10-7-2013

A Tool Also for Linguists: A Review of Paul Sullivan's Qualitative Data Analysis Using a Dialogical Approach

Grandon Goertz

University of New Mexico, sordfish@unm.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr

Part of the Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons, and the Social Statistics Commons

A Tool Also for Linguists: A Review of Paul Sullivan's Qualitative Data Analysis Using a Dialogical Approach

Abstract

Paul Sullivan (2013) introduces a method of speech analysis that uses a dialogical approach, which is distinguished from critical discourse analysis, phenomenological analysis, and grounded theory by its hermeneutic of trust. In this approach, data is analyzed using a pairing of bureaucratic and theoretical methods that indicates in the speech where the key moments are and where intonation expresses meaning. In the evaluation process subjectivity is defined and described. The types of data that would be especially suited to this approach include interviews, focus group speech, and conversation. This dialogic approach also has applications in the field of linguistics

A Tool Also for Linguists: A Review of Paul Sullivan's
Qualitative Data Analysis Using a Dialogical Approach

Grandon Goertz
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

Paul Sullivan (2013) introduces a method of speech analysis that uses a dialogical approach, which is distinguished from critical discourse analysis, phenomenological analysis, and grounded theory by its hermeneutic of trust. In this approach, data is analyzed using a pairing of bureaucratic and theoretical methods that indicates in the speech where the key moments are and where intonation expresses meaning. In the evaluation process subjectivity is defined and described. The types of data that would be especially suited to this approach include interviews, focus group speech, and conversation. This dialogic approach also has applications in the field of linguistics. Keywords: Dialogical, Qualitative Data Analysis, Linguistics

Qualitative Data Analysis Using a Dialogical Approach is presented in nine chapters that take the reader from an introduction that establishes this dialogical approach as being based on the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, and then proceeds to the final chapters that describe the data evaluation and analysis process. The book was written from a psychological perspective, and contains adequate definitions and descriptions which are sufficient for someone who is not familiar with all the terminology. The first five chapters provide the reader with carefully defined concepts and practical perspectives, and the remaining four chapters add a fine point to the data interpretation process.

The first chapter opens with an overview and a description of a dialogical approach which is a methodological analysis of qualitative data. Sullivan (2012) notes that a dialogical method would be useful for researchers working with qualitative data such as interviews or focus group speech. In discourse, expressed ideas contain personal values and judgments and these ideas are generated through lived experience. Therefore the emotional register and emotional intonation give the language meaning and value for the speaker.

The author makes distinctions between the dialogical approach and other approaches such as grounded theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis, narrative analysis, and discourse analysis. These approaches were neatly summarized in a table that shows the analytic strategies and ideological attitudes for each method. (Tables are used frequently in the book to illustrate ideas and to summarize concepts.) Sullivan (2012) also points out that critical discourse and some narrative methods assume a situation of power relations and consequently the investigator is suspicious of the purpose that the speech serves. Grounded theory and phenomenology tend to interpret the speech data as employing an attitude that is more trusting and empathetic. The author then concludes that aim of discourse interpretation is not to discover a single meaning, but to make sense of the varied ways that meaning may be experienced.

Chapter two brings the concept of speaker subjectivity into the discussion. Subjectivity relates to the previous chapter in that the kind of subjectivity that is revealed by the analysis depends on the qualitative method and how it views the use of language. The chapter continues with a description of three theoretical approaches to participant subjectivity having applications to a dialogical analysis. These three, blank subjectivity, complex subjectivity, and uncomplicated subjectivity are discussed at length with information that draws from recent research and historical perspectives.

These three theoretical approaches are fused into a subjectivity model that defines complex, conscious subjectivity. These concepts include a fine-grained discourse analysis that places emphasis on the speaker's ability to construct the world in various ways and this analysis describes how the conversation indicates social context changes. Complex subjectivity discourse analysis places emphasis on how the speaker views power, especially social power and governance in either a conscious or unconscious manner. The third theoretical approach, uncomplicated subjectivity, focuses on an individual's consciousness and lived experiences. These three theoretical approaches are combined to be used in dialogical subjectivity, which strives to examine the ways the speakers seek to make sense out of experiences.

By chapter three, the reader is prepared and ready to learn how dialogue can be used to discover subjectivity, how the foundations laid in chapters one and two fit into the method, and in this, the author does not disappoint. Subjectivity, in the dialogical context, relates to the self and other, and subjectivity is conscious as it considers the ideas and judgments of others. The author explains that discourse should be viewed aesthetically by including voices and intonation into discourse. Genres, as methods of expression, are critical to understanding the discourse in that genres have the capacity to organize the time and space dimension of subjectivity. A speaker's intonation clues the analyst as to which genre the discourse belongs to and respectively the genre indicates the emotional properties of the intonation. The author provides examples and discusses rhetorical features, emotional responses, and intonation. Intonation and accentuation express subjectivity while the genre helps define the shape of subjectivity.   A dialogic approach includes attention to emotion, subjectivity, and lived experiences by examining the voice, genre and intonation.

Sullivan (2012) then brings the reader to the data preparation and analysis process in chapter four. This process first uses what is called a bureaucratic procedure to evaluate the data. The bureaucratic procedure includes data preparation, selection, transcription, coding, and the identification of themes which prepares the data for a systematic analysis. The data is read and searched for key moments, which are significant utterances that are defined by speaker readiness for a reply or reaction. After the mechanics of data preparation are complete, the bureaucratic side of the analysis notes and codes genres and types of discourse, emotions, the time-space properties, and the contexts of the action.

The second side of the analysis is the charismatic analysis which includes the aims and goals of the researcher. In this process, the researcher views the data for extracts and examples that reflect personal or theoretical interest. In a dialogical approach, bureaucratic and charismatic procedures should support each other to make a strong analysis.

Chapter five illustrates the process of writing an analysis, once the data has been evaluated and coded. At this point, the investigator must step back and view the data as a whole, and then compose a research question. Understanding the research question is crucial for choosing key moments and gaining a sense of the speaker's point of view as expressed through intonation. The research question may evolve and change with the analysis, and according to what emerges from the data.

The data analysis should start with the identification of key moments for each speaker, using the bureaucratic categories of genre, emotional register (intonation), time-space elaboration of the genre, and the context. Through an analysis of emotional intonation one also gains a sense of various truth conditions. Sullivan (2012) points to the importance of including sound extracts, quotations, and examples from the data in a write up that "involves a direct engagement with different voices" (p. 89). The report should include the features of the discourse and an explanation of subjectivity and truth as it is intoned by the speakers.

Chapters six, seven and eight move into psychological perspectives on the data and the analysis process for the numerous examples that were presented. Chapter six demonstrates how double-voiced (more than one addressee in an utterance) discourse can be used to analyze focus group data by creating a dialogue from quotations taken from context and placing the quotations in a new context. In this new context, dialogues are responded to by the actual addressee. The researcher does not reproduce what is real, but creates an experiential text that facilitates the understanding of what is being studied. The chapter also completes the discussion of the meaning of genre by describing the folk psychology, carnival, romantic, medical drama, psycho-drama and confessional genres.

Chapter seven analyzes various commentaries on subjectivity. If the reader is not thoroughly familiar with subjectivity from a psychological perspective, this chapter will be difficult to read. Without reviewing each of the mentioned four types of commentary, nevertheless, conclusions can be drawn that I find useful. The author does not ignore power relations in texts, but these relations are framed in terms of a self-other relationship following a perspective presented by Bakhtin. In this view, both the self and the other have shifting boundaries between different texts. These shifting genre and discourse boundaries help identify the changing relationship between the self and the other. There are domains that reflect on the speech and actions of another person, such as policy documents and news reports, and where the analysis of boundary shifts in subjectivity could be analyzed by a dialogical analysis.

Chapter eight establishes a set of evaluation criteria for a dialogical approach. The discussion begins by describing the elements of traditional evaluations used in psychology which are then compared with evaluation criteria from qualitative research approaches. Any dialogical study should be evaluated using the criteria of time-space, combined with the voices, experiences, values and judgments of others to search for a truth that is based on lived experience. In the final analysis, the researcher should describe how the subjects express their views in terms of how well they connect to lived experiences.

A discursive analysis has applications in linguistics, including discourse analysis as done by linguists in evaluating texts and speech. Ideally recorded speech is used as the source of data, which is then analyzed by a variety of speech analysis software, PRAAT being the most commonly used. From this analysis, a visual depiction of the words and the tone contours will be visible. Often these tones pattern in expected and predictable depictions on a graphing system. Speakers are aware of the tone shape and in speech shape it to represent both spoken utterances and unspoken meanings. A tone that rises is usually associated with an expression of surprise or doubt, or is used to frame a question. Tones that decline in overall sonic frequency indicate utterance finality. Those tones that rise, fall and rise again often indicate the desire to continue speaking, or to hold the floor. A speaker who lowers the intonation and then ends the sentence with a noticeably higher tone is probably expressing a declarative sentence. In any case, the word that receives the highest tone, or the lowest tone, is often stressed in the utterance, or intonation unit (See Beckman, 1997 and Pierrehumbert, 1980 for details. The pragmatics of intonation has been described in detail.).

Intonation, in linguistics, can be determined for tones that represent linguistically relevant fundamental frequency configurations. A tone is the sound produced by the vocal system during speech, and the tone is modulated according to the speaking intent. Tone is associated with stressed and unstressed syllables, and helps to define utterance boundaries. This tone pattern is then transcribed and coded to include grammatical and metalinguistic information. Intonation is an important quality of speech, as is other prosodic qualities such as speech rate, pauses and hesitations, and speech volume.

The application of a dialogical approach to linguistics is fairly direct. The methods used in linguistic discourse analysis can lack the neutral perspective that Sullivan (2012)

described in *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Quantitative measurements add a dimension to qualitative research, and add to the reliability of the analysis. The first step would be to analyze transcribed text using the dialogical method, and evaluating the data for intonation units, key events, genre, and the time situation. The spoken data would next be measured according to the linguistic method of text parsing for the tone values at the dialogical intonations to determine if the utterances carry additional meaning that might be seen as significant. This process would add numerical values to the intonation and create mixed method study.

Especially useful for a linguistic analysis would be language samples that are found in the public domain such as political discourses and advertisements, religious events, and narration at sporting games. For example, both dialogical analysis and tone analysis could be used to show how political campaign advertisements during election years are used to create the impression of threat and insecurity in the opponent.

A discursive approach also has applications in second language acquisition and ESL teaching. The various language teaching methods that have been employed over the past 50 years have been criticized as being ineffective because the classroom did not provide a sociocultural environment in which students could learn. Students learn better and acquire the second language easier when they feel that they are part of the classroom environment and the classroom culture reflects their culture. Post-method scholars such as Kumaravadivelu (2009) advocate that teachers should develop a strategic framework to create a classroom-oriented environment by using information gathered through a critical discourse analysis.

A discursive approach to a classroom cultural evaluation would provide information that a critical approach perspective could not. A critical approach assumes that language involves relationships of power and that language involves unconscious desires. These assumptions lead the researcher to develop a suspicious attitude towards the data. A dialogical approach does not try to uncover social and historical power dynamics, but rather employs a hermeneutic of trust. A dialogic approach is especially useful for data such as focus groups recordings, diaries, and video and a dialogical approach would be excellent for analyzing the discourse of a classroom of elementary school children. The dialogic approach would be useful in showing where boundaries exist in the instructional program, how social identities are shaped and how subjectivity is represented in the classroom.

References

Beckman, M. E. (1997). Speech models and speech synthesis. In J. P.H. van Santen, R. W. Sproat, J. P. Olive, & J. Hirschberg (Eds.), *Progress in speech synthesis* (pp. 185-209). New York, NY: Springer.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2009). *Understanding language teaching.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Pierrehumbert, J. B. (1980). *The phonology and phonetics of English intonation* (Ph.D. dissertation). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.

Sullivan, P. (2012) *Qualitative data analysis using a dialogical approach.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Author Note

Grandon Goertz is Ph.D. student in the Educational Linguistics Program at the University of New Mexico. He has graduate degrees in Linguistics and Public Administration and is a practicing engineer, specializing in ergonomics. He can be contacted at 1 University of New Mexico, MSC 4100, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131-001; Telephone: 505-277-6764; Email: sordfish@unm.edu.

Article Citation

Goertz, G. (2013). A tool also for linguists: A review of Paul Sullivan's *Qualitative Data Analysis Using a Dialogical Approach. The Qualitative Report, 18*(Rev. 24), 1-5. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/goertz24.pdf