



Participants' use of enacted scenes in research interviews: A method for reflexive analysis in health and social care



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ABSTRACT

In our study of a workforce intervention within a health and social care context we found that participants who took part in longitudinal research interviews were commonly enacting scenes from their work during one-to-one interviews. Scenes were defined as portions of the interviews in which participants directly quoted the speech of at least two actors. Our analysis in this paper focuses on these enacted scenes, and compares the content of them before and after the intervention. We found that, whilst the tensions between consistency and change, and change management, were common topics for scene enactment in both pre and post-intervention data, following the intervention participants were much more likely to present themselves as active agents in that change. Post-intervention enacted scenes also showed participants' reports of taking a service user perspective, and a focus on their interactions with service users that had been absent from pre-intervention data. In addition, descriptions of positive feeling and emotions were present in the post-intervention enacted scenes. We suggest that this analysis confirms the importance of enacted scenes as an analytic resource, and that this importance goes beyond their utility in identifying the impact of this specific intervention. Given the congruence between the themes prominent in enacted scenes, and those which emerged from a more extensive qualitative analysis of these data, we argue that enacted scenes may also be of wider methodological importance. The possibility of using scene enactment as an approach to the validation of inductive analysis in health and social care settings could provide a useful methodological resource in settings where longitudinal ethnographic observation of frontline care staff is impossible or impractical.

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1. Introduction

If practice is the site of knowing and cognition is distributed amongst people in interaction with themselves and the material world (Nicolini, 2011) then our understanding of organizations and work practice in health and social care settings will be strengthened when we shift the spotlight as researchers to interactional data. One way to do this is to conduct ethnographic research in these settings, sampling and recording interactional episodes. However, participants may provide another window on their work practice when they replay 'enacted scenes' (involving the directly quoted speech of two or more speakers) during research

interviews. Their choice of scene and their narration on the scene may provide opportunities for researchers to gain a deeper understanding of participant's knowledge and belief about their work practice. Being able to sample the interactional episodes from work practice is especially relevant to the field of health and social care where there is a need to improve the quality of care at the direct point of care during interactional episodes between the healthcare provider and the patient or service user (e.g. DH, 2001; DH, 2010; DH, 2012); in such settings it may not always be possible to record interaction directly. This paper reports on an analysis of 'enacted scenes' as reproduced in research interviews before and after a workforce intervention, and considers the import of these scenes both for understanding the impact of the intervention, and their wider methodological utility in researching the delivery of health and social care.

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1.1. Background

Individuals vary in their styles of speaking, vocabulary used, length of utterance etc, but all speakers will adjust aspects of their stance in response to the interactional requirements in social contexts. During the context of a research interview the participant will be engaged in interactional work to help the interviewer understand their context and their perspective on it. Baynham (1996) suggests that dramatisation might be used to increase social closeness between participants in order to maintain involvement. One way to identify moments where participants are using dramatisation is to look for moments of direct speech. These can be easily recognized within written transcripts. In using direct speech as a device to re-enact a dramatic scene, the participant is taking themselves and the interviewer on a journey to a moment or issue of real significance to them.

The scenes that participants are enacting in their talk can be defined by the use of direct speech, where two or more speakers are involved. Tannen refers to direct speech as *constructed dialogue* and states that it is “a means by which experience surpasses story to become drama” (1986: 312). Furthermore, “the creation of drama from personal experience and hearsay is made possible by and simultaneously creates interpersonal involvement among speaker or writer and audience” (Tannen, 1986: 312). Direct speech is one feature of discourse which creates *interpersonal involvement* (Tannen, 1985: 134), where the focus of the narrative being told is dramatized in a re-telling, recreating the speaker's own initial reaction or prompting a similar reaction in the listener(s) by mimicking the event. The audience is given the opportunity to see the events for themselves, albeit in the manner intended by the reporter, allowing them to both observe and empathise with the reporter. Understanding constructed dialogue as rhetoric, it is shown that the scene will be reported in a way that encourages the listener to interpret the scene as the speaker themselves did (Holt, 2000).

But direct speech offers more than just a description, it provides “a type of demonstration” (Clark and Gerrig, 1990: 764) which pertains to authentic information, a form of evidence that carries an “air of objectivity” (Holt, 1996: 242) and to which the reporter, as a first-hand observer, has a “greater fidelity” (Li, 1986: 41). The idea of evidentiality is explored as an aspect of stance (Chafe and Nichols, 1986; Aikhenvald and Dixon, 2003), indicating one's basis and reliability for making their assertion. The enacted scene, however, is not characteristic of a stand-alone evidential in the way that researchers have tried to index stance and, similarly, modality through semantic and grammatical markers (Downing, 2001; Kärkkäinen, 2003; Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, 2004; Du Bois, 2004). Rather as an *interactional evidential* its meaning, function and role as evidence is realised in the conversation, is “mobilized interactionally across turns” (Clift, 2006: 583), and the audience still has the opportunity to interpret the scene, and to question its quality or impact as evidence.

As an ‘auteur’ of the scene re-enactment, the reporter manages stance at the three levels identified by Biber et al. (1999), that is, *epistemic* (concerning certainty, doubt, knowledge, imprecision), *affect* (concerning states, evaluations, emotions) and *manner* (relating to style of speech). Researchers have found displays of strong affect (Kochman, 1981) and a performative power (Álvarez-Cáccamo, 1996) in giving voice to one's own or another's words. It is argued that a speaker's *selective depiction* (Clark and Gerrig, 1990) of scenes comes from a store of moments in their memory and scenes are selected and depicted as appropriate to the assertion they are trying to make. Whatever their stance is in the moment, the resources for scene enactment remain largely unchanged and so the very selection of a particular scene is indicative of their

stance. Furthermore, scenes can be re-imagined in light of new evidence or knowledge, and a moment can have new meaning for the reporter. In this way, given the level of stance that is potentially invested in this re-enactment, the episode is highly personal and can offer a deep insight into the reporter's thoughts, views and feelings about its content.

It can be argued, then, that in using direct speech to re-enact scenes the participants are, in effect, providing us with a virtual ethnography. If the researchers were the ethnographers the selection of scenes for analysis would be at least partly made by the researcher. Placing an analytic focus on the scenes enacted by the participants puts them in the role of ethnographer because they are choosing what to highlight for the researcher. The scenes can potentially tell us something about their individual stance, but also about the organisational culture. In previous work (Pilnick and James, 2013) we have used Goodwin's (1994) ideas about professional vision to show how transforming culture and practice within communities is a socially constructed endeavour. According to Goodwin, the enactment of coding, highlighting and representing information can become ways of shaping perception, of showing others ‘how to see’ a particular object or event.

Additionally, we propose that scene re-enactment through direct speech is both a novel and relevant phenomenon to explore in the specific context of workplace intervention research. In the intervention underpinning this study, the context of the interviews, the interviewer and the job roles of the interviewees remained constant before and after the intervention, thereby minimising other potential influences on interaction. If the ways in which the participants enacted scenes from their work setting changed, we argue that this may provide evidence for the impact of the intervention itself. Other researchers interested in the interactional manifestations of authority, responsibility and entitlement have proposed that these can be linked to specific features of talk (e.g. Fox, 2001; Heritage, 2012). For example, Fox (2001) proposes that people making a bid for authority produce few or no evidential markers for their assertions. It follows that pre- and post-intervention scene enactment could be explored from this perspective, to identify any changes in the ways that workers position themselves within sites of practice through their talk. We have chosen to use the term ‘scene enactment’ as opposed to ‘vignette’ because it indexes what we perceive as the speaker's degree of commitment to the talk, privileging the dramatic portrayal that characterises these episodes.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to show how we set about identifying scenes where interactional evidence was played out during a research interview, in order to demonstrate a) the purposes for which participants use the reporting of direct speech in this setting and b) to assess how this use of direct speech changes pre- and post-the study intervention. We end by reflecting on the relationship between our findings here, and the findings of the wider qualitative study from which these data are taken, and by considering the wider methodological utility of enacted scenes involving direct speech for health and social care research.

2. Method

For the purposes of this paper, we conducted a new analysis on participant interviews that were obtained for a main study (James et al., in press) evaluating the impact of a coaching-style workforce development intervention. The participants in the research were employees at a social care/education organisation where Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) was being implemented, and came from the health, education and social care sectors. The guiding principles of the VIG intervention and more details on the way in which it was carried out in this setting are provided in box 1. All the participants

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