherwise we had to take it all apart again. And, well, **I succeeded** in that time and again, I have to say. ([D]as musste– also sehr präzise gemacht werden, sonst mussten wir das alles wieder auseinandernehmen. Und das **ist mir** halt immer wieder **gelungen**, muss ich sagen.) (Tom, D)

(211) And so, I thought that was a major **achievement**. (Delta)

(212) And **I** even **coordinated** their biggest event. They had a beauty conference for all the beauticians to come. And everybody was happy. So, I felt it was a **great achievement** in my life. (Jessica)

For many (but by no means all) people, taking the initiative, being more demanding and realising their capabilities can be rewarding as they advance their careers. Highly agentic constructions and phrases describing people's career progressions include *secure/land a job*, *go through promotions/jobs*, *take on responsibility*, *put one's name forward*, *develop a career for oneself, turn it on its head* and *use my experience*, all of which are either direct or indirect (metaphorical) MATERIAL processes.

(213) I'd got enough experience to **secure** full-time permanent experience in the field I wanted to go into. And **I landed** my first job … I'd done about six different jobs, **going** through various promotions, all in the same field. (Jon)

(214) **I took on** training responsibilities for general manager. (Gary)

(215)   [I]t was a five-week project to write the help documentation for this new piece of software that was still under development. And so, **I put** my name **forward** for that. (Ed)

(216)   **I've** kind of **developed** a sort of career for myself, I suppose, in terms of project management. (Mack)

(217)   And certainly, over the last few years, when **I began to turn** it on its head, I suppose, and **use my experience** as a point of differentiation, as an advantage to help other individuals going through similar circumstances across a range of disabilities. (Isaac)

Many of the expressions employ the conceptual metaphors MORE IS UP, GOOD IS UP or POWER IS UP, for example, *build up experience*, *step up*, *work one's way up* and *rise above*, thereby highlighting the person's successful progression, while *go through* in (220) conceptualises the different but related mapping of LIFE AS A JOURNEY or PATH:

(218)   I did a mix of voluntary work, part-time work, full-time work, temporary contracts. Until **I built up** the experience I needed to go into the advice work. (Jon)

(219)   And **I managed** to work my way up the corporate ladder to a team manager in a call centre. (Kelly)

(220)   And **I've gone** through a series of jobs. Each of them really's involved a step up. (Mack)

(221)   I can use myself as an example of another group of people for whom employment prospects and expectations are also low and that **I have risen above** them. (Brian)

Agency can also manifest itself in the wish to become more independent. Independence is not necessarily restricted to the workplace, as Ali and Ed demonstrate. Both see living on their own and having personal mobility as vital aspects to independence. Chloe's view of her independence at work leads straight to the next aspect of self-managing reasonable adjustments and access needs without assistance from others. In terms of transitivity, these accounts once more use MATERIAL processes (*find*, *gain*, *do*), embedded MENTAL processes like *want* and *feel* or negated RELATIONAL processes (*I am not someone who*):

(222)   I did have a carer years ago from the council, like a helper or support worker. But **I found** that I wanted just being independent and not get that much help. (Ali)

(223)   But now I'm in [place] I feel that I'm quite, like, **I'm gaining** a level of independence. (Ed)

(224)   Well, I am not someone that sits down and says 'Now, you sighted people, I am blind, so come and help me'. **I am** really **doing** a lot, even without assistance. (Also ich bin niemand, der sich hinsetzt und sagt 'So, ihr Sehenden, ich bin blind, jetzt helft mir mal'. Sondern **ich mach** wirklich viel, auch ohne Unterstützung.) (Chloe, D)

The topic of self-managing reasonable adjustments was mentioned by a couple of people, most noticeably Emma, Isaac and Stuart. The blind or partially sighted person might know best what their needs are and what problems they have regarding accessing information. This is true for people who have been with their visual impairment for a longer time, although it does not always apply to people who have only recently acquired their eye condition and do not yet know what the best solutions are to the problems they encounter (see also Subsection 5.2.3 and Section 6.3). The other issue to consider is that an individual's efforts to implement adjustments can only go so far when specialist corporate software is involved or when the equipment is too expensive for the person to buy (see especially Subsection 7.2.3.3 on Written Information). As I discussed in the previous chapter, a lack of support in implementing reasonable adjustments is a major source of dissatisfaction at work (Subsection 7.2.1.3).

Motivations for helping oneself and making reasonable adjustments can be borne out of the VI person's desire not to be seen as a liability (as Emma suggests), the absence of an employer's support (Stuart) or an employer's lack of knowledge (Isaac), employing the MATERIAL processes *buy*, *find*, *make* and *manage* and the RELATIONAL process of *being* (*practical*). Admittedly, it will be easier for partially sighted people to manage such adjustments than for fully blind people, so the nature of the disability has an impact as well.

(225)   **I could find** my own way around doing things like the paperwork and doing the orders and stuff like that. And **I** simply **bought** things from the visually impaired society that I could use at work. So, you know, **making** my own reasonable adjustments. … **I was practical** enough to find my own solutions for things, so that an employer never thought that my visual impairment was a barrier in any respect … So it's knowing about those things as well and helping myself. (Emma)

(226)   In fact, it's such that the keyboard with the big letters on that I ended up buying my own for that having to do. **Made** my own reasonable adjustment. (Stuart)

(227)   I ended up basically project managing my own adjustments because no one else (laughs) haven't had the knowledge or experience to do it. (Isaac)

Finally, a new sense of identity as a visually impaired person and improved confidence can be brought about by a change in perspective regarding the impairment. This process takes place when people focus on their strengths, what they can see, rather than their weaknesses

or limitations or what they cannot see (see also Subsections 8.1 and 9.4.2). Lexically, these episodes are presented as *realisations*, often through MENTAL process types (*think*, *realise*), which carries a sense of suddenness or unexpectedness and distances the narrating self from the past self. The presentation of a personal development over time and an evolution of one's self-concept (or the narrative self) are major aspects of people's professional identities, revealed in the most striking way through such biographical narratives (see also DEPPERMANN 2004: 176).

(228)   When **I started thinking** about what I can see then I started to realise, actually, I can see a lot more than **I realised**. (Ali)

(229)   **I realised** that I wasn't a normal person with really bad eyesight, I was a blind person with exceptional eyesight, you know. And it kinda turned around the perspective on me. (Gary)

(230)   **I** kind of **needed** to get on the horse and ride it as an adult with sight loss. … **I'm gonna have to forge** my way as a visually impaired person. (Mack)

Mack's quote is arguably one of the best examples for a heightened sense of agency and narrative ownership, employing the idiomatic expressions *get on the horse and ride it* and *forge my way*, which requires the agent to take an active part in the activities they metaphorically refer to. The way he presents his narrative also suggests that it is this sense of agency that allowed him to develop a career for himself rather than pure luck or having had help from other people. Narratively, many of these employment journeys resemble a heroic quest where the protagonist must overcome challenges by helping themself, realising their potential and beginning to appreciate their worth in order to emerge successfully from the adverse experiences (see also Subsection 2.3.5 on FRANK'S narrative typology).

However, as Melissa and Mack point out, while being proactive, engaging and demanding ("sticking your neck out") might be the way to change one's outlook on employment, this is easier said than done for most people who have suffered from negative experiences and found their expectations to be disappointed on more than one occasion:

(231)   **You've got to be** the person who is willing to be out there sticking your neck out and stop saying 'I'm rubbish' is not good enough. **You need** to change it. And it's hard for people to do that when people are generally speaking quite lacking in confidence and quite frightened really, quite intimidated. (Melissa)

(232)   **I can understand** why some visually impaired people shy away from work because, really, potentially **you're putting yourself up** for, you know, rejection and bad experience, you know, things that can knock you back, dent your confidence, dent your self-esteem. (Mack)

As I will discuss in the next section, the barriers that need to be overcome and the challenges that some VI people face can impact their self-worth and professional identity to the point where they become passive figures in their own employment stories.

8.2 Affectedness and Passivity

8.2.1 Affectedness Expressed Through Grammatical Passive Voice

In this section, I will discuss three topics commonly talked about in passive voice constructions in my narrative data: being made redundant, being moved around in some sense and being discriminated against. All three ways of indicating affectedness can also be expressed by active voice where the narrator becomes the PATIENT or GOAL and thus the syntactic object of the sentence and the employer or manager the AGENT of the action and the subject of the clause. As I mentioned above, affectedness was found to be more commonly indicated by verb semantics of limited agency than grammatical voice (76 versus 38 instances) – although both can also coincide – and topics expressed by those other means are slightly more varied. I will nevertheless start with analysing passive voice as a conventional way to indicate affectedness. To begin with, consider the following examples.

(233)   [Manager:] 'This is Friday, you haven't got a job on Monday'. So **I was made redundant**. (Chris)

(234)   I worked there from 2004 until **I was made redundant** this year when they lost a major contract and didn't have enough work to employ me any longer. (Linda)

Being made redundant is an obvious candidate for employing passive voice. In fact, it is such a common action to use a passive that we do not regularly express it in another way. Therefore, it probably does not reveal much about a person's mental experience or their professional identity. Other instances where narrators exhibit more creativity and are less conditioned to use a passive are more telling in that respect. One of these cases is concerned with material processes formed using VERBAL and MATERIAL phrasal verbs such as (*to*) *summon*, *call in*, *take into*, *bully out*, *throw on* and *push/put back*.

(235)   I had spilt hot chocolate on a sofa in the meeting room. And, well, then, instead of settling the issue sensibly, **I was summoned**, so to speak, to our deputy manager by my head of department. (Auf ein Sofa im Besprechungsraum hatte ich Kakao drüber gekippt. Und, ja, dann anstatt dass man das irgendwie vernünftig regelt, **wurde ich** dann zu unserer Vizechefin sozusagen **zitiert** von meiner Abteilungsleiterin.) (Marie, D)

In the example above, Marie describes a disciplinary meeting she had to attend that ultimately led to her asking to move to another department because she felt the trust with her supervisor was broken. The examples below also fit into the category of making someone redundant, but rather than the action itself they describe the process that precedes the meeting and redundancy notice, that is being "called in".[30] Both Kelly and Mack said they were being made redundant because of low-performance levels caused – as far as their managers were concerned – by their visual impairments.

(236)   **I got called in** by – not my line managers, it would have been by one of the partners – and they said they were just making me redundant. (Mack)

(237)   **I was taken** into a room, not long after I came back off being sick again, and I was told, you know, 'You're really behind with your work, it's not good enough.' (Kelly)

(238)   I just couldn't understand why **I was being** almost **bullied out**. … So, I felt, because it was such a painful, abrupt end that **I had** actually **been thrown** on the scrap heap. (Delta)

The semantics in Delta's account is more drastic by comparison (if somewhat mitigated by the adverbs *almost* and *actually*), and as pointed out in the last chapter (see Subsection 7.2.2.1), testifies to the trauma she experienced during that period. Especially the dehumanising metaphorical expression *throw on the scrap heap* reveals a lack of sympathy and human decency regarding her employer. It shows the absence of any appreciation for Delta's many years of dedicated service as a teacher at the school. Experiencing the end of a job as being "thrown on the scrap heap" is degrading and devaluing and can leave so-called emotional scarring.

The last two examples in this category are concerned with the discourse topic of Challenges and Barriers some VI people face in employment (see also Section 6.2). For Nada, these are related to her disability needs and the fact that she is unable to make a potential employer aware of them without coming across as too demanding or needy. The agent

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[30] In Mack's quote, we find the so-called *get-passive* rather than the more conventional morphological form, the *be-passive* construction. Semantically, however, both can express very similar meaning, and both depict the narrator in the semantic role of PATIENT.

of the action *push back* remains in the semantic background in this sentence, although she identifies *the system* as the root problem in another part of the interview (see example (246) below). Chloe expresses that her talents were underappreciated even when she took on different tasks and responsibilities as an equality officer in her company – she hoped this office would allow her to progress in her career rather than lead to her being stuck in the customer service centre.

(239)   [E]very time I get so far **I** just **get pushed back** because I just don't have the energy or the means to get an employer to hear what my disability needs are. (Nada)

(240)   After my term of office [as an equality officer], because it was kind of an electoral office, **I was** quickly **put back** into the switchboard, and that's where I sit now. (Ich wurde nach der Amtszeit, also weil es so n Wahlamt war, **wurde ich** ruckzuck wieder **zurück** in die Telefonzentrale **gesteckt**, und da hock ich jetzt.) (Chloe, D)

Experiences of discrimination and disablist treatment are expressed by a range of phrases such as MATERIAL and MENTAL/RELATIONAL processes of *being ostracised*, *being treated differently* and *being seen as less*, the latter of which also includes the supposed perceptions of third parties. Furthermore, we find negated active voice (*you can't do things as quick*) and "pronominal switching" from the first ('I') to the second person ('you') (see DE FINA & GEORGAKOPOULOU 2012: 80) in examples (242) to (244). These experiences are closely tied to the participants' identities as visually impaired people and to society's perceptions and expectations about blind and partially sighted people and their capabilities.

(241)   **I feel discriminated against** as a visually impaired person anyway. (Nada)

(242)   I also find **I'm ostracised** at work. … none of it can be proved. But you know **you're being discriminated against**. (Stuart)

(243)   I think, you know, **being treated** differently in a less favourable way. You know, it's being– **less is expected** of you because you can't do things as quick as someone who may have vision. …. **you're** always **seen** as less**. (Kelly)

(244)   [Y]**ou are at risk** of **being rejected** because of your visual impairment. (Mack)

The next section deals with some of the same topics, the difference being that affectedness can also be expressed through means other than grammatical passive voice. Semantically, passive verbs and specific noun phrases can present the VI person as someone who is held back or acted upon by other social actors or abstract entities.

8.2.2　　　Affectedness Expressed Through Limited Semantic Agency

I identified four ways to indicate affectedness through means other than passive voice constructions. Most of these employ particular verb phrases that denote limited semantic agency in the sense of immobility or counter-force and cast the individual in the semantic role of GOAL or PATIENT, even when they are the grammatical actor and subject of the sentence. The four semantic categories were termed (1) *stagnation*, (2) *motion,* (3) *impact* and (4) *antagonistic action*.[31]

In the *stagnation* category, the VI person is metaphorically kept in a state of inactivity, either by an abstract entity or external source (*the seeing world, the system*), by their visual impairment or by holding themself back because they do not have the means or the energy to oppose and object to discrimination. MATERIAL verbs and noun phrases that express immobility include *no-go*, *keep in place*, *barrier* and *can't bear to go through with*.

(245)　　[A]nd yet **I get this no-go** from this seeing, so called seeing world. ([U]nd trotzdem **krieg ich** von dieser sehenden Welt, sogenannten sehenden Welt, **dieses No-Go**.) (Chloe, D)

(246)　　So, it's all about **the system itself** that **is keeping me** in this place of not being able to get paid experience. (Nada)

(247)　　For me it was always a negative thing in life. **It was a** huge **barrier**. (Ali)

(248)　　And my cousin had said that there was enough evidence to take them to court for discrimination. But that it might take a few years and I would have to keep reliving these experiences. And **I couldn't bear** to go through with that. (Delta)

Like the previous section on passive voice, here we also find motion verbs indicating affectedness. The narrator becomes the semantic patient of the action as they are being affected by other agents. Alternatively, the process is described in a way that makes it seem accidental and undesirable to the narrator. In the first scenario, the VI person becomes the direct object of the sentence. Agents in subject position can be the visual impairment/the disability (Isaac) or the managers of a company (Gary and Kelly). The VI person is metaphorically *pushed into* areas, they are being *let off* or *moved around*.

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[31] These categories could also be analysed from the perspective of Force Dynamics in cognitive linguistics.

(249)   **It** kind of **pushed me** into areas that perhaps I wouldn't have necessarily wanted to go in. I spent a lot of time working principally on telephone-based activities. (Isaac)

(250)   I guess they decided they want to go a different direction. And **they let me off**. (Gary)

(251)   And what– basically, **what they kept doing was moving me around** to different teams because no one was dealing with the fact that I couldn't quite cope with the pressure of the job and the workload because of my visual impairment. (Kelly)

When the narrators are the subjects of the sentences, they can still take on the semantic role of PATIENTS and thus remain in a limited sense of agency and control. These cases suggest that they did not take an active part in the MATERIAL processes (*I got into/ended up/remained*) and were thus influenced by an external factor such as a company's managers (Linda) or by mere chance (Chloe and Marco). Consequently, the result of the action is unwanted and the statement is often combined with invoked negative appraisal (*trouble*, *I didn't want*, *I had no clue*, see previous chapter):

(252)   **I got into trouble** for being late because I've got off the bus in the wrong place. (Linda)

(253)   And then **I ended up** (literally *landed*) exactly where many qualified and very talented disabled or blind people end up; **I ended up** in a switchboard where I also didn't want to be. (Und dann **bin ich** genau da **gelandet**, wo viele qualifizierte und sehr gute behinderte oder blinde Menschen landen; **ich bin** in ner Telefonzentrale **gelandet**, wo ich auch nich hin wollte.) (Chloe, D)

(254)   [W]ell, **I ended up** in the recruitment department, which I had no clue about whatsoever. ([A]lso **ich bin** halt in der Personalgewinnung **gelandet**, wo ich gar keine Ahnung von hatte.) (Marco, D)

Affectedness is arguably most evident in the MATERIAL phrase *X impacted/affected me/my career*. In the two examples below, Isaac and Jon ascribe the practical challenges inside and outside of work to their visual impairments. While Isaac sees his career progression and job aspirations as the main area where his disability has had an impact, Jon puts more emphasis on impairment effects such as tiredness and stress that can be aggravated by unfavourable working conditions (direct sunlight, a cluttered desk, a small computer monitor, and so on).

(255)   I guess **it's impacted** my career to the extent that I've remained, you know, in a clerical role … **sight loss has impacted** my career progression and my aspirations. Partly, **it's affected me** on a practical level. (Isaac)

(256)   [T]he sort of big message I got from it was **the impact** of tiredness and stress **on my vision**. And how **that affected me** day and night, really, inside and outside of work. (Jon)

Negative impacts on people's professional or disability identities are also transparent in prepositional phrases such as *what happened to me*, nominalisations of complex emotions like *constant fear of vulnerability* and *others make a decision*. Especially the quotes by Delta and Kelly illustrate the power of disablism in the workplace to affect people's mental health and their overall outlook on working life, a form of psycho-emotional disablism discussed in Subsection 2.2.3.

(257)   I felt that **what happened to me** shouldn't have happened to me in the way it happened, really. (Delta)

(258)   A visual impairment makes being in the workplace more difficult, and there's a **constant fear of vulnerability**. (Kelly)

(259)   The possibility of a well-paid job is so low. Many qualified disabled / blind people do a job because **other "non-disabled" make the decision**. (Die Möglichkeit auf einen besserbezahlten Job ist so gering. Viele qualifizierte behinderte / blinde Menschen machen einen Job, weil **andere „nichtbehinderte" die Entscheidung treffen**.) (Chloe, D, e-mail communication)

The example given by Chloe was also coded as belonging to the *impact* verb category (see also Section 6.5) because it shows that, to her mind, blind and partially sighted people and disabled people in general are at the mercy of the powerful, that is employers and human resource managers, who make decisions about whether to employ someone or not. Besides, Chloe implies that these decisions are made without sufficient grounds for justification, and that equally skilled disabled people are disadvantaged.

The final category in this section is labelled *antagonistic action* and concerned with three examples that show the narrators as the victims of some forceful MATERIAL (though metaphorical) action. They experience being put under *pressure* or *bullied*, or something is *used against* them. Example (260) below is also an instance of *exclusion* in VAN LEEUWEN'S model (1996: 38), since it completely removes the social actors, or at least suspends and deemphasises their existence.

(260)   But **the pressure** just **continued**, really. (Delta)

(261)   Then I was unemployed for about a year, although I have to say that **the job centre** always **bullied me** quite a bit, too. (War dann ein Jahr ungefähr arbeitslos, wobei ich auch sagen muss, dass das **Arbeitsamt mich** da auch immer ziemlich **schikaniert hat**.) (Marie, D)

(262) And **they were using the Bradford scheme against me** when by law, under the equality act, for things which are disability-related sicknesses and illness appointments, they're not allowed to do. (Stuart)

In Delta's and Stuart's cases it is the employer or manager who puts pressure on them to the effect of forcing them to resign or bringing about a reason to make them redundant. Marie was "bullied" by the job centre and explains that she was forced to take part in employability workshops and various training, which she considers ineffective because people with different disabilities, needs and capabilities were put together in the same class.

(263) [A]t the new employer, they weren't that happy with just me working just two and a half days per week so they brought **the HR person** I felt **put a bit of pressure on me** to increase that. She wanted me to increase it to four days per week but **I compromised** and went for three days per week. (Ed)

The example above is one of the few references that were coded as mixed cases of agency and affectedness. The phrase *put (a bit) of pressure on me* resembles the other instances of antagonistic action. However, Ed's negotiation with the human resources department ends with him taking an active role in the process (see the adversative conjunction *but* and *I compromised*), thus achieving a result that suits his work-life balance.

8.3   Summary

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the analysis of agency and narrative ownership on the one hand and affectedness and the use of passive voice and limited agency on the other can contribute to a more profound understanding of VI people's professional and disability identities. Agency indicators can suggest how robust and confident a person feels as a VI employee in the work environment, both regarding their relationship with an employer and with their visual impairment. Reversely, a lack of agency and narrative ownership and an increase in linguistic markers indicating affectedness and passivity can hint at a person's lack of self-confidence, their anxieties and fears of reproach and the severity of emotional pain or psychological trauma in the face of barriers, challenges and discriminatory behaviour.

Table 8.3   Cross-Tabulation of Discourse Domains and Agency and Affectedness Markers by Domain Coverage in Percent

Discourse Domain	Ownership	Affectedness: Passive Voice	Affectedness: Limited Agency
Employment	**75**	10	16
Social Actors	47	22	31
Challenges and Barriers	20	**32**	**48**
Assistance and Support	**63**	10	26
Visual Impairment	**70**	9	22

Distinct discourse topics are associated with the two modes of agency (see Table 8.2 above). Narrative ownership is thematically developed in sections about Future Plans and Aspirations, Changes and Promotions, Tasks and Work Experience and Professional Identity, i.e. the Employment discourse domain, and, in part, Assistance and Support (*self-managing reasonable adjustments*, etc.). The visual impairment itself also lends itself to accounts of narrative ownership once people embrace their disability (*I know what I can and cannot see*). Passive voice constructions most notably occur in narratives about Being Made Redundant and Discrimination, Stigma and Stereotypes, hence the prevalence of the Challenges and Barriers domain. When affectedness is expressed through semantically passive verbs, narrators moreover relate their experience to the topic of Various Other Challenges and Problems (disciplinaries and being moved to different departments against their will) as well as Accessibility Issues, and also, to some degree, the Visual Impairment, especially the subtopic labelled The Condition and Its Impacts. The final analysis chapter looks at how disablist attitudes and practices discussed in previous chapters are reasoned about and argumentatively build into the narratives to make sense of or resist and challenge them.

9   Rhetorical Strategies and Discourse Models

9.1   Discourse Models: Compliant, Explanatory and Resistant Discourse

In the final analysis chapter, I will discuss rhetorical strategies and argumentation schemes VI people use to reason about their employment experience and, more specifically, about disablism and discrimination in workplace contexts. I have identified several argumentation schemes and associated discourse models. Regarding the discourse models, we can differentiate between strategies that align with a Compliant Discourse about disability and employment, those that are part of an Explanatory Discourse and those that feed into Resistant and Affirmative Discourses.

Figure 9.1   The Three Discourse Models and Associated Rhetorical Strategies


COMPLIANT DISCOURSE	EXPLANATORY DISCOURSE	RESISTANT DISCOURSE
▪ Perspectivisation ▪ Self-Blame Attribution (Victim-Victimiser Reversal)	▪ Generalisation ▪ Externalisation ▪ Speculation	▪ Other-Blame Attribution ▪ Self-Affirmation

A total of 209 references were coded as rhetorical strategies. In order to do so, I carried out several close readings of the narratives and grouped similar substrategies together while being mindful of both the discourse topic structure established beforehand as well as the topic-independent rhetorical strategies discussed in the Literature Review, such as Justification, Generalisation and Victim-Victimiser-Reversal. Not all of the strategies and concepts routinely used, for instance, by Ruth Wodak's group, became relevant during this analysis, and not all that could be found in the narrative corpus were equally significant to explain people's professional identities and employment experience. Once the main strategies were identified, I linked them with the overarching strategies of negative or positive self- and other-presentation. Finally, I looked for similarities as well as differences between strategies to relate them to the three discourse models of Compliance, Explanation and Resistance, which emerged as a result of this process, although they reflect parts of well-known disability

discourses, especially medical or individual on one hand and social and affirmative discourses on the other.

The discourse model with most references overall is the Resistant Discourse (106 references). While the prevalence of resistant discourse arguments can be surprising in light of all the negative experiences discussed so far, we have to remember that interviewees self-select their discussion topics and can therefore demonstrate a degree of mental strength in this kind of contextual setting without fearing opposition from the researcher. Eighty-one of those references fall in the category of Other-Blame Attribution. Dominant and Explanatory Discourses yielded about 50 references each. Most interviewees are quite outspoken about issues of disability discrimination and not hesitant to name the social actors they feel are responsible for acts of oppression and barriers to equal access. There are, however, striking individual differences. A simple quantitative analysis of the discourse models shows that some participants engage more in certain discourses than others (see Figure 9.2 below).

Figure 9.2   Distribution of Discourse Models Across all Participants in Percent
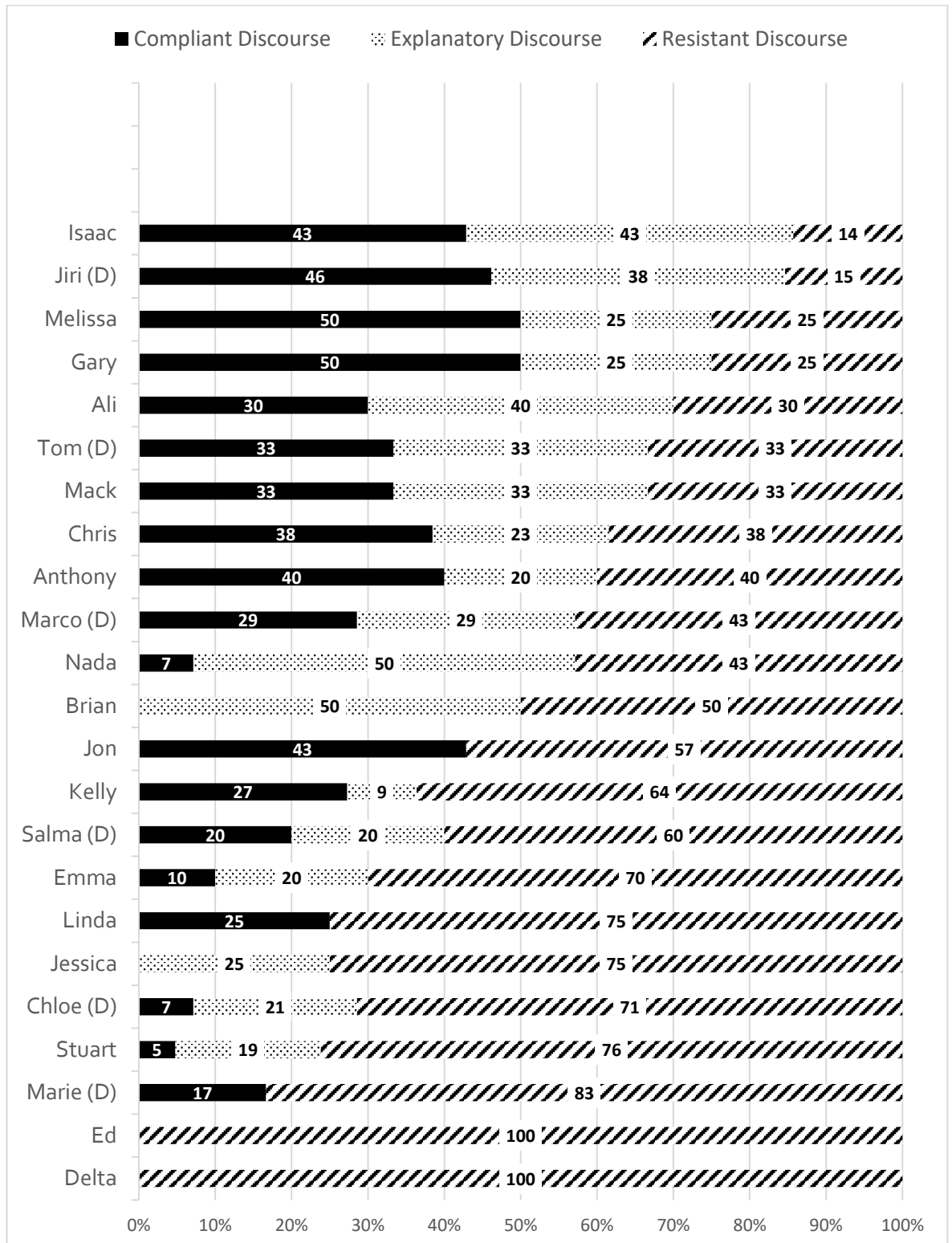
The figure shows the distribution of Discourse models by participants ranked from lowest to highest for the proportion of Resistant Discourse strategies. The number of references per

interview also varies considerably. On average, we find eight or nine argumentative sections per narrative. The interviews with Ed, Jessica, Linda and Melissa contained between two and five instances of argumentation, Stuart's story as many as 21 (although some of these references are broken up by topic shifts).

Concerning the different demographic groups, there were no notable differences in the distribution of Discourse models or specific strategies between blind versus partially sighted people, nor between English and German participants. However, differences were found between unemployed or retired and employed as well as between male and female participants. 66 percent of references made by women were part of the Resistant Discourse, whereas men's contributions only amounted to 41 percent for this discourse model. Instead, male narrators are almost three times more likely to use Compliant Discourse strategies like Perspectivisation and Self-Blame (31 versus 13 percent of references). Similarly, unemployed or retired participants are endorsing proportionally more Resistant Discourse strategies than employed participants (63 versus 44 percent). The opposite is true for the Compliant Discourse (13 versus 30 percent),[32] although employed participants engaged more in Self-Affirmations than unemployed ones did.

There are several factors that influence this spread. First, people who are unemployed and have been made redundant have often had more negative experiences and are therefore more likely to attribute blame to other social actors in Resistant Discourses. Consequently, they are also more likely to discuss instances of discrimination and disablism, which is in an important aspect of blame attribution strategies. The same rationale can be applied to female participants because most women I interviewed have had overall negative employment experiences – on average certainly more so than men (see Chapter 7). Second, the difference between unemployed and employed participants in the Compliant Discourse model can be explained by the fact that people in employment have had more direct contact with managers and are thus able to use that empirical knowledge to empathise with them through Perspectivisation. Finally, employed participants are more prone to be self-affirmative because their capabilities have been validated by having (had) a paid full-time job.

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[32] However, as I noted in previous chapters, five of the seven unemployed or retired participants are female, so gender is a greater predictor than employment status, although the two demographics are probably related since more female than male participants were unemployed or remained in a job role they disliked. To put it differently, there seems to be a chain of dependency in the fact that gender influences people's employment experiences, which in turn has an effect on negative evaluation and resistant discourse reasoning.

I will start with Perspectivisation and Self-Blame categorised as Compliant Discourse strategies. I will then move onto the Explanatory Discourse and its three associated strategies of Generalisation, Externalisation and Speculation before I end this chapter with Resistant Discourse reasoning.

9.2 Compliant Discourse

9.2.1 Perspectivisation

Perspectivisation is a discursive strategy that invites the recipient to adopt a specific point of view – either the narrator's or that of another social actor – in order to understand and empathise with their feelings, thoughts and actions. The examples in this section prompt listeners to put themselves in the position of employers and managers and see the world from their perspective. Perspectivisation was classified as a Compliant Discourse strategy because it advocates understanding for employers and thus can serve to mitigate responsibility by justifying their decisions and practices, notwithstanding whether such justifications are effected rightly or wrongly. Importantly, empathising with someone does not necessarily equal condoning their actions and behaviour.

The most evident way of using a perspectivising strategy is to appeal to recipients' empathy by invoking employers' emotional dispositions. In the examples below (which were analysed as affect appraisals of INSECURITY in the Evaluation chapter), narrators suggest that employers are scared, worried or afraid to employ VI people. This view converges with findings from other qualitative studies of disabled people's experience with employment that labelled the associating trope "existential anxieties" (ROULSTONE & WILLIAMS 2014: 18). These presentations are at times combined with justifications and rationalisation aspects that make those fears more relatable or understandable. Understanding is achieved through evidentiality markers (*of course*, *just, certainly*), concessions (*to be fair, there are justifications for X*) or intensifications (*very* afraid; *very/really* hard/difficult, *never, completely*) as well as certain topics like "health and safety issues" (see Ali).

(264)   That means to dismiss a disabled employee, the company needs to have valid reasons for doing so. And, **of course, that can scare an employer** a little when he employs a severely disabled person. (Das heißt, um einen blinden Mitarbeiter

zu kündigen, muss die Firma das gut begründen können. Und das m**acht natürlich dem Arbeitgeber ein bisschen Angst**, wenn er einen Schwerbehinderten anstellt.) (Jiri, D)

(265)   I think **some of them just get worried**. It's **health and safety issues**, you know, of taking somebody with a disability. … You know, I think **some of them were worried** that they end up tied up with me or something. So, things like that I think **were worrying people**. (Ali)

(266)   I've been the subject of the Americans with Disabilities Act from both sides. Both as a person with a disability and as a person trying to run a small business. And what I find is that it's– **it makes companies very afraid of people with disabilities**. Instead of wanting to genuinely be helpful because it's a human thing to do, **everybody is so afraid** that you're gonna sue them that they go the opposite direction. (Gary)

A shared perspective is also created when it is pointed out that employers have found it challenging to deal with disabled people and their access needs. Even if line managers have been unaware of people's problems, it is their responsibility to ensure equal opportunities are met and, if necessary, to get help how to *deal with someone* who needs those adjustments. Often, the VI person affected by these grievances is either not in the position to raise their concerns for fear of negative consequences, or, as might be the case here, they do not fully realise where the responsibilities lie.

(267)   And even blind people who are particularly good at one area of their work, if they aren't able to do all the other bits around that then that– **it makes it difficult for employers**. … And **there are certainly justifications for some employers** feeling that blind people cannot do certain parts of certain jobs. (Chris)

(268)   **[T]o be fair** to most line managers, you know, **they never experienced** dealing with a person that would need those kinds of adjustments, so they're completely in the dark. (Isaac)

Kelly's account below already indicates a kind of victim-victimiser reversal where the management is depicted as having understandable difficulty adjusting to the employee rather than feeling responsible for providing workplace adjustments that fit around the disabled person. The management eventually failed to accommodate Kelly's needs and she was forced to leave the company. However, we can understand the rationale behind Kelly's attempt at perspectivisation when considering how her abilities and professional identity have changed since her diagnosis (*I was an efficient worker* vs. *barely being able to do a full day's work*).

(269)   **It was very hard for them to adjust to me** not being, you know– I was a really focused, efficient worker that would do a lot of work, get a lot of things done,

help other people get things done, you know. I'd work twelve-hour shifts. And then I'm going from that to barely being able to do a full day's work, **it was really difficult for me to adjust to and also for my management to adjust to**. (Kelly)

Another sign of why these quotes can serve as justifications include the fact that participants do not discuss whether employers' worries and difficulties should play any role in hiring or keeping a blind or partially sighted person in employment in the first place. If these feelings remain unquestioned, they appear to be acceptable despite them having the status of ideological assumptions (or presuppositions). And, as we know, relations of power "are best served by meanings which are widely taken as given" (FAIRCLOUGH 2003: 58).

I argue that emotions of fear are one facet of disablist attitudes, and while it might be a difficult undertaking to change and counteract these feelings, empathising with the people who harbour them can impede progress. Admittedly, empathy with someone does not necessarily provide grounds for justification or grant the person immunity of further criticism, but neither does it easily unlock the more critical ways of examining the underlying mindsets and behaviour. To put it differently, Perspectivisation in Compliant discourse reproduces and maintains rather than challenges or questions the current social order . If we follow the line of argument that an employer has justifiable problems with VI people at work and is therefore (in part) blameless, then the next step would be to look for responsibility in blind and partially sighted people. This destructive strategy of self-blame attribution is the topic of the following section.

9.2.2 Self-Blame Attribution or Victim-Victimiser Reversal

Rather than assigning responsibility for disablist treatment, the lack of opportunity and reasonable adjustments to the person responsible, the individual reverses the roles blaming themselves and thus devaluing or starting to doubt their own abilities and accomplishments. Discursively, we can speak of negative self-presentation; narratively, the stories are similar to FRANK's Chaos narrative (see Subsection 2.3.5). They also reflect individual discourses on disability as well as the problem-focused majority discourse (see Chapter 4). This state of self-doubt can be temporary or long-lasting. Both Jon and Mack eventually realised that it was not their inability to work as fast as other people but rather the missing adjustments

and impairment effects that lay at the source of the difference they found when comparing themselves to their colleagues:

(270)   There was a lot work I had to do with small text and numbers. And **I just thought I was naturally slower than everybody else**, that they were just amazingly quick and I was just slower than them. And it began to dawn on me that, actually, it was nothing to do with that, it was actually with my vision. … And **it still felt to me as though I've been making excuses** for the fact I was slow to do things, or couldn't find things, or whatever. (Jon)

(271)   [T]hey were simple things, but they were obviously important things, you know, indicating (I suppose), in some ways, **where your limitations are**. (Mack)

Like Jon, several other participants have remarked that they were slower than fully sighted colleagues, either when taking written tests in application processes (Marco and Linda) or during day-to-day tasks at work (Marie). If highly qualified disabled applicants repeatedly fail selection tests because of inadequate access technology and adaptations, we must assume that equal opportunities have not been achieved.

(272)   At the end, you have to go through exactly the same normal application processes, and unfortunately, they begin with a very long multiple-choice test. … But **of course, you're never as fast and as good**, I should say, **as someone who can scan with their eyes**, right. (Da muss man hinterher genau die normalen Bewerbungsprozesse durchlaufen, und die beginnen leider mit einem sehr langen Multiple-Choice-Test. … Aber **natürlich is man nie so schnell und so gut**, sag ich mal, **wie man mit dem Auge scrollen kann**, ne.) (Marco, D)

(273)   Sighted people, they can do that [= compose an e-mail] just like that while they are in the conversation, as I have noticed, but **I simply can't do that quite so quickly**. (Die Sehenden, die können das [= eine E-Mail schreiben] dann so während des Gespräches machen, habe ich schon so mitgekriegt, aber **das geht halt bei mir nich so schnell**.) (Marie, D)

(274)   When I go to these typing tests **I don't type fast enough** because they've not got the equipment, and then because I don't type fast enough I don't ever hear from the places again. (Linda)

Some VI people attribute their lack of success in finding or staying in employment or progressing further in their careers to their impairments. Compared to the examples above, this argument facilitates shifting the 'blame' from purely personal limitations and individual differences (*I was slow* or *I wasn't qualified*) to the person's impairment, which is conceived as a group difference (being visually impaired versus fully sighted). Jon, for example, elaborated that seeing his impairment as the primary cause of his struggles at work has come as a revelation because some of the issues could then be solved by implementing adaptations.

As I have discussed in previous chapters, people do experience practical difficulties on various levels in terms of access to information, mobility and so forth. But while impairment effects are a reality for many disabled people, the world of work should nonetheless be able to offer avenues to participate fully. The situation is worse when people feel that they are being rejected because of their status as a disabled person since there is no straightforward way to break free from this label. This kind of argument is linked to the discriminatory perception that disabled people are in general less productive than their non-disabled peers.

(275)   But I can't shake the feeling that **a disability is problematic after all**, yeah. (Aber ich werde das Gefühl nicht los, dass **eine Behinderung doch problematisch ist**, ja.) (Jiri, D)

(276)   And I realised with my minimal education – I've only got a high school diploma – and my limited mobility, **there really are no other job options out there for somebody with my eyesight**. (Gary)

(277)   [S]ight loss has impacted my career progression and my aspirations. … some roles within the business were **quite difficult for someone with a sight impairment**. … that's the consequence of– consequences of sight loss. (Isaac)

Self-blame and self-devaluation are especially transparent in the following quotes by Tom and – perhaps even more so – Kelly. Tom expressly connects his work performance with his visual impairment (*because of my sight*). He also uses the adverb *of course* (the German *natürlich* can also be translated as *naturally*) as an admission, which suggests that the gardener's dismay about Tom's lack of efficiency was justified.

(278)   And after finishing school I first went to a gardener. And, **of course, he couldn't make use of me because**, well, **I did more harm than good**, also **because of my remaining sight**. (Und nach der Schule kam ich vorerst dann zu einem Gärtner. Und **der konnte mich dann natürlich nicht gebrauchen**, **weil ich ihm halt mehr Schaden gebracht hatte als Nutzen,** auch **wegen meinem Sehrest**.) (Tom, D)

(279)   And **partly it was my fault** because I didn't wanna say that I was falling behind and couldn't work as quickly as I used to be able to. (Kelly)

In Kelly's case, someone who endorses disablism might argue that it is effectively her fault if she is falling behind with her work and does not raise the issue to a line manager or supervisor who could potentially help solve the problem or at least provide some reassurance. However, as I have noted before, it is the employers' responsibility to create a work environment where the individual feels that those kinds of concerns can be raised without fear of reproach. We must also consider that Kelly's visual impairment resulted from an accident:

When she returned to work after being off sick for some time, it should have been clear to her managers that a phase of readjustment, reorientation and rehabilitation would be necessary in order for Kelly to continue working as a productive member of the team. During this period of readjustment, it might be expected that she would not "work as quickly as she used to be able to", but judging from her own account, her employer failed to see or address these concerns. Unfortunately, this is a very common case for employees who are facing the onset of sight loss during their career (Bach 2011: 48 ff.).

Chloe judges that both employers and blind and partially sighted people share responsibility of improving VI people's employment situation. Although the visually impaired community might know best which improvements are necessary and can perhaps take a more active role advocating for them, it is ultimately powerful social actors like governments and businesses who have the most influence over the standards, procedures and legislations in place.

(280)   Well, at least discovering new areas like personnel work or trainer work. Too little is happening there. And **too little is happening there on our own initiative**, yeah. And **it's really not just sighted people who have to be blamed for that**. (Also jedenfalls mal neue Bereiche entdecken wie zum Beispiel Personalarbeit oder Trainerarbeit. Da passiert zu wenig. Und **da passiert zu wenig von uns selbst**, ja. Und **so kann man wirklich nich nur den Sehenden vorwerfen**.) (Chloe, D)

(281)   **[Y]ou need to be someone with sufficient resilience** to sort of take the dents and the kicks and get up and brush yourself down and carry on. But I can understand why some visually impaired people shy away from work because, really, potentially you're putting yourself up for, you know, rejection and bad experience. (Mack)

(282)   [I]t's hard for people to do that when **people are generally speaking quite lacking in confidence** and quite frightened really, quite intimidated. (Melissa)

Mack and Melissa raise the possibility that for VI people to function equally in work they need to have "sufficient resilience" because they are more likely to encounter problems, both in practical terms and discriminating attitudes in employers or colleagues. Reversely, this means that people who do not possess this kind of resilience will find it harder to get into or stay in employment. However, the final argument in this section would also entail that less confident disabled people practically have no opportunity to change their situation. These two quotes were coded as Self-Blame strategies because the responsibility to change is seen with the VI person rather than with employers, even though Mack and Melissa do not talk about themselves but about blind and partially sighted people in general.

The discursive strategy of Self-Blame is admittedly a rather subtle one; but those kinds of strategies are no less effective in legitimising control or naturalising social order through text and talk, especially relations of inequality (FAIRCLOUGH 1985, VAN DIJK 1993). This rhetorical pattern seems to suggest that hegemonic discourses along the lines of *blind people are stupid; disabled people are a burden; an impairment is a hinderance*, etc. have had a negative influence on people's self-image (see especially Section 4.2 on the hegemonic discourse). Psychologically, these coping strategies are "responses by disabled people to the experience of living with impairments within a world in which the dominant disability discourse is an individualizing one" (SWAIN & CAMERON 1999: 76). They are symptomatic of the psycho-emotional forms of disablism discussed in Subsection 2.2.3 and potentially damaging to one's identity (see Subsection 2.3.4). Although these responses are valid and represent a way of managing identity, their outcome is effectively reducing rather than promoting people's wellbeing and self-confidence.

9.3   Explanatory Discourse

I introduced Explanatory Discourse as a third category next to Compliant and Resistant Discourse during the conception of this chapter to account for examples where narrators do not take sides or assign blame, neither implicitly nor explicitly, and instead discuss problems. The strategies in this section are often concerned with wider socio-economic or legal issues around disability and employment (Generalisation and Externalisation). The strategy labelled Speculation captures the idea that interviewees make assumptions about what employers know and think about VI people and their employment situation as well as disability needs and how shortcomings could potentially be eliminated. Externalisation and Generalisation mean abstracting from individual experience and finding reasons for being rejected for a job, especially reasons that do not relate directly to the situation where the rejection occurred. While there certainly is some truth to the connection between unemployment rates and the likelihood of people to find work, this circumstance does not explain the much higher unemployment rate among VI people across all fields of work compared to sighted or non-disabled people, since we would expect everyone to be equally affected by a recession regardless of a disability.

9.3.1   Generalisation

Generalisations widen the focus for explanations of disablism and negative experiences of VI people by looking for reasons that affect a larger amount of the population, such as high unemployment rates and precarious economic situations in general as well as low employment rates among blind and partially sighted people in particular. Anthony and Mack draw on recession and unemployment rates as arguments for why they have found it difficult to get into employment. (Both, however, have managed to find a job and were employed at the time of the interview.)

(283)   [A]s I came out of college I realised that, because **we're in quite a lot of recession times still**, it was obviously a lot different back then as well, I thought, well, I'm gonna have to try and spread my remit a lot further, you know. (Anthony)

(284)   I finished my postgraduate diploma and I graduated in 1994. And again, this was **in the middle of a recession in the United Kingdom**. … the North East of England still **has the highest unemployment rate** in the UK. (Mack)

Recession and high unemployment can help participants understand why it took them longer than expected to find a job (Mack) or why they have conceded with entering a field of work that was different from what they originally sought out to do (Anthony). This strategy can therefore help integrate problematic or undesired turns and career developments into one's employment biography. Such attempts collectivise and depersonalise the experience to some degree, which has been noted in stories where people recount negative or even traumatic experience (see also DE FINA 2003, DE FINA & GEORGAKOPOULOU 2012: 76).

High unemployment rates among blind and partially sighted people specifically can function as a strategy to explain people's difficulties. At the same time, the argument partly deflects employer responsibility and presents the issue as a mere statistical fact removed from the realm of social agency. The quotes below rhetorically function as generalisations since they move the focus away from the individual and their unique experience and toward the whole of the VI community, thus presenting the individual experience as a typical one of the in-group (DE FINA & GEORGAKOPOULOU 2012: 82). In the process, people become a number in the unemployment figure. Discursively, the narrators and other blind and partially sighted people are 'aggregated' as a number and 'assimilated' into a single group (see VAN LEEUWEN 1996: 49). It is striking that statistics about employment levels of blind and partially sighted people are common knowledge among the participants, seeing that so many

have mentioned this fact. The figures are regularly circulated by VI charities in newsletters and on their websites or social media accounts and thus seem to have entered people's collective memory. Expressing this collective memory can be seen as a sign of blind and partially sighted people's group talk in a community of practice or symbolic community (see Subsections 2.1.1 and 2.2.6). In relation to narrative analysis, this argument can also be considered a "public narrative" (SOMERS 1994).

(285)   There is– as I said this society for the blind and visually impaired in academia and employment … And even there in this society are, well, **at least seventeen, eighteen percent [unemployed],** right? And **among blind people easily over thirty [percent unemployed].** (Es gibt n– wie gesagt diesen Verein für Blinde und Sehbehinderte in Studium und Beruf … Und selbst dort in dem Verein sind so, ja, **siebzehn, achtzehn Prozent** mindestens, ne? Und **so unter Blinden auch über dreißig**.) (Marco, D)

(286)   I once heard, I'm afraid **30, 40 percent of blind people have work**, you know. (Ich hab mal gehört, fürchte so 30, 40 Prozent von den Blinden haben Arbeit, nicht.) (Tom, D)

(287)   I'm aware that sort of **employment levels among visually impaired people working is somewhere between thirty, thirty-five percent**. Certainly, employment levels in like professional professions are probably much, much lower than that. (Brian)

(288)   I have come to understand through one piece of research or another that **eighty percent of completely blind people are generally unemployed**. (Nada)

The rhetoric move of citing statistics lends argumentative strength to one's claims. Empirical, falsifiable data make an argument more convincing because numerical evidence is routinely published by reliable and well-renowned authorities, for instance the Department for Work and Pensions or other governmental organisations as well as charities working in the VI sector. Discursively, these legitimations by authorisation (see VAN LEEUWEN & WODAK 1999) create intertextual links between biographical narratives and official sources, studies and surveys. What is problematic about this "topos of numbers" is that visually impaired job seekers (or anyone, for that matter) have no control over employment levels. The issue is hinted at rather than critically discussed or evaluated because participants who use this strategy do not normally give any underlying reasons why they think unemployment rates among VI people are so much higher. Consequently, the agents responsible for the situation remain inaccessible. However, it is also possible that narrators have no answer as to why the situation is so grim for many people.

Psychologically, generalisations function as coping strategies that can inspire a sense of community and joint suffering. The argument helps to lighten the weight of setbacks and disappointments because people can accept that personal limitations are not the reason why they have not found work. Instead, the issue is presented as a very common experience of blind and partially sighted people looking for work. It can be argued that the strategy therefore is a form of justification for why people have been unsuccessful in finding jobs. Externalisation works in an analogous manner, but the focus is shifted from the general to a more specific, often technical aspect.

9.3.2 Externalisation

Externalisation provides reasons that are not immediately connected to the individual's situation, such as legal frameworks, i.e. the protection against dismissal, issues with IT and access to technology as well as budgetary cuts in certain sectors and public services. Especially funding cutbacks are closely related to the previous strategy of Generalisation because they can affect other disabled people or even non-disabled employees.

The so-called *Kündigungsschutz* or protection against dismissal is most notably mentioned by German participants, although English-speaking participants also discuss disability legislation (see (266)). Rather than seeking responsibility in employers for not taking a chance on disabled employees, disability legislation is seen as one of the barriers to employment. These policies were of course originally introduced to protect people's rights. This line of reasoning therefore adopts the view of employers that it is hard to "get rid of" VI employees and carries an aspect of mitigation and legitimation.

(289)   Maybe it also plays a role that the– well, **the protection against dismissal for severely disabled people** is quite pronounced in Germany, yeah. (Vielleicht spielt noch eine Rolle, dass in Deutschland der– also **der Kündigungsschutz für die Schwerbehinderten** besonders ausgeprägt ist, ja.) (Jiri, D)

(290)   Then the second major barrier is I think **the protection against dismissal**. Many employers think 'Well, if I employ a disabled person now, I will never get rid of them again', right. (Dann is n zweiter großer Hemmnis glaub ich is **der Kündigungsschutz**. Viele Arbeitgeber denken ‚Naja, wenn ich n Behinderten jetzt einstelle, den werd' ich ja nie wieder los', ne.) (Marco, D)

(291)   **[T]he policy** provides many opportunities. But, well, the implementation is not really one-to-one. (**[D]as Gesetz** verschafft einem schon viele Möglichkeiten. Aber die Umsetzung ist halt nicht wirklich Eins-zu-Eins.) (Salma, D)

The second major complicating factor is information technology, especially software and computers. Assistive technology and screen readers are often praised as allowing VI people access to digital information. However, as I already mentioned in previous chapters, there are also areas in IT that do not easily lend themselves to full access for disabled people. Sometimes participants recount experiences from the past when access technologies were not as advanced as they are nowadays (Chloe, Emma). At other times, they attribute difficulties in finding a suitable job to the fact that computers have become a necessary aspect of modern working life in many jobs. People like Ali thus see the prevalence of modern technology as a barrier rather than an advantage, while others take the opposite side.

(292)   [I]n the nineties, **computers weren't that advanced**, and I wasn't quite ready yet. So, I couldn't use the computer that fluently. ([I]n den neunziger Jahren **da war das noch nich so weit mit den Computern** und ich war auch noch nich so weit. Also konnte den Computer auch nich so fließend nutzen.) (Chloe, D)

(293)   [A]ctually, **this medium**, this way of working **wasn't going to be the best thing** for me. (Emma)

(294)   You know, most of the jobs are in **computers these days or IT-based**. And so– You know, it was always that **I can't do this, I can't do that**. (Ali)

(295)   [I]f you didn't have **these kinds of tools or assistance** maybe the job as whole would be difficult to perform. (Mack)

The last topic in this category is about financial matters of organisations. Marco and Ali directly relate their (unsuccessful) job hunting experience to cutbacks in the public and governmental employment sectors. Obviously, job applicants cannot be certain that the reason for being refused a position is in fact based on budgetary constraints of the company. As Stuart's example illustrates, financial issues might also be used as pretence by employers.

(296)   And, well, I then limited myself to the public sector, and even though you have quite a lot of job interviews there because of legislation, in principle, **the budgetary constraints of the authorities are also becoming stronger now**, despite there being quite a lot of them in [place]. (Und dann hab ich mich jetzt auf n öffentlichen Bereich halt beschränkt gehabt, und da hat man dann durch gesetzliche Vorgaben zwar relativ viele Vorstellungsgespräche, aber im Prinzip **werden da jetzt auch die Haushaltszwänge immer stärker bei den Behörden**, selbst wenn es in [Ort] sehr, sehr viele gibt.) (Marco, D)

(297)   The colleges, councils, you know. Just quite big organisations like that. But then the problem there I had is that sometimes they didn't have these kinds of schemes in place. **Cause they are having cutbacks** and things like that. (Ali)

(298)   And we're not too sure why they've actually got rid of me. **They've used the excuse that we have financial cutbacks,** but the question is, why me? (Stuart)

All three arguments, legal legislation, technology and budgetary aspects, can partly be used as explanations or justifications for why people have not found a job. Rather than having to blame themselves (as in the previous Discourse model) or the employer (as in the Resistant Discourse model), the responsibility is rhetorically shifted to inanimate objects and abstract processes or states that have no obvious originator. Disability policies and funding cutbacks are of course authored and executed by social actors and thus by people, but the way these factors are discussed in the narratives suggests that not any one person or institution is explicitly held responsible for the situation. Some of these sentiments are also surfacing in the social model of disability that focuses on the shortcomings of society at large (see Subsection 2.2.2).

9.3.3   Speculation

Speculation, in this context, means making assumptions or estimations about why employers are reluctant to employ VI people or why they fail to make reasonable adjustments and provide equal opportunities. Some of the examples below are hypotheses about what employers think and know, and thus they bear some resemblance to the strategy of Perspectivisation. The reason I coded them as part of the Explanatory rather than the Compliant Discourse model is that deficits in one's knowledge can more easily be remedied, for instance by educating and training people on disability issues. Emotions such as fear, on the other hand, which were the main concern in the Perspectivisation section, are far less malleable or controllable. Hypotheses about people's knowledge therefore do not work as justifications or legitimations but as explanations. Some of the quotes can even be read as carrying an element of blame attribution because we can draw the implicature that employers should be knowledgeable in the areas they are being criticised for lacking knowledge in, see (304).

One indicator that we are dealing with hypotheses rather than established facts is that many people use the expression *I think* before they introduce the problem they talk about, see (303), (306) and (307). For instance, participants state that employers do not have sufficient knowledge, experience and understanding about disability issues, particularly how a VI person works and what kinds of tools and assistive technologies are available to them as well as how to implement these adjustments:

(299)   **First, they know– the companies have too little information, of course.** For example, how a blind employee works. What he needs. What kind of support he needs, what kind of support he doesn't need, right. We're working with computers. What can he do, what can't he do, right? These– **normally they know– the knowledge is rarely available**. (**Am Anfang wissen– haben die Firmen natürlich viel zu wenig Informationen**. Wie zum Beispiel ein blinder Mitarbeiter arbeitet. Was er braucht. Was für Unterstützung er braucht, was für Unterstützung er nicht braucht, ja. Wir arbeiten mit Computer. Was kann er machen, was kann er nicht machen, ja? Diese– **normalerweise wissen– ist das Wissen kaum vorhanden**.) (Jiri, D)

(300)   Even with technologies there are some limitations, but most of it is possible nowadays, **and most employers simply don't know that**, right. (Selbst mit den Techniken gibt's zwar noch Grenzen, aber das meiste geht halt heute, **und das wissen die meisten Arbeitgeber halt nich**, ne.) (Marco, D)

(301)   [T]hey were very willing to help. **They didn't know** how, **they didn't have the experience, the knowledge**. (Isaac)

(302)   [M]y colleagues in this department, or rather **the supervisor or the manager** of this department, **didn't really understand** my strengths. (Jessica)

(303)   I don't think people are malicious and purposely trying to make things more difficult. **I think it's a case of ignorance and being uninformed**. (Kelly)

(304)   As I say, **it's lack of knowledge**, lack of training, lack of things. They don't know how– it's not a case of they don't know how to handle it, **they don't even think about it**. (Stuart)

It is also interesting to note that Jiri corrects himself twice in the quote above by reverting to an impersonal formulation (*they know– the companies/the knowledge*) thus exhibiting a kind of blame avoidance strategy, while Stuart, on the other hand, intensifies his judgment by using repetition and *not even*.

The other issue that participants raise several times is training and education for employers as well as employment advisors in job centres that would redress their lack of knowledge and raise awareness about disability needs and "how straightforward it can be to employ someone with a visual impairment" (Nada).

(305)   **[E]mployers need to be educated**. **Employers need to understand** what visually impaired people can offer to an employer and, you know, to judge the person on the skills that they've got. (Emma)

(306)   I think **there's not enough education for people** themselves in terms of what is put into the support– is available to them in employment. Because quite often the disability employment advisors at the job centre don't have any particular specialism in that area. They're just kind of side-lined into that role and **they**

don't really understand a great deal about visual impairment or who to refer people onto. (Melissa)

(307) I think that **someone really needs to talk to employers** about how straightforward it can be to employ someone with a visual impairment. I think somebody really needs to show employers what they can do practically and technologically to support someone that's working for them. (Nada)

(308) [Y]ou may need to look at certainly **education for employers** and those providing employment services. (Brian)

While Explanatory Discourse is very much problem-focused, strategies like Generalisation and Externalisation can also serve to deflect responsibility. Unemployment among blind and partially sighted people is seen as a prevalent problem but not necessarily critically discussed, and the causes are not always made transparent. At the same time, these argumentations can be part of a sense-making strategy that helps individuals to understand why they have found it difficult to get into employment. Speculation, on the other hand, can bear resemblance to Resistant Discourses because employers are portrayed as being at the core of the issue, even if they are not blamed explicitly. Other-blame attribution will be discussed in the following subsection.

9.4 Resistant Discourse

9.4.1 Other-Blame Attribution

In the Resistant Discourse model, I distinguish two sub-strategies: Other-Blame Attribution and Self-Affirmation. Other-Blame Attribution is used to assign responsibility to employers and other social actors, either for making wrong decisions or unjustified assumptions about VI people's abilities and access needs or for harbouring resentment and negative attitudes toward blind and partially sighted people. Some of the examples are implicit rather than explicit blame attributions and thus need to be elaborated by employing cultural and contextual background knowledge. Blame attributions are part of a resistant discourse because participants name problems and by doing so challenge people's attitudes and behaviour. These strategies serve the purpose of negative Other-presentation and are in stark contrast to the Self-Blame strategy in the Compliant Discourse model – where narrators indirectly accept or condone the devaluing positionings of others. Instances of discrimination and disablism

are a major aspect of Other-Blame Attributions. Some examples are more or less explicitly narrated as acts of discrimination from the participants' perspective. It is also important to note that these accounts are necessarily negative in regard to the evaluative dimension, which provides a more differentiated view on the findings of Chapter 7: Negative evaluation and resistance are to a degree co-dependent and expressed through criticism.

The example below, for instance, allows for the implicature that blind people should receive more support during their university degree. Universities and people employed by the institution are therefore (implicitly) held responsible for failing to oversee that blind people have the access tools they need to assist them during their studies. The quote also triggers a negative judgment because, at least to Nada's mind, gaps exist between non-disabled and disabled students, equal opportunities are not the status quo.

(309)   And a large percentage of blind people generally drop out of university because **they're not getting the support that they need** to complete their degree. (Nada)

Moreover, employers are seen as shirking responsibility (Jiri), blocking access for disabled people (Marco) and flouting disability and equality acts (Stuart). This behaviour is probably rooted in ignorance and negative attitudes (Melissa), more specifically the view that blind people "can't do anything" (Chris) and that they would not be able to contribute valuable skills to a team or even be a burden to their colleagues.

(310)   It's about information. But also about responsibility. **It's possible that some people shirk responsibility**, yeah. (Es geht um die Information. Aber auch um die Verantwortung. **Es kann sein, dass einige Leute sich vor Verantwortung drücken**, ja.) (Jiri, D)

(311)   Yeah, my ideal field of work that I wanted to go into, the auditing firms, the investment banks, that's such an elite circle. With my disability, I don't have to try to get into those at all, unfortunately, that's what I found. **They're blocking that completely**. (Ja, meine Traumbranche, wo es mich halt hingezogen hat, also eigentlich in die Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaften, in die Investmentbanken, das is so 'n elitärer Kreis. Da brauch ich's mit der Behinderung gar nich versuchen, hab' ich mittlerweile gelernt leider. **Die blocken das total ab**.) (Marco, D)

(312)   **They have been flouting the equality** act left, right and centre. … They weren't interested in the quality of the training they were giving. And basically– sometimes those problems arise, issues, and **they just dismissed them**. (Stuart)

(313)   I think **the biggest barrier for people is the negative attitude of employers**. When I was– you know, I've had experience with that. When I was wanting to

leave support work and go and do something else, after countless interviews that I know I've got to do a job standing on my head. (Melissa)

(314) [T]he attitude that '**Oh, these blind people, they can't do anything**', you know. 'They can't cope with that, they can't cope with that'. And there is a general perception that blind people cannot. (Chris)

The narrators' negative judgments are evident in the semantic domains the lexicogrammatical patterns are associated with, which is concerned with shifting or avoiding responsibility (*shirk* responsibility), metaphors of impeding or blocking certain (positive) developments (*flout*, *block*) and negative overtones in meaning in the phrase *these blind people*. But once again, socio-cultural and contextual knowledge is a vital part of establishing the attribution of responsibility, i.e. that employers should not shirk responsibility, that they should adhere to equality standards and that they should not have these kinds of attitudes whereby they judge people based on their disabilities rather than their skillsets.

Disablism as unequal treatment can also be reflected in paternalism, when employers make decisions about what VI people need and what they can or cannot do without conferring with the affected party. Patronising or infantilising actions do not have to be borne out of ill-meaning intentions, but they nevertheless devalue the person and diminish their self-worth by taking away their autonomy and right to self-determination. Just like any other form of group-focused discrimination, disablist behaviour does not have to be intentional to be effectual. As Linda points out, there is a lack of proper managing skills.

(315) We realised quite quickly that I probably wasn't going to be able to use a till. Which was a– you know, **they didn't ask me**. **They just assumed that I wouldn't be able to do that**. So, I got other things to do instead. (Emma)

(316) And I did not think she understood how to work with a blind person, because **without me asking or anything she just thought**, 'Oh, you need assistance'. So, she arranged for my colleague to come and help me when I did not need the help. So, I felt– and she didn't actually sit down and discuss things. A lot times this was her decision and meetings was just like a pretence. (Jessica)

(317) **The Managing Director had no management skills at all**. My guide dog was rummaging in the waste paper basket in the office and she just tapped me on the shoulder and said the word Bins. This doesn't mean anything whatsoever to someone who can't see. (Linda, e-mail communication)

Several participants have raised the suspicion that they were rejected for a job or the opportunity to be invited for an interview because of their disability, especially when they were voluntarily disclosing their disability (Mack) or when application forms had required them to disclose it (Ed).

(318)   So, I knew that my CVs looked well, send them off, nothing would happen. And you'd start to wonder '**Am I not getting it– even for an interview because I'm disclosing my disability**?' (Mack)

(319)   **I generally didn't get anywhere with the employers' application forms** when they had asked about my disability except with the civil service ones. (Ed)

(320)   Yeah, and then I applied here and there and had to discover that, well, I would be suitable but **being blind was always kind of in the foreground**. (Ja, und dann hab ich hier und da mich beworben und durfte wieder feststellen, ja, ich wäre zwar geeignet, aber **das Blindsein das stand immer also so im Vordergrund**.) (Chloe, D)

Since applicants do not have insight into the details of application processes, they cannot be certain that their visual impairment was in fact the primary factor of the rejection. Therefore, many participants speak of the subtlety, or indirect or institutionalised, discrimination. The problem that follows is how discrimination can be proven, and this question seems to preoccupy people's minds. Stuart's case is somewhat more enlightening in that regard. With the help of the union, he could establish that he was the only candidate for the jobs he applied for, but he was still not able to secure any of the openings.

(321)   I have applied for jobs since losing my vision impairment. I've got as far as interview but never ever being offered another job. (2 sec pause) Yeah, so, I don't know whether that's just obviously, you know, I'm not at the skill level or **whether my disability just played a part in that**. (Kelly)

(322)   [H]ow can you really enforce disability discrimination equality when you can't really prove that an employer was discriminating against you? So, **it's very subtle kind of discrimination**, indirect sort of discrimination that takes place. (Ali)

(323)   As I say, I found the experience with my disabilities– a lot of it is– you know, **there's discrimination there**. **But you can't prove it**. **It's very subtle** … And I went for ten, fifteen, no about ten jobs there. And they– basically, often I was the only candidate there I didn't get a single one of those jobs. The union there was pretty sure but we couldn't conv– **couldn't find out for certain that I was being discriminated on the grounds of disability**. (Stuart)

Disablism becomes more blatant in personal encounters and specific discriminating practices that people were subjected to by employers or line managers. These are individual cases, and it is therefore difficult to draw general tendencies from the examples, but they nevertheless illustrate a severe and hostile expression of disablist attitudes in some people's workplaces. Some participants find out about their managers' enmities through word of mouth by other colleagues, even when disablists are not openly voicing their resentment (see Marco).

In Stuart's case, the boss' feelings toward disabled people have transpired in a more obvious manner in the conversation they had. But whether the person can be safely classified as "anti-anyone who's disabled" is left open to some degree by Stuart through the use of the discourse modifier *I think*.

(324)   But I was really unfortunate with both my supervisors, I have to say. In hindsight, **they apparently had a problem with my disability** in general, as I was told by colleagues. (Aber ich hatte auch wirklich Pech mit meinen beiden Vorgesetztinnen, muss ich sagen. **Die hatten** im Nachhinein, was ich von Kollegen so gehört hab, **anscheinend schon mal Probleme mit der Behinderung** überhaupt.) (Marco, D)

(325)   [M]y boss's boss once said to me– he was coming in here and I was, basically, I've got the disability living allowance mobility care part. And basically, he turned round and said 'Hey, you can walk around'. Even though I'm walking round with a stick and everything else, and I can't see properly. And he said '**Oh, no, you don't need– no, you shouldn't have that**.' Effectively, you had to be a multiple amputee in a wheelchair in a bed to qualify for it, as far as he's concerned. And **he was pretty anti-anyone who's disabled**. And that's part of the reason why I think they wanted– **he doesn't like having disabled people around**, or anyone who's visibly disabled. (Stuart)

In Jessica's and Anthony's cases, disablism is manifested in unequal treatment and the rejection of the possibility to gain further qualifications and training. The discriminating practice is clear in both instances: The school was able to provide braille exam questions before when Jessica went through the education system, but refused to do the same for a teacher training test; similarly, Anthony was made an unconditional offer for a college course until the decision was revoked without explanation. The intentions and attitudes of the people who supervise these tests and courses, however, are inaccessible. Jessica's account also demonstrates that people react differently to disablism. While she expresses anger and indignation, other participants might feel sad or disappointed in a comparable situation, and thus more likely to fall into thought patterns of affectedness and self-blame.

(326)   I was rather infuriated, because it's ridiculous, you know. I have been going through the school, the education system. I took all the exams. They had braille exam questions for me. And then how could they say **a selection test for teacher training, they can't provide for the blind**? (Jessica)

(327)   I went to my local college to do a B-Tec, and when I was there I decided I'd do the foundation degree course, the next level up. So, I was told by a lecturer that I would get on the course, no problems. In fact, he went as far as to mention I would be given an unconditional offer. However, two days later that was revoked and I wasn't on the course at all. And when we found out why that was, it was because **there was a module in the second year which he thought I**

> **was going to struggle with** so it got quite– **it got quite nasty**, you know. … So that's the only time I can ever say, you know, definitely, that was maybe some discrimination but maybe it was because he was unaware of it. Maybe he didn't realise like what technology there was out there. (Anthony)

Anthony's quote partially combines blame attribution with mitigation and relativisation (*maybe some discrimination*), as well as perspectivisation and hypothesising (*maybe he was unaware, maybe he didn't realise*). Why the assertion is toned down in such a way remains open to debate. As I mentioned in the Evaluation chapter, this could have to do with the narrator's personality, the amount of information or evidence available to them as well as politeness conventions that prohibit judging other people too harshly or insinuating unfounded motives.

Delta's experience is arguably the worst case of disablist resentment and depreciation in my data. She indicates that the head teacher's suggestion is extremely hurtful and completely unjustified. Her comment lacks any grounds for constructive advice and exposes itself as a mere disablist insult disguised as caretaking.

(328)   And then one day I went to her and said 'Look, why don't you just send it to me electronically and I'll print it out?' '**Because I keep forgetting that you're disabled now**. So why don't you wear one of the hats that the children wear? With the padded hat. Because sometimes I just– and then I won't forget.' Which I found extremely insulting and upsetting. (Delta)

If VI people can rise above the disablism, discrimination, resentment and rejection by summoning a positive self-image, then they can start to realise their potential as blind and partially sighted employees. Some participants transform the destructive experience and turn it into constructive self-affirmations, which will be discussed in the last section.

9.4.2   Self-Affirmation

The Self-Affirmation strategy presents the individual as a confident and strong-willed person who knows their own mind and self-worth and will sometimes openly challenge disablist evaluations that are laid on them by others. As such, this rhetorical strategy can be aligned with a (re)positioning attempt of the narrating self that rejects the positioning attempts made by others (e.g. managers) and calls presupposed hierarchies and judgments into question by shifting the focus to one's strengths (see especially Subsection 2.2.4). Picking up the argument from Subsection 2.2.6 on disability identity, self-affirmations can help build the kind

of self-regard necessary for being able to positively identify with such an identity label. A self-affirming stance and open resistance can help the person to show that they are determined and thus pave the way for a successful career, as Chris and Mack demonstrate. In Delta's case, however, self-determination was not enough to overcome the kind of disablism she encountered.

(329)   I said, '**Nobody tells me I can't see well enough to do the job**. You can tell me I'm not competent to do the job. But I will decide whether I can see well enough to do it'. And it's the only time I ever knew that man lost for words. (Chris)

(330)   I kinda knew– started to know my own mind that I had capabilities. So, in a way, I felt **it didn't matter what other people thought** I knew. I started to sense that, yeah, I could do stuff. (Mack)

(331)   I was talking to my husband, and he just worried about it. And just– he kept saying to me 'Just give up work, it's just not worth it'. You know, 'It's just dragging you down'. And I kept saying '**No, I'm not going to be pushed out like this**'. (Delta)

Self-affirmations do not have to enter a confrontational setting to be effective (see Emma and Isaac). Isaac's example also emphasises that the struggle against everyday disablism can ultimately build people's strength and confidence. This aspect can be a distinguishing feature in a disabled person's biography and an advantage over non-disabled competitors (if employers see this potential), since employees that belong to dominant groups do not necessarily go through such an experience.

(332)   And I think a lot of it is down to me being proactive. **Me knowing what I need, not being a victim**. Not seeing myself as somebody who can't do a full role because of my disability. (Emma)

(333)   The positive ones are actually **what you learn from going through the experience and the strength that that brings you**. And I just think people should never underestimate the qualities that they develop as a result of dealing with a disability. … If there are challenges and you learn to deal with them then **you're stronger for it and you require useful skills** that are underestimated. (Isaac)

(334)   [M]y mom was probably the driving force in my life. **My mom wouldn't let me use my vision as a handicap**. She wouldn't let me give up on things. (Gary)

(335)   [They] have very kindly registered me as sight-impaired. And I'm now very kind of, I don't see that as a stigmatising thing at all. **I see that as a hugely enabling thing for me**. (Jon)

Gary's story shows that a higher level of resilience can also be initiated by other people such as family, parents, partners and friends (see also Section 6.4). Finally, Jon's quote illustrates the importance of one's perspective on and relationship with the impairment because it can be a liberating feeling to see the barriers as challenges that can be overcome and the differences as enabling factors that open new possibilities.

9.5 Summary

In this chapter, I set out to provide an analysis of the most important rhetorical domains for analysing VI people's employment narratives. The investigation provides deeper insight into the intricacies of these issues, their connectedness as well as the discrepancies between different discourse models and stresses how empirical interview data can be used to explore visually impaired people's professional identities more fully. In the end, however, it is a combination of factors that influence blind and partially sighted people's employment experience. It is unlikely that any one discourse model will be able to fully explain the different situational settings and personal contexts of people.

Most of the strategies discussed in the Compliant Discourse as well as the ones in the section on Explanatory Discourse serve the purpose of rationalising people's negative experience: Narrators try to find explanations for why they have been made redundant or why they have not been able to find a job. In both Compliant and Resistant Discourses, responsibility is primarily attributed to social actors. The crucial difference is that in the Compliant Discourse people attribute responsibility to themselves or the VI community at large, or they directly or indirectly mitigate responsibility of employers, thus justifying, excusing or rationalising the negative attitudes and behaviour of others. Resistant Discourse, on the other hand, argues against disablist ideology and attributes primary responsibility to employers and people engaging in discriminatory practice. In this respect, the Explanatory Discourse is more impersonal and further removed from the direct responsibility of any social actor. External or circumstantial causes are suggested as key explanations for VI people's negative experiences and struggles. When social actors are included in the line of reasoning, they are not explicitly held responsible. Rather, the problem is presented as a matter of fact with minimal or no blame attribution in Speculations.

Lastly, in the section on Other-Blame Attribution, I have mapped out the hypothesis that disablism is an ideological worldview that categorises and evaluates individuals on the grounds of their disability, irrespective of personal qualities and individual differences. It is a *point of view problem* as it disregards what people can do by limiting the scope to what they cannot do. Disablism can be expressed both by practices and actions and in personal conversations through evaluations and judgments. Resistant Discourse is a way of challenging and counteracting these evaluations, but first they need to be made explicit through Other-Blame Attributions. The quantitative analysis in the beginning of the chapter also suggests that a relatively high number of the participants engage in this discourse model, which is both somewhat surprising as well as heartening because it shows that VI people strive to debunk the traditional thinking that disabled people are constantly facing barriers and experiencing limitations in a wide variety of workplace contexts.

To engage in Resistant Discourse thinking, the disabled person needs to come out and redefine their personal identity by "rejecting the tyranny of the *normate*"; having "come out, the disabled person no longer regards disability as a reason for self-disgust, or as something to be denied or hidden, but rather as an imposed oppressive social category to be challenged and broken down" (SWAIN & CAMERON 1999: 76). This can be shown through the rhetorical analysis of my data where the discourse shifts from the struggle against the self in the Compliant Discourse model to the struggle against a disabling society in the Resistant Discourse model (see also SWAIN & CAMERON 1999: 77 f.). This finding is true both across and within a number of participants, as some interviewees could be shown to go through identity transformations (see especially Section 8.1), although this does not equally apply to all narrators, unfortunately. In any case, these transitions reiterate the point that identities are temporally dynamic and highly context-dependent (see Section 2.1).

10 Conclusion

This study has investigated professional identities of blind and partially sighted people in the UK and Germany by exploring their narrative accounts through Critical Discourse Studies techniques focusing on discourse patterns and topics, linguistic means of evaluation, voice, rhetorical strategies and discourse models. I have demonstrated how a CDS approach can be combined with a disability studies perspective and biographical research methods, and how a participant-focused view on counter-discourse can complement findings from traditional sociological and discourse analytical studies. I have suggested how disablism can be defined and analysed when reflected in people's employment biographies. I found that disablist ideology can manifest in a number of different ways: For some people it is the latent denial of opportunity, their skills being underestimated, not being offered a chance or being rejected for a job solely on the grounds of their impairment; others see a lack of knowledge and awareness or negative attitudes in employers as the main barriers, which would need to be counteracted by offering training, raising awareness, furthering mutual understanding and respect, emphasising the value that VI people can bring to a company; a portion of the participants have also experienced direct discrimination, misrecognition and forms of hate speech, expressions of resentment or contempt that devalue their worth both as individuals and as job seekers or employees. Prevalent stereotypes include that VI people are slower, less independent and less productive than sighted employees, that they need a lot of help to function equally well or to function at all, that they pose a health and safety risk to companies, that their requests of reasonable adjustments are an annoyance or a financial burden and that they trigger fears and anxieties in others.

Another vital aspect is the implementation and realisation of support mechanisms and access technologies in the workplace. This includes the Access to Work programme and similar frameworks (e.g. the temporary employment position scheme), application training, safeguarding of legislations and employee protection, offering counselling and equipping union representatives and service providers such as job advisors with the tools they need to support disabled people and strengthen their negotiating position vis-à-vis employers. Available services need to be publicised more widely, both for employers and employees. And while more support is certainly necessary, I have also pointed out that self-managing one's needs can at the same time be a stressor for people.

Which of these steps reflect on prognostic critique related to the project? According to GENDRON (2013), more research is needed on an institutional level to find out, for example, if and how exactly any existing workplace regulations take low vision into account and which restrictions in public spaces in general and in the employment context specifically show the most potential for improvement in terms of accessibility. Buisnesses as well as public sector institutions also need improved access to representatives and specialists experienced in the area of disability needs, inclusion and diversity. Furthermore, bureaucratic hurdles must be reduced that currently complicate and impede rapid and easy access to a wide array of support mechanisms, whether they function on a technological, personal or environmental level. These kinds of support systems also need to be extended to encompass counselling connected to apprenticeships and training measures, which should be tailored to better fit people's diverse needs and lifestyles, e.g. by providing more opportunities for distant learning and remote employment.

Regarding social identity categories, it was interesting to see that there was almost no variation in stories of English- and German-speaking participants and less differences than expected between age groups or blind and partially sighted people. The main dividing factor I identified was gender, where it could be shown that female participants are less likely to find employment and have thus had more negative experiences but at the same time a lot of capacity for discursive resistance. A possible limitation of the study is that the participant group is not fully representative of the socioeconomic spread in society: Many interviewees have a higher education degree or can be considered skilled professionals, which is also reflected in the articulate and at times clearly political, self-aware manner of their speech. However, this fact must be considered in relation to the recruitment process itself, which mainly involved contacting charities for blind and partially sighted people. I am not confident I could have reached VI people with different backgrounds by any other means.

To investigate the topic of disabled people and employment further, I would suggest considering the views of employers and managers in more detail, since they have been identified as the main social actors responsible for the barriers and challenges that people face in employment. The question is, however, whether employers will reveal their reasoning and potential disablist attitudes to researchers at all. Future research could also explore the experiences of people with other forms of impairments. Following my earlier comment, it could be rewarding to put a stronger emphasis on gender identity and specifically ask people about their opinions on this matter. In my own study, the importance of this category only began to surface during the coding and analysis stages.

The wider context of perceptions of disability has been explored both through a dialectic debate between the literature and the data by consulting several sociological studies and in a corpus analysis on expressions connected to blindness and visual impairment, both of which confirmed the societal views expressed previously that contribute to an image of disabled people as dependent and, at times, second-class citizens. The analysis of grammatical voice and affectedness as well as the Compliant discourse model and strategies of self-blame and negative self-presentation has demonstrated that these opinions and judgments indeed impact on people's confidence and self-images and that some of them have internalised oppressive views and behaviours of others by incorporating them into their identities. This circumstance also highlights the (disabling and destructive) power of hegemonic discourse: Language is indeed effective in influencing people's mindsets. Pointing out and scrutinising these strategies is a form of text and discourse critique. Explaining their socio-psychological foundations, on the other hand, served the socio-diagnostic critique because disablism and self-devaluation could be understood to be linked by these mechanisms. In turn, this can lead to recommendations or prognostic critique concerning all social actors.

Employers and society at large need to be reminded to focus on the person as a whole, people's abilities, the values of diversity and the advantages this can bring to everyone involved. However, as FRENCH (1999: 26) points out, simply "informing people about visual disability is seldom enough to change significantly their behaviour." Therefore, blind and partially sighted people should be encouraged to be open and upfront about their impairments and to oppose being defined by them, not to see themselves as victims but instead engage in resistant and affirmative discourse reasoning and stand together with other VI people (and otherwise disabled people) in the fight against these stereotypes, misconceptions and prejudices. These routes to resistance have been evident in many people's stories, perhaps more so than could be originally expected considering how critical the employment situation is for many disabled people. In some cases, an impairment was even judged as an asset by employers and employees alike. Dealing with all the barriers mentioned above on a daily basis can contribute to people's resilience. It is my hope that the participants can learn something from the accounts of others and that the charities and organisations I worked with will share the results to raise people's consciousness about those issues.

In this vein, the findings of this study can be applied in FREIRE'S framework of "conscientisation" (1970) by making "values and experiences that are most often repressed or hidden, conscious and visible to oneself and others" (LAWRENCE-LIGHTFOOT 1994: 3).

The transformative power of narrative was stressed at several points throughout this investigation: Sharing stories with other people can aid in the development of a constructive, positive self-identity of reflexivity (WATSON 1998: 160). It can also open up areas of people's current struggle and the potential for improvements: The more "people tell their story the more society will see for themselves where the barriers to living lie" (SLACK 1999: 37). Yet, not every person possesses such capacity for resistance and reflexivity, neither psychologically nor socio-economically or politically. Encouraging disabled people to practice resistance could also be seen critically because it leaves the need to change with the oppressed individual rather than society, which is responsible for the structures of inequality. Such a strategy could be viewed as reinforcing victim-victimiser reversal once more. The focus on providing adjustments, on the other hand, can be seen as an individualistic approach to disability since it does not change negative views in society. Besides, not every person's experience was negative. It must also be pointed out that VI people can be very successful in work and proud of their accomplishments while overcoming existing barriers. These stories can be a source of inspiration.

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Appendices

Call for Participants

A call for participants for my research study

(please feel free to share):

My name is Gerrit Kotzur and I am a PhD student of Social Sciences at Northumbria University Newcastle. For my research study I am conducting interviews with blind and partially sighted people in the UK about their employment experience.

What is it about? The research is about employment experiences of people with visual impairments. For this purpose, I am recording interviews, either in person (if you live in the North East) or via Skype or telephone/mobile phone.

Who can take part? Anyone over the age of 18 can participate. It doesn't matter whether you've already worked in a job or just finished school/a degree or been without employment for a longer period of time. We could then talk about your expectations/wishes instead.

What do you need to do? This is not a typical survey or interview with lots of questions; rather, I will ask you to tell me the story of your employment experience. Whatever you have to say about this can be useful at this stage. You might think of it as telling me about your employment biography, in a way.

Is it ethical? Is my data secure? This research project received ethical clearance through an independent review on the university's ethics board. Needless to say, I will anonymise the data and exclude any personal information (e.g. names, places) that people feel not comfortable sharing or that could be used to identify them. Of course, you can drop out of the study anytime afterwards by writing me an email.

Contact details: Please don't hesitate to get in touch for more information and to schedule a meeting with me: via Facebook or via email or mobile phone.

Thank you very much in advance for your consideration.

Participant Information Sheet

Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences − Research Ethics Framework

Information Sheet

Name of project

Disablism at Work. A Critical Discourse and Biographical Narrative Study of Blind and Partially Sighted People's Professional Identities in the UK and Germany

Research Organisation: Northumbria University

Researcher's name: Gerrit Kotzur

Who is funding the research? Northumbria University

What is the purpose of the research?

In my research project, I aim to examine experiences and expectations of people with sight loss in a work-related context. The results of this research can feed back into application processes and charities working with people with visual impairments.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Your personal data will be anonymised (i.e. your personal information or data will not be identifiable). The audio recordings will be transcribed and analysed by the researcher. The results of the study will be incorporated into my PhD thesis, the PhD thesis is likely to be published, and the data gathered is likely to also be used in other academic publications and conference papers. All information and data gathered during this research will be destroyed three years following the publication of the study.

Why have I been chosen?

You must be at least 18 years of age. Probably, you have been chosen because you took part in a training workshop or receive newsletters from organisations working with people with visual impairments, such as charities that help me with my research study.

What will I have to do if I agree to take part?

You will be asked some demographic information (e.g. area of residence, gender, age, occupation). You will then be asked a question regarding your experiences or expectations of working in your current or desired job. Questions may also touch on how and when you first found out you have a sight impairment and what this means for you. Please try to answer all questions as honestly as possible. If you need to for any reason take a break from the interview you may leave and come back any time or terminate the interview completely without giving a reason.

(cont.)

Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential?

The researcher has put into place a number of procedures to protect the confidentiality of participants. These include: Your name or other personal details will not be associated with your data, for example if you provide your email address this will be kept separate from your interview data. Only the researcher will have access to any identifiable information; and data will be stored securely on the University server. This will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Has this investigation received appropriate ethical clearance?

The study and its protocol have received full ethical approval from the Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences at Northumbria University.

Who can I contact for further information about this research?

For further information please contact the researcher or his supervisor:

Researcher:

Gerrit Kotzur
[Address and telephone number]
gerrit.kotzur@northumbria.ac.uk
gerrit.kotzur@gmail.com

Supervisor:

Dr Mimi Huang
Senior Lecturer
Lipman Building City Campus
NE1 8ST Newcastle upon Tyne
0191 227 3483
mimi.huang@northumbria.ac.uk

Who should I contact if I wish to make a complaint or report an incident concerning this research?

ad.pgr@northumbria.ac.uk

0191 227 4936

You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet and a copy of the Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Name of project

Disablism at Work. A Critical Discourse and Biographical Narrative Study of Blind and Partially Sighted People's Professional Identities in the UK and Germany

Research Organisation: Northumbria University

Researcher's name: Gerrit Kotzur

Participant's name:

I confirm that I have been supplied with and have read and understood the Information Sheet (ASS-RE5) for the research project and have had time to decide whether or not I want to participate.

I understand that my taking part is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

I agree with Northumbria University recording and processing this information about me.

I understand that this information will only be used for the purposes set out in the information sheet.

I have been told that any data generated by the research will be securely managed and disposed of in accordance with Northumbria University's guidelines. Data will be stored on the University server.

I am aware that all tapes and documents will remain confidential with only the research team having access to them and that the researcher will respect confidentiality unless there is a clear indication of an illegal action on any of the recordings collected during the course of this research.

My consent is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act.

Signature of participant   Date:

I can confirm that I have explained the nature of the research to the above named participant and have given adequate time to answer any questions concerning it.

Signature of researcher   Date:

Participant Debrief Sheet

Thank you very much for taking your time to support my study. It is important to talk to blind and visually impaired people about their experiences on the labour market to make sure that they are treated, approached and addressed in a respectful manner like everyone else.

The aims of this study were to gather information about how people with sight loss/impairment in the UK view possible difficulties in their working life (including applications for jobs, the daily work life and employers' attitudes toward them), and how they express their identities as employees.

I hope that this will help suggest and improve ways that employers and organisations offering workshops about employability for blind and VI people address and work with their applicants/participants.

The information you gave me will be held anonymously. This means that it will be impossible for people to know what you told me. If you want to withdraw your data from my study, this can be done at any time and without giving reason by contacting me.

If you think of any questions you would like to ask after the interview, then you can contact me personally as well.

Regards,

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