

War on terror revisited: On historical contingencies of membership categorisation analyses of political discourse.

Ivan Leudar and Jiří Nekvapil

The University of Manchester, Manchester

Charles University, Prague

Synopsis

- Ethnomethodology vs. discourse analysis of media
- Managing the context
- The idea of dialogical networks
- 9/11 Dialogical networks
- Ethnomethodology and history
- Conclusion

Ethnomethodology vs. Discourse analysis of media

- Ethnomethodology
 - Indexicality (situatedness)
 - Unique adequacy requirement
- Discourse Analysis
 - Discourses and Cognitivation
 - Scholarship

Managing the context

- Indexicality as an unavoidable source of meaning
- Context management (examples)
 - psychotherapy
 - TV interviews (McGuinness)
 - Dialogical network (Democratic Party of Sudetenland)
 - Structured immediacy (in psychotherapy)

Dialogical Networks

- Forms of communication which typically occur in the mass media (but not only there)
- The participants are not co-present; the contributions of individual participants are distributed in time and space,
- An individual's contribution can be multiplied

Network Cohesion

- Sequential structures
- Argumentative resources
- Lexical resources
- Category organization

Sequential Structures

- Claim - Denouncement, Dismay
- Demand - Rejection
- Summons (for support) - Response
- Appeal - Response/No response
- Invitation - No response
- Threat – Counter-threat

Properties of Sequential Structures

- Several actors often react to the first part of a sequence
- The second part in a sequence is often a reaction to several tokens of the first part
- The connection between the parts of sequences is often mediated by journalists

Theoretical Points

- Dialogical networks (DN) are not inventions of the analyst
- Participants themselves orient to DN
- The concept of DN respecifies ‘intertextuality’ as a members’ phenomenon that is locally accomplished, recognised and produced

9/11 Dialogical Networks

Public addresses made soon after the attacks

- by Bush, Blair, Muslim MPs, bin Laden
- by Blair, Muslim Council of Britain, Muslim MPs

On Doing History

- Retrospective analysis
 - Hacking (1995)
 - Leudar and Sharrock (2002)
 - Collingwood (1994)
- Participants' as 'practical historians'
 - Garfinkel (1968), Sacks (1968)
 - Lynch & Bogen (1996); Lynch (2008)

On Doing History

Garfinkel (1968)

Society's members act as 'practical historians' who reflexively orient to history while reproducing it. (Formulated by Lynch and Bogen, 1996)

On Doing History

Garfinkel (1968)

Suppose you treat the stuff that you dig up as a joke that the ancients were playing on those who would come later, to find that these predecessors had been there before.

(p. 153)

On Doing History

Sacks (1968)

Insofar as you have dealt with a society that was aware of a history, that was oriented to a history, then you damn well have to consider that the things you found were put there for you, or someone such as you, and could have been put there then with various attitudes. (p. 158)

On Doing History

Lynch (2008)

Garfinkel and his research team aimed to conduct a specific variant of the documentary method – to derive an organized pattern from a body of documents. However, rather than simply illustrating the interpretative flexibility of retrospection, his reflections about clinic records suggest that such flexibility was anticipated and to some extent prospectively managed when the records were written and assembled in patient files. This was not simply a way of talking about the hermeneutic circle, because it involved complex, organizationally distributed, temporally-articulated, interactions among various (sometimes unknown) parties. The raw data (the clinic files) for the sociologists were themselves anticipatory social productions, but just how they were produced was only partly, and perhaps deceptively, revealed in those data. [...]

I believe there is an affinity between historians' and ethnomethodologists' respect for documentary detail and concern to recover local, contextual orientations expressed in and through documents

(Lynch (2008) Ethomethodology and History. Paper presented to *Mind and Society 15*, University of Manchester, 5-6 September 2008.)

On Doing History – Bush’s ahistorical and essentializing formulation (in extract 1)

- 28. The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full**
- 29. resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those**
- 30. responsible and to bring them to justice.**

Comment: In some respect this account is essentializing – the acts are constructed not in terms of historical links but in terms of transcendental characteristics of their perpetrators. Yet there is a prospective historical element - the so formulated deed will be a historical grounds for particular future reaction, that is, the future activities will be contextualised in its terms. But history starts with 9/11 and its perpetrators formulated in just this way. (See extract 2 for essentialising account of the attacks and attackers.)

**On Doing History –
Blair’s ahistorical and essentializing formulation
(in extract 3)**

**11. As for those that carried out these
12. attacks, there are no adequate words of
13. condemnation. Their barbarism will
14. stand as their shame for all eternity.
15. As I said earlier, this mass terrorism is
16. the new evil in our world.**

Comment: The attacks are set up as a historical object in the same way as in Bush’s account. They are not situated historically but formulated as a historical antecedent of the future assessment (lines 13-14). Again, and more explicitly, history starts with the attacks (lines 15-16). See also extract 5, lines 6 to 8, 12-14.

**On Doing History –
Blair’s ahistorical and essentializing formulation
(in extract 6)**

- 124. Terrorism has taken on a new and frightening aspect. The people perpetrating it wear**
- 125. the ultimate badge of the fanatic: they are prepared to commit suicide in pursuit of**
- 126. their beliefs. Our beliefs are the very opposite of theirs. We believe in reason,**
- 127. democracy and tolerance. These beliefs are the foundation of our civilised world.**
- 128. They are enduring, they have served us well, and as history has shown, we have been**
- 129. prepared to fight, when necessary, to defend them.**

Comment: Note again that history starts with the attacks – the attack is specifically formulated as something new (line 124). Our readiness to defend our self is situated in a minimally historical way by citing unspecified historical precedents (lines 128-129).

**On Doing History –
Muslim Council of Britain
(in extract 4)**

**29. Terror makes victims of us
30. all, it is beyond reason. Terror on
31. this scale must not be compounded
32. by knee-jerk reactions that would
33. make victims of other innocent
34. peoples of the world. This would
35. only add to the devastation caused.**

Comment: This is again a prospective historical formulation – the attacks are to be formulated so that in the future they are not to be historical reasons for victimizing British Muslims

**On Doing History –
The Muslim News, Editorial
(in extract 12)**

49. September 11 will doubtlessly go down in history

...

55. It is certainly a pivotal

**56. moment in history and we can only hope that Blair
has been using his influence to moderate plans**

**57. and encourage them to act with reason, rather than
being a ‘cheer-leader’. Our biggest fear is that**

**58. events tend to gain a momentum of their own with
unknown consequences**

Comment: The present happenings are formulated as historical moment (line 49) that in the future could become a historical precedent for disastrous consequences (lines 57-58). So it should be formulated in such a way that such consequences will not arise.

**On Doing History – The Muslim News,
Outpouring of Muslim grief
(in extract 11)**

**36. Warnings about the likely
37. repercussions were made in virtually every
38. statement issued by Muslim groups. Both
39. the Muslim Welfare House and Council of
40. Mosques in Tower Hamlets referred to the
41. 1995 Oklahoma bombing and called on the
42. need to resist the temptation to scapegoat
43. the Muslim community.**

Comment: In this account Muslim News refers to the backlash as something that is now happening and it sets it aside with reported historical parallel

**On Doing History – Khalid Mahmood
(in extract 7)**

**365. Will the Prime Minister accept my
366. unreserved condemnation of the
367. atrocities carried out in the United
368. States? Will he also accept that that
369. terrible act of terrorism claimed the lives
370. of many people of many faiths, including
371. Muslims?**

Comment: In this extract Khalid Mahmood situates the 9/11 attacks alongside attacks in which Muslims were victims – ‘terrible acts of terrorism’ in line 369 is not determined to refer exclusively to the ‘atrocities in the USA’ (lines 367-368)

On Doing History – Mohammad Sarwar (in extract 9)

- 9. There can be no**
- 10. justification for this vulgar terrorist**
- 11. atrocity, but we cannot be blind to the**
- 12. plight of oppressed people who look to**
- 13. Europe and the USA for support. As a**
- 14. former colonial power we have a**
- 15. special responsibility.**

Comment: Mohammad Sarwar situates the 9/11 attacks by aligning them with the plight of oppressed people, which is in turn aligned with British actions in history. The 9/11 attacks thus receive a partly historical account. Note also that Mohammad Sarwar forestalls this historical explanation being understood as an excuse (line 9-11)

On Doing History – Osama bin Laden (in extract 10)

- 2. I have received with great sadness the news that some of our Muslim brothers have**
- 3. been killed in Karachi while expressing their denouncement of the forces of the**
- 4. American crusade and their allies in the Muslim lands of Pakistan and Afghanistan.**
- 5. We ask God to receive them as martyrs and may they become like the prophets, the**
- 6. believers and good people who were chosen to become God's companions, and may**

Comment: The lexical choices by Osama bin Laden tie the conflict into history

**On Doing History – Osama bin Laden’s historical
formulation of the conflict
(in extract 10, similarly in extract 13)**

- 11. It is not surprising for the Islamic nation to rise up in Pakistan in defence of Islam.**
- 12. Pakistan is considered to be the first line of the defence of Islam in the region as was**
- 13. the case with Afghanistan in defending itself and Pakistan against the Russian**
- 14. invasion more than 20 years ago.**

Comment: The conflict in Pakistan is situated historically as continuing defence of Islam, paralleling that in Afghanistan

Conclusion

- historicity of dialogical networks

Bibliography

- Garfinkel, H. (2002) *Ethnomethodology's Program: Working Out Durkheim's Aphorism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).
- Hacking, I. (1995) *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Leudar, I., Marsland, V., and Nekvapil, J. (2004) On membership categorisation: 'Us', 'them' and 'doing violence' in political discourse. *Discourse and Society* 15, 243-266.
- Leudar, I. and Nekvapil, J. (2007). The War on Terror and Muslim Britons' Safety: A Week in the Life of a Dialogical Network. *Ethnographic Studies*, 9, 44-62.
- Lynch, M. (2008) Ethnomethodology and history. Paper presented to *Mind & Society 15*, University of Manchester, 5-6th September.
- Lynch, M. and Bogen, D. (1996) *The Spectacle of History: Speech, Text, and Memory at the Iran-Contra Hearings* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Martin, J.R. (2003) Making history: Grammar for interpretation. In J.R. Martin and R. Wodak (eds.) *Re/reading the Past: Critical and Functional Perspectives on Time and Value*, pp. 19-57.