BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

McEntee-Atalianis, Lisa (2021) Discourse and identity. In: Hyland, K. and Paltridge, B. and Wong, L. (eds.) The Bloomsbury Handbook of Discourse Analysis. Bloomsbury Handbooks. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 9781350156098.

The Bloomsbury Companion to Discourse Analysis (2nd Edition)

Ken Hyland, Brian Paltridge and Lillian Wong (eds.)

Chapter 22 Discourse and Identity

Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis

Abstract

The concept of identity as resulting from social practice and interaction developed in postmodern writing in the social sciences. This occurred at the same time as the deconstruction of the 'self' as a unified, self-determining subject. Within Applied Linguistics the 'discursive turn' to the study of identity has led to a proliferation of research applying different approaches and analyses, e.g. conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis and narrative analysis. These approaches view discourse as central to identity construction/work, however they come with different epistemological and ontological baggage and assumptions, and utilise different methodologies and analytic frameworks. This chapter will discuss the impact of the latter on identity research documenting the similarities and differences between some of these macro and micro-level approaches. Using a sample dataset, the chapter will illustrate differences in assumptions, analytic techniques and conclusions, and discuss the strengths and limitations of different approaches for the study of identity.

Biography

Lisa McEntee-Atalianis is Reader in Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck, University of London. Her research focuses on issues of 'identity' at micro- and macro-discursive levels. Her breadth of interest is evidenced in her recent book: 'Identity in Applied Linguistics Research'

(2019), and publications in chapters and journals such as *Critical Discourse Studies, Discourse & Communication, Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development, Narrative Inquiry*. Her research has focussed on different communities and sites, e.g. Greek-Cypriot communities in Cyprus and London; the Hapa community in Japan; workplace identities (gender and leadership) and regional (European) identity.

Chapter Overview

Introduction

Discursive Approaches to Identity

Sample Analyses: Sample Analysis 1: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Sample Analysis 2: Conversation Analysis (CA)

Sample Analysis 3: Narrative Analysis (Small Stories)

Conclusion

Key Readings

Chapter 22 Discourse and Identity

Lisa J. McEntee-Atalianis

Introduction

At the turn of the century - a period often referred to as 'high/late/post-modernity' - prominent scholars in the social sciences and humanities (e.g. Derrida, Foucault, Giddens, Hall) reframed accounts of identity. Instead of conceiving it as a stable essence, internal to and under the control of the subject, they viewed it as fragmented and fluid, brought to life via social engagement, through a process of inter-subjective interaction. It was conceived as dynamically constructed and performed in and through discourse, brought about within (rather than brought to) encounters or textual accounts, in temporary and sustained moments of realisation and contact. In line with a social constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann 1967), the individual and the social world began to be conceived as mutually constitutive. Individual/group identities and the social world were argued to be under constant negotiation and construction, through language and other semiotic means, across a range of contexts and times (Benwell and Stokoe 2006; McEntee-Atalianis 2019).

This new way of viewing identity/subjectivity means that connections between language use and personal/social categories are carefully studied by examining how they are made relevant (/expressed), managed (/negotiated) and brought about in spoken and written discourse via social practice. This has become the focus of much recent scholarship; albeit, with researchers drawing on a plethora of approaches.

In this chapter we briefly discuss three discursive approaches to the study of identity, considering their foci, operation, strengths and limitations. We undertake brief sample analyses using the same data set in order to illustrate the types of issues at stake and the methods discourse analysts employ.

3

Discursive Approaches to Identity

The term 'discourse' can mean different things. A linguistic definition refers to language use above the level of the sentence, however a functional/sociolinguistic definition of the term refers to language in context/in social encounters, whilst a post-structuralist/critical understanding of 'discourse(s)' defines it/them as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 42), e.g. educational discourse, media discourse. In practice, some studies of discourse and identity have combined elements of each, but for the most part the discursive turn to the study of identity has led to the development of theories and methods which have catapulted research along broadly different paths: studies which align with a post-structuralist Foucauldian viewpoint, which adopt critical perspectives (e.g. Critical Discourse Analysis, positioning theory) and studies which favour ethnomethodological/conversation analytic perspectives. These can be schematised in terms of macro-analytic/'top-down' approaches which take account of historical, political and socio-cultural discourses/influences on identity construction, versus micro/'bottom up' approaches, which examine the fine detail of localised interaction. Some accounts incorporate elements of both micro and macro perspectives, e.g. Interactional Sociolinguistic Analysis (ISA), and some narrative approaches.

What all of these perspectives and frameworks have in common is an interest in situated language use and an understanding that the social world/identities are constructed, contested and reproduced in discourse. However, they differ in at least three (contentious) areas: firstly, how analysts theorise and operationalise *context,* i.e. whether analyses should just focus on the local occasioning of identity within an interactional unit - i.e. an orientation to identity in response to a prior utterance and/or as made relevant within the current exchange or activity - or whether external, background knowledge (cultural/social/political)

4

should be brought to bear on interpretations of the data. For example, pure conversation analytic approaches focus their lens on the momentary display of identity, working on fine-grained analyses of turns at talk. They restrict the analysts' gaze and interpretation to the situated/local context of interaction. This contrasts with narrative analysts and critical discourse analysts who, in different ways, broaden their purview to incorporate considerations of external (socio-cultural and political) factors and contexts in the interpretation of their data. Secondly, and related to the latter, different approaches differ with regard to the role of the analyst – some preferring to adopt an emic-centred approach, whilst others draw on analyst knowledge of other sites of information and/or political orientations (in the case of CDA) for data interpretation; and thirdly, there are differences with respect to beliefs about the limits of and relationship between 'structure' and 'agency' - to what extent are individuals conceived as free to act as they wish, or are they subject to structural forces and control? These differing perspectives arise from different theoretical orientations and methodological approaches, informed by different research traditions and disciplinary bases, (e.g. cultural and social theory; ethnomethodology; post-structural feminism and queer theory; social constructionism; and symbolic interactionism).

The following is not an exhaustive or comprehensive account. It is necessarily selective and nuanced in its discussion and illustration of three frames of analysis. More comprehensive accounts of these approaches can be read in earlier chapters of this book and in the references provided. The aim is to illustrate and outline how different discourse analytic approaches afford different lenses through which to view and analyse the same data set. The three approaches selected for discussion and explication have become prominent and influential in the study of language and identity. They have been chosen as they illustrate macro-, micro- and combined macro/micro theoretical and analytical perspectives (in that order).

Critical Discourse Analysis

The term Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) encapsulates a number of interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches. It views discourse as a social practice, which is subjective in form and therefore not neutral or transparent, but influential in moulding our world view (see Chapter 3 above). Analysts share a common 'critical' perspective and approach to the analysis of discourse and identity. Their aim is to deconstruct and uncover the relationship between language/semiotic systems of representation and the workings of power in and via social institutions (e.g. education; media; government), thereby revealing the discursive processes through which ideologies are circulated and forged, and bringing to light hegemonic practices which serve to establish, normalise and perpetuate inequity and oppression of certain individuals or groups, leading to symbolic and material disadvantage for some. CDA therefore upholds an 'overtly political agenda' (Kress 1990: 84-5) such that scholarship is driven by an emancipatory quest to uncover discourses (in a Foucauldian sense) which have become naturalised as socio-cognitive 'truths' and which serve to regulate and control social ideology and the positioning of certain subaltern/less powerful identities (e.g. positioning woman as carers; migrants as threatening forces). Through their work they seek to effect social change.

Scholars have developed different theoretical and analytical approaches and tools. These range from Fowler's seminal work, showing how grammatical constructions serve to forge particular ideological meanings; Kress's examination of multi-modality; van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach and Wodak's 'Discourse Historical Approach' (see Chapter 3 above). Analysts attend to large data sets, often collating corpora of documents/texts (e.g. speeches; policy documents; newspaper articles or social media), which they subsequently and variously submit to thematic, rhetorical, semiotic and linguistic analysis. Researchers

explore such issues as the strategic semiotic/linguistic accomplishment of inclusion/exclusion (e.g. via use of inclusive/exclusive markers or body placement); constructions of agency and passivity; and ideological positioning and influence. CDA relies heavily on the resources analysts bring to bear on the interpretation of texts: their linguistic training, their socio-cultural knowledge and their political orientations. They rarely investigate the effect on the recipient (reader/listener) via an analysis of recipient responses or interpretations of texts.

CDA's adherence to looking beyond the text for explanations and viewing individuals or groups as an effect of discourse with limited agency has attracted criticism. Many (e.g. Blommaert, 2005) claim that its top-down *a priori* assumptions about inequity, power and identity/ies lead to biased interpretations of the very discourse it is claiming to (critically) analyse. They further criticise a lack of uniformity in approach and systematicity in terminology and data analysis, especially when compared to the rigour of other approaches, (e.g. CA). They argue that the methods lack specificity e.g. often the representativeness of data sets is not transparent and analyses depend on researcher interpretation, rather than being emically-determined or verified. In assessing these differing perspectives (anti- v pro-CDA), Baxter draws a distinction between those who take a scientific, positivistic view of linguistic analysis and who therefore question CDA's objectivity and scientific rigour, and those who have 'embraced hermeneutic, interpretivist or social construction principles', who favour 'its readiness to declare its principles and to marry ideological commitment to the pursuit of rigorous, replicable and retrievable research methods' (2018: 246).

Conversation Analysis, Membership Categorisation Analysis and Identity

Conversation analysts, in contrast, work from a vantage point in which their subject of inquiry is argued to be objectively/neutrally interpreted from the linguistic material internal to and recoverable from the interaction. Therefore, scholars do not begin their analyses with a

particular agenda or viewpoint on identity, or its ontological standing, rather, the viewpoint of the interlocutor is privileged over that of the analyst. External theorising and/or drawing on social categories, or cultural or historical knowledge or accounts for interpretative purposes is deemed inappropriate. They caution against researchers deciding *a priori* which identity categories may be salient in the interaction under scrutiny. Rather they reveal through their analysis how interactants 'occasion' identity/ies and category memberships in realising social action by examining interlocutors' oriented-to and recipient-designed shifting ascriptions, roles and activities in the exchange, in order to determine the relevance of identity for the participants. Therefore, the 'context' of their investigation refers to the locally managed and situated nature of talk-in-interaction and identity is conceived as a dynamic 'resource in conversational interaction' (Antaki et al 1996: 473-474) and an 'accomplishment of interaction' (Benwell & Stokoe 2010:84). Interpretation is dependent on speaker's responses to turns at talk, using a procedure known as 'next turn proof'.

Analysts therefore focus on when and how identity/ies are made relevant to the interlocutors within the conversational exchange (/turn-taking) and how speakers orient to them in talk, e.g. through explicit mention of social categories/names/pronouns and/or via 'category-bound activities' conventionally associated with particular social types (e.g. mother; female; youth). Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) is one way in which researchers have explored the local occasioning of identity construction and its negotiation in conversation, in order to achieve social action. Sacks (1992/1966) developed the concept of the membership categorisation device (MCD) to explain how interlocutors invoke and use categories to organise, express, negotiate and interpret their social world. Categories are associated with particular actions ('category bound activities') or characteristics ('natural predicates') which are culturally inferred, and carry with them 'rights and obligations'. For example, a boss might orient to a maternal identity when adopting an affiliative stance with

her work colleague, in order to convey empathy when the employee's child is ill and she is delayed. The employee's role as a mother makes her lateness accountable. However, the boss's interactional alignment may also serve to mitigate a subsequent face-threatening act when the colleague, despite her circumstance, is still requested by her boss to perform her duties within a restricted timeframe. The boss's professional identity makes her request accountable.

Whilst systematic in its approach, not all scholars agree that CA's claim to objectivity and its' restrictive definition of 'context' is feasible or optimal (e.g. see Wetherell's (1998) oft-cited debate with Schegloff (1997)), for 'even the most literal description of a conversational exchange involves selection and interpretation; thus, the answer to the dilemma between staying very close to participants' explicit orientation to identity categories and proposing connections with more general social categories does not lie in interpretive asceticism' (De Fina, 2015/19: 362). Rather some scholars argue that there is merit in looking outside, as well as within the observable data, in order to make relevant connections and interpretations. Momentary performances may be associated with other contexts, experiences or ideologies which make discourse socially interpretable. As such some combine detailed micro-analyses with ethnographic insight in investigating the persistent and dynamic nature of identity display across space and time. They reveal the complex play and salience of inter-discursivity across contexts, showing how identity/ies are fashioned and refashioned, when interlocutors draw on, alter or sometimes repeat prior performances which may 'accrete' to produce more stable renderings. They argue that identity construction must be understood as a process spanning multiple moments and encounters which give rise to recognisably stable as well as dynamic practices, roles and characteristics. De Fina (2015/19) has been one of many who has taken this stance in relation to investigating story-telling and identity, as discussed below.

9

Narrative Approaches

Stories are credited with not only conveying identity but also shaping our very being, helping us to understand who we are by providing a sense of continuity and temporality; connecting events in coherent renderings (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008; De Fina 2015/2019). The 'narrative turn' (Bruner 1990) to the study of identity/ies within the social sciences has given rise to numerous methodologies and analytic frameworks (see Chapter 5 above), each exploring the processes through which individuals fashion and perform their complex, plural and sometimes contradictory identities, as well as those of their story characters, often through processes of positioning and evaluation. Most recent work has adopted a constructionist stance - viewing identities as built in and through storied interaction and constitutive of social reality. Two dominant narrative approaches occupy the field - biographical and interactionally-oriented approaches (De Fina 2015/2019). In this section we focus on the latter, exploring how identities are culturally and historically located and become realised and seated within specific participation frameworks and interactional routines.

Interactionists, inspired by CA (e.g. see Antaki & Widdicombe 1998), explore the processual, repetitive and strategic realisation of identity in the situated stories people tell. They reveal how story-tellers and their interlocutors work to construct, claim, negotiate and/or refute the roles and representations proffered in interaction, through such means as membership categorisation, or indexicality (Silverstein 2003). They investigate how particular personae are symbolically and (indirectly) associated with particular cultural repertoires, behaviours or characteristics established from prior events/encounters and ideologies, e.g. linguistic indices which point to particular social categories or types, via such indices as voice (accent/voice quality), vocabulary or style. Narrative scholars often focus their investigation on: the types of stories narrators tell and position themselves within; the

identities constructed (narrator and story characters); the ordering of events; and the relationship between the immediate context of the story-telling event and broader culturally-recognised 'master narratives' or shared repertoires.

Theories of the multi-layered and complex nature of identity, and its negotiation within the interactional order via storytelling, have been developed by some. For example, Goffman's (1981) concept of 'footing' illustrates the different roles and changes of alignment that speakers take towards themselves, others and the subject of discourse. Roles include those of: 'animator' (the person voicing the message); 'author' (the person who composes the message); 'principle' (the person responsible for the message); and 'figure' (the story character). Alternations in footing may align with shifts of perspective in the narrative telling and involve the voicing of story characters or social discourses. Through shifts in footing, story tellers 'animate' different selves or characters via the strategic use of socially recognisable voices. The 'lamination' (layering) of multiple voices has been shown to reveal the 'self' as multiple.

Moreover, in examining narrative identity in 'small stories' told in every day interaction Bamberg (1997) asserts that narrators 'position' themselves at three levels (where 'positioning' refers to the psychological and discursive location that speakers/writers inhabit or perform in conveying who they are or how they wish to be viewed at a particular time/place). These levels serve as crucial entry points for analysis: firstly, with respect to other characters in their story (e.g. as victim or active agent); secondly, in relation to their audience in the story-telling event and thirdly, with respect to themselves, i.e. how they want to be understood. In story-telling and image management, we take up positions with respect to: the characters and the events we relay; our audience and the social issues under discussion. Part of the motivation for examining small stories for research on identity is argued to arise from the way they enable the analyst 'to scrutinise the inconsistences,

contradictions, moments of trouble and tension, and the teller's constant navigation and finessing between different versions of selfhood in local contexts' (Bamberg 2011:16) uncovering both constant and variable realisations in the process of identity construction. Positioning theory connects identity with power relations by combining a consideration of both the (micro) conversational exchange and (macro) socio-cultural and political influences.

Sample Analyses

The brief analyses below serve to illustrate the different approaches detailed above. They draw on data reported in Shaitan & McEntee-Atalianis (2017), gathered from semi-structured interviews with ten Japanese nationals who self-ascribe as mixed-race, with one of their parents being Japanese. The short extract used for analysis is from an interview with one individual, Jack. Further demographic, contextual and ethnographic background will be provided in the analyses below as relevant to the analytic framework. Due to limitations of space the data is presented using a generic orthographic transcription which deliberately chooses not to align with any particular analytic approach. Different approaches use their own transcription systems – some far more detailed than others (e.g. CA, see Chapter 2 above), and although these were undertaken for the analysis, they are not presented here.

The extract begins with a question by the interviewer:

Interviewer: 001. Do you consider yourself a typical half, hybrid, double, or 'hapa'?
Jack: 002. NEITHER, really. I feel like just a human being, really. This
               003. attitude….It is just people classify me as different … being … half
               004. or whatever, RIGHT? I just see myself as a human being.
Interviewer: 005. But, for example, if people in Japan or in America ask you where
               006. you are from, what do you tell them?
Jack: 007. In Japan, I usually say … mo (well), first of all, if it is mendokusai
               008.(troublesome), I just tell them I am from Okinawa. If I do not really
               009. care, I really say that. But, most people, if they ask me, it is none
               010. of their business; I tell them I am half. In Japan I say, I am half.
Interviewer: 011. Oh, I see. All right. ((*silence*))
Jack: 012. But nobody would ask me in US, RIGHT? If I go to US, nobody
               013. would ask me, RIGHT? Everybody is mixed, anyway. They often
               014. mistake me for a Hispanic. They start talking to me in Spanish,

015. Portuguese or something. They think I am Spanish.

Sample Analysis 1: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Preliminaries

People of mixed-race in Japan have historically experienced 'otherisation', marginalisation, restrictive policies and forced assimilation. Beyond the extract above, critical discourse analysts would examine a range of texts to explore how the Japanese government, media and citizens have promoted Japan as a culturally and ethnically homogeneous nation, shoring up a discourse of 'Japaneseness', known as *Nihonjinron* (Befu, 2001), whilst also promoting a discourse of *gaijin* ('foreigner/outsider') - directed at and about individuals who do not possess Japanese features, 'pure' Japanese lineage or observe Japanese cultural/social customs or norms. Their mission would be to explore the linguistic and discursive realisation of these representations, which in turn drive the construction of in- and out-groups. Through this work they would aim to uncover the normalisation of racist and xenophobic discourses which in turn may/do lead to hegemonic practices.

Using a framework such as the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) the analyst would therefore take into account historical and more recent extra-linguistic, social and institutional (con-)texts and behaviours, drawing on these in the interpretation of the data presented here (see Chapter 3 above, also see van Dijk (1998) and Stubbe et al (2003) for examples of how to apply CDA to spoken data). They may examine strategies of positive and negative presentation - of self and other (e.g. referential/predicational/argumentational or mitigating strategies) - and explore the rhetorical and persuasive force of legitimisation strategies.

Analysis

In this short extract we see how a specific text - a brief conversational exchange - provides unique insight into the discourses of *Nihonjinron* and *gijin* as the interactants draw on,

13

contest and recontextualise circulating ethnic labels. We observe how strategies of positive self-representation and negative representation of others, are used to construct in- and out-groups in order to legitimise the construction of identities.

Initially we observe how the interviewer begins her exchange with a presupposition that the interviewee, Jack, may self-ascribe using a referential label 'other' than Japanese by invoking circulating labels associated with those of mixed heritage – "half, hybrid, double, or 'hapa'". She suggests that there are "typical" examples of these categories and that the interviewee may align himself with one or more of these. This presupposition arises from the interviewers' exposure to historical and contemporary discourses about race in Japan (particularly those of mixed-race) and we witness its re-contextualisation in the exchange here. The term 'hapa' introduced in her listing arises from the label given to the 'Hapa Community' which was unofficially created in Tokyo in 1991 as a voluntary organisation for people of mixed-race who were facing social isolation. Indeed, many other labels have been given to and appropriated by mixed-race Japanese e.g. Blackanese, haafu, mixed-roots, halvsie, half-Japanese (Shaitan & McEntee-Atalianis 2017). The term *haafu* is often used a generic term of reference for people of mixed heritage in Japan – whether or not they self-ascribe as such.

This opening provocative question therefore serves as a referential strategy and categorisation device. It performs a definitive act of 'othering' or displacement and Jack's response acknowledges its circulation in Japanese discourse – "people classify me as different … being … half or whatever…" but rejects the ascription. He goes on to discuss the salience of this categorisation in different geographic locations, noting how assumptions and attitudes towards people of mixed race differ according to place. Using *deixis* Jack contrasts his experience in Japan - in which he is positioned as 'half' and 'other'- to the USA (his father's place of birth), where his racial identity is reported not to be an issue at all. Indeed,

the rights of individuals or groups to reside in nations (e.g. migrants) or to be treated on equal terms is often based upon assumptions and discourses of authenticity and legitimacy. These have been extensively examined in the CDA literature and are seen here.

This brief account illustrates how CDA's consideration of material outside of the text (i.e. broader historical/cultural/social/personal details and context) helps us to tease out a meaningful interpretation of the data: in particular, in this instance, to understand the power of hegemonic discourses on the experiences of individuals and the construction of identities.

Sample Analysis 2: Conversation Analysis (CA)

Preliminaries

In contrast to CDA, a conversation analysis would not draw on background (historical/cultural/social/personal) knowledge for interpretative purposes. For CA it is crucial to find evidence within talk-in-interaction using a fine-grained turn-by-turn analysis. Therefore, interpretations are drawn from the 'locally occasioned' actions of the participants exploring responses to prior turns at talk.

Analysis

In this extract we witness how the interviewer orients explicitly to Jack's identity in the first turn at talk (line 1), making it accountable, i.e. something we can study. We do not have access to prior turns, but this utterance can be characterised as 'topic initial' - orienting the interlocutors to the subject of identity. It acts to foreground a more extended turn-at-talk. Indeed, swiftly following the completion of the interviewer's question, Jack (in turn 2), takes up the floor to reject the identity categories proffered by the interviewer. This rejection is heard immediately by the recipient, as Jack with raised voice and without hesitation, invokes the adverb 'NEITHER' to introduce his dismissal of the categories proposed. Instead he chooses to be characterised generically as a 'human being' (lines 2 & 4).

15

The interviewer appears dissatisfied with Jack's response however in line 5 (marked by the use of the adversative 'but') and immediately re-initiates an exploration of the topic by reframing and reformulating her question. She invokes national frames of reference (Japan and America) and instead of requesting a self-ascription (as in line 1) seeks a response based on Jack's report of others' ascriptions. Jack immediately responds, reporting on his experience in Japan, but his difficulty in responding is marked initially by hesitation in line 7 (indexed by pausing and the discourse marker 'well'). His hesitation foregrounds the difficulty and complexity of his response both within the interactional frame of the interview and when responding to notional "others" in different contexts. This is also subsequently marked by code-switching, from English to Japanese in the conditional clause: "if it is mendokusai". Here he explicitly states that on occasion others' questioning of his identity can be 'troublesome'. The exact reason as to why some interactions may be 'troublesome' is not made explicit. Jack goes on however to confirm that on most occasions he would use the term 'half' (line 10) – an ascription which is somewhat different to that first claimed in his first turn at talk (lines 2 & 4 – "a human being"). Judging that his first reference to 'half' may be contextually ambiguous ("I tell them I am half"), he repeats and makes clear that it is "*In Japan* I say, I am half."

The end of this assertion (line 10) is heard as a completed turn by the interviewer, an opportunity for her to speak. In line 11 she offers feedback to confirm understanding but appears to await (as marked by a level tone and *silence* at the end of the turn) continuation by the interviewee. The floor is taken up again by Jack (line 12) who then elaborates further on his experience in the US.

This brief analysis illustrates how CA provides a method to analyse the way in which interlocutors jointly work to constitute the interactional context and highlights the unfolding

complex and fluid nature of identity construction in talk-in-interaction. We finally turn to consider a narrative approach.

Sample Analysis 3: Narrative Analysis (Small stories)

Preliminaries

Bamberg argues that there are "three practical challenges that self and identity formation processes are facing" (2011: 3):

a. "a successful diachronic navigation between constancy and change"

b. "the establishment of a synchronic navigation between sameness and difference (between self and others)", and

c. "the management of agency between the double-arrow of a person-to-world versus a world-to-person direction of fit."

As such subjects position themselves in relation to social categories and values, one way of exploring these positions and tensions is via an analysis of the small stories people tell focusing on three levels of positioning: *"How ... characters [are] positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?"; "How the speaker position[s] him- or herself to the audience?" and "How ... narrators position themselves to themselves"* (Bamberg 1997: 227).

In the following we draw on the first level of analysis to explore the means by which Jack constructs his identity in relation to other story characters, exploring how these are linguistically and spatially developed.

Analysis

The characters in this short extract include the speaker (Jack) and 'people' (lines 3, 9). 'People' are initially referred to generically (line 3) before a more nuanced specification is made of 'people' within bounded national contexts (via the use of the locative in line 5 -

'people *in* Japan or *in* America'). These story characters are subsequently invoked by Jack to support a reasoned argument for his response to others' ascriptions of him. Jack begins by rejecting the denotations offered by the interviewer as 'a typical half, hybrid, double or 'hapa'', preferring to self-ascribe as 'a human being' thereby emphasising his egalitarianism and opposition to his positioning by others, who view him as an outside/foreigner/*gaijin* – 'It is just people classify me as different…being…half or whatever' (line 3). A distal positioning is therefore established between himself and those who choose to label him as 'different'.

Once prompted to reframe his response by considering how he would respond to enquirers asking about his place of origin in different geographical locations (Japan and America), Jack first locates himself spatially in Japan. He presents himself as subject to interrogation but expresses a degree of agency and control over interactions: as able to assess the appropriate response at different times and the ability to 'play' with his interlocutors. This is however conditional upon his affective state (as expressed via conditional clauses). He asserts initially that if he 'do[es] not really care' (line 9), he is able to subvert the question by aligning with a localised/Japanese *place*, rather than *race* identity, thereby appropriating a different label than one expected by the illocutionary force of the interrogator. He self-ascribes as someone from 'Okinawa' (a small Japanese island), not as someone who is 'half/hapa' etc. The dominant force of *Nihonjinron* is however acknowledged by Jack, for he notes that most of the time he will self-identify as 'half' if asked. He is therefore positioned as a victim of the perpetuation of a dominant ideology empowering nosey Japanese enquirers to encroach on his 'business' (line 10).

In contrast however, as the lens shifts to a different spatial location – the US – Jack aligns with fellow US citizens – self- and other-ascribing using the referential label of 'mixed': 'Everybody is mixed' he states in line 13. He uses extreme case formulations (Pomerantz 1986) – 'nobody' (line 12), 'everybody' (line 13) to present his justification for

18

the generalised assumptions made about his 'mixed' identity in the US and his apparent comfort in not being asked about his race.

This first level of small story analysis has revealed how Jack variously positions story characters to expose the contested sites of identity within social orders embedded in different spatial/contextual frames which determine actor rights and obligations. Here we see that Jack is both subject to structural forces but also agentive in his ability to contest ascriptions or behaviours imposed upon him.

Conclusion

The discursive turn to the study of identity in recent years has given rise to numerous studies which have applied a range of approaches to answer different research questions and achieve different goals (see McEntee-Atalianis 2019). Given their social constructionist stance there are many areas of overlap, however, there remain many points of difference (theoretically and analytically) and contention, e.g. how context is conceived and utilised. Each approach, nonetheless, affords the analyst a unique toolkit and perspective to apply in their study of identity/ies, and each, in their own way, have enriched our understanding of this complex phenomenon/a.

Key Readings

Antaki, C. and Widdicombe, S. (1998), *Identities in Talk*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Benwell, B. and Stokoe, E. (2006), *Discourse and Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University
       Press.

Benwell, B. and Stokoe, E. (2010), 'Analysing identity in interaction: contrasting discourse, genealogical, narrative and conversation analysis' in M. Wetherell and C. T. Mohanty (eds), *The Sage Handbook of Identities*, London: Sage Publications, pp. 82-103.

De Fina, A. (2015/9), 'Narratives and Identities' in A. De Fina and A. Georgakopoulou (eds), *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 351-368.

McEntee-Atalianis, L.J. (2019), *Identity in Applied Linguistics Research.* London: Bloomsbury.

References

Agha, A. (2006), *Language and Social Relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Antaki, C., Condor, S. and Levine, M. (1996), 'Social identities in talk: speakers' own orientations', *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 35: 473-492.

Bamberg, M. (1997), 'Positioning between structure and performance', *Journal of Narrative & Life History*, 7 (1-4): 335-342.

Bamberg, M. (2011), 'Who am I? Narration and its contribution to self and identity', *Theory and Psychology,* 21 (1): 3-24.

Bamberg, M. and Georgakopoulou, A. (2008), 'Small stories as a new perspective in narrative and identity analysis', *Text & Talk*, 28 (3): 377-396.

Baxter, J. (2018), 'Discourse-analytic approaches to text and talk' in L. Litosseliti (ed), *Research Methods in Linguistics*, London: Bloomsbury, pp. 227-257.

Befu, H. (2001), *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of 'Nihonjinron'* (Vol 5). Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press.

Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1967), *The Social Construction of Reality.* Harmondsworth,

    England: Penguin.

Blommaert, J. (2005), *Discourse.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bruner, J. (1990), *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Foucault, M. (1972), *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New

    York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. (1995), *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random

    House.

Goffman, E. (1981), *Forms of Talk.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Kress, G. (1990), 'Critical Discourse Analysis', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics,* 11:

    84-99.

Irvine, J. (2001), '"Style" as distinctiveness: The culture and the ideology of linguistic

    differentiation' in P. Eckert and J.R. Rickford (eds), *Style and Sociolinguistic*

    Variation, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 21-43.

Pomerantz, A. (1986), 'Extreme Case Formulations: A Way of Legitimising Claims', *Human*

    Studies, 9: 633-653.

Sacks, H. (1992/1996), *Lectures on Conversation*, (ed) G. Jefferson, Oxford: Blackwell.

Schegloff, E. A. (1997), 'Whose text? Whose context?', *Discourse & Society,* 8 (2): 165-187.

Shaitan, A. and McEntee-Atalianis, L. J. (2017), 'Identity Crisis: half, hybrid or culturally

    homeless?' in F. Fozdar, & Z. Rocha (eds) *"Mixed race" in Asia*, London:

    Routledge, pp. 82-97.

Silverstein, M. (2003), 'Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life', *Language*

    and Communication, 23: 193-229.

Stubbe, M., Lane, C., Hilder, J., Vine, B., Marra, M., Holmes, J. and Weatherall, A. (2003), 'Multiple discourse analyses of a workplace interaction', *Discourse Studies,* 5 (3): 351-388.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998), 'Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis' in J. Cheshire and P. Trudgill (eds) *The Sociolinguistics Reader Volume 2: Gender and Discourse*,London: Arnold, pp. 367-91.

Wetherell, M. (1998), 'Positioning and interpretive repertoires: Conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue', *Discourse & Society*, 9 (3): 387-412.