

Power Dynamics in Police Interrogations: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Language and Control

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Abstract. How is language used by law enforcement? Critical Discourse Analysis is employed in this paper to investigate the high-stress situation of police interrogations and how language is used to establish power relations. In Addition, discourse does not just reflect the organisation of society but also forms new rules for organised power. Deconstruction of the police' repertoire of language: commanding expressions, entrapment questions and rephrasing are all forms of silent modification. Research shows that interrogation is not unilateral; although agents have the power of the institution, detainees are also learning to resist and negotiate, and at the end of the interrogation, the power relations are relatively uneven. Finally, this study has shown how speech is used to shape the reality inside the agency, and therefore, Critical Discourse Analysis facilitates better understanding of the typical unequal power relations between law enforcement and the people they investigate.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), police interrogation, power dynamics, language, control strategies

1. Introduction

The detention room is a power furnace, and discourse serves to both carry and shape the common idea. It is a place for collecting data and is also under the control of state power; through language and discourse, it is organised and rules for interpreting the data are set [1, 2]. The asymmetry in the relationship between law enforcement officers and the accused will be exerted by language at all levels of the police-suspect interaction to maintain the status quo and, in some instances, even be challenged [3, 4].

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be used in this paper to explore how such power relations and regulatory strategies appear in the language of police interviews. Specifically, it studies:

- 1) How is the power structure of the interrogation talk shown in CDA?
- 2) What type of CDA research method would be suitable to study the power relations in this particular area?

Through identification of linguistic resources in such dialogues, this paper hopes to learn more about how discourse constructs, supports or disputes systems of authority and thus contributes to the whole discussion on social justice and structural reform.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

The foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a relatively simple but profound idea that language is not neutral. It is a type of social activity that contains power relations and ideologies, as pointed out by Fairclough [1]. CDA thinks that language does not merely reflect society; rather, it is a force that shapes and changes society. Speech acts are not merely descriptions of the world but rather constructions of it. The link between linguistic use, power and belief serves as the foundation for CDA; thus, this study can examine how seemingly neutral words reflect and even create the system of society.

2.1. Challenge to the traditional view

The traditional method of discourse analysis has been criticized for focusing too much on the straightforward description of language use and has therefore overlooked the power differences in social interaction. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is another way that has begun to challenge this idea; thus, it has started to examine how speech can either promote or reduce the power structure of the dominant group [3]. It is not sufficient to merely describe what is said; one should also consider who is speaking, why they are speaking, and what the results will be. Therefore, CDA should focus on showing how communication is used to promote or challenge the existing worldview of the people; otherwise, it will only be a description of that world view. Therefore, CDA is a more active and transformative kind of discourse analysis than the previous ones.

2.2. Key concepts: deconstruction of power in language

Language as a Tool of Authority: CDA believes that language uses metaphorical language, framing and patterns of discourse to achieve the function of wielding authority. Think about metaphors; they are not only for decoration but can also show problems in a way that gradually changes people's thinking and therefore alters the direction of the country [4]. Observe how political leaders use "war" metaphors to talk about social issues, and these problems are immediately regarded as fights that need to be fought.

Frame Tactics: They are also good tools. The descriptors this study use to describe people and things; the stories this study create about them - these form the way in which this study perceive and interpret [1]. During the questioning by the police, people thought about how to act "unwillingly" or "manipulatively" to lose the police's trust.

Imbalances of Power and Social Frameworks: CDA concentrates on the intersection of power imbalance and the whole of society. According to Foucault [5], CDA believes that power is not held by a single person but rather operated through a network of relations among many people. Discourse is needed to maintain or alter the system of power at a particular time by means of various types of language. For instance, recurrently using formal titles and polite speech by police officers may give them an impression of prestige over the people they arrest.

In short, CDA provides a necessary tool for analysing and challenging the main ideas of society. Under the direction of outstanding scholars, this study discovers how and why inequality and injustice occur in practice.

3. Methodology

Three parts of critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough are employed in this paper to study the power relations of police interrogation. Instead of isolating language analysis, Fairclough has been studying the cooperation among texts, communication, and all kinds of social environments for a long time [1].

3.1. Analysis tools

Fairclough's model has three levels, and the first is "textual analysis"; this is a study of linguistic features such as vocabulary and grammar. In short, "social practice analysis" places the content in the broader society and shows how this writing reflects and carries forward the communal values of that society [6].

By learning what this study does not know, omitting, and contradicting, this study will change the direction of its research. The above show the power structure of society as perceived by those at the bottom, and at the same time, there are meetings and rebellions [2, 1].

3.2. Selection of data

To understand the reasons behind this, this study will examine the transcripts of police interrogations and carefully select those that represent different groups of people. Textual excerpts that are relevant to the investigative enquiries and show the general situation of society are selected [2].

3.3. Ethical considerations

Ethical enquiry requires self-awareness; otherwise, one may unconsciously carry one's own prejudice and spread such ideas [1]. Research is not about categorising people; instead, without simple classifications, it also shows that life is rather complex [2]. Rather, the focus should be on exposing the subtle hegemonic process and its impact on people's lives.

4. Case study: power dynamics in police interrogation

4.1. Unveiling the power plays of language

How do police use speech to direct behaviour during the interview process? It is not simply a shout, but rather an indirect method. Conversation analysis believes that all sorts of minor interactions are also covered by the whole power system. A typical case is the usual way of interruption. As Heydon [7] proposes, fast interruptions can disrupt a person's thoughts quickly and show all the participants that they are in charge of the talk. Chan [8] has provided this study with a case; in five minutes, the single officer has had to interrupt the talk of the suspect more than 15 times. It is a kind of talkery duel, and each interjection is a defensive manoeuvre to obstruct the other person.

Authority is not always expressed explicitly. Speech Act Theory has been used to study the relatively neutral words that contain underlying expressions of dominance. An inquiry is not only to seek information, but it can also be a request for obedience [9]. Jones [2] suggests that "You are under arrest" may not be a formal pronouncement by the court but rather a form of performance that can immediately redistribute power, strip the suspect of the liberty to act, and change their relationship with law enforcement. These expressions are somewhat akin to magic words that can

alter reality or, at the very least, reorganize the power distribution among those arrested and the police.

To truly understand the power structure at the bottom, this study looks at an interrogation record.

Excerpt:

Officer: "You had asked a question earlier today, but you did not have the opportunity to answer it then. Is there a reason why you did not?"

Suspect: [No response]

Officer: As we have discussed earlier, You mentioned that you are lonely in your home.

Haworth(2006).

The constable wants to be authoritative again, so he points out that the defendant was previously at fault and rephrases what has already been said. The agent's use of iteration and subject regulation is a kind of tactical verbal dominance aimed at compelling the accused to comply.

4.2. Power asymmetries and control strategies

It can be seen that law enforcement officers have many kinds of language to exert authority over others in the course of an investigation. Commanding and demanding orders will also be included; they regulate the dissemination of data. Psychological influence is also employed to control the emotional state of an individual [10, 11]. For example, the detective might say, "Let us review what you said before", but the purpose is not only to verify whether it is true but also to lead the talk and make the detainee recall particular events more distinctly [12]. These agents are, in short, used to coordinate the behaviour of people through language.

4.3. Implications for social reality

The method of questioning employed by the police is a form of communication that has some impact on society. These language tools can change a person's sense of self and their perception of the surrounding world to some extent; therefore, they may either cooperate with the police or refuse to do so [13]. If someone is frequently spoken to in an authoritative manner, out of fear, they may be motivated to say something false [14]. Therefore, this study needs to address the problem of how to achieve efficient legal enforcement while also protecting the rights and interests of all citizens.

Inquiry Hierarchy also serves to increase the division in society. As Jones [2] pointed out, racial discrimination frequently manifests in language; thus, law enforcement officers may use all sorts of communication that is biased against ethnicised defendants. It shows that critical discourse analysis can be used to find the root causes of structural bias and change the behaviour of one person at a time.

5. Discussion

5.1. CDA's opinion on interrogation dynamics

This paper will expand on the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover the concealed power relations among all sides in police interrogations. CDA can be used to uncover the use of language by law enforcement officers, such as commands and questions, as well as narrative construction, etc., and examine how they construct narratives and control suspects' behaviour. However, compared with the previous studies that have only listed the verbal weapons, this study's research will also examine how these tactics are used to support the broader social construction of

truth and may therefore continue to maintain the current power imbalance or provide a way for resistance.

5.2. Navigation constraints

In the conduct of research, the present research needs to know about the limitations. CDA offers some ideas, but it is not possible to eliminate the influence of the investigator's own views. All of the present research's analysis is affected by the present research's own history and prejudice; it needs to be open-minded and self-aware [1]. In addition, the cultural specificity of the present research's dataset on law enforcement questioning is not very generalisable. What is considered (or is not considered) efficacy in a single Western police interrogation situation may be very different in a non-Western area.

5.3. Map directions for the future

There are some problems in this paper, and many more can be studied in the future. A necessary condition is to expand the range of CDAs by adding many more multicultural environments. Do the same linguistic methods work in all the places of different cultures, or are there significant differences? In addition, an intersectional way of thinking can be employed to investigate how power is constituted by all sorts of collective identities, such as ethnicity, gender, social class, etc. [15]. With the development of communication in recent years, more and more people's lives have been covered by digital platforms; thus, CDA now needs to be applied to cyber activities and other types of electronic communication [2]. How is a hierarchy formed and maintained in the digital area, and what new problems related to social justice and equity have arisen because of this?

6. Conclusion

Finally, based on the analysis of law enforcement interrogations from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, it can be seen that discourse is often regarded as a passive tool but actually serves to exercise control. Through detailed study of the tactical arrangement of terms and power-laden talk, this study have found that delicate verbal cues can exacerbate inequality and harm the principle of justice.

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Appendix A: full transcript of interrogation

Source: Haworth, K. (2006). The dynamics of power and resistance in police interview discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 17(6), 739–759.

Transcript:

Officer: "You were asked a question this morning; you had the opportunity to give that answer this morning. Is there any reason why you didn't?"

Suspect: [No response]

Officer: "Let's go back to what you said earlier. You mentioned being alone at home."

Officer: "The entry for Mrs. Grundy's visit on the 9th of June---will you tell me why there's no reference there to you taking any blood from her?"

Suspect: "Normally all the blood results came back two days later."

Officer: "No, but can you tell me why there's no mention on that date?"

Suspect: [No response]