

**Diversity as Interactive Practice:
Theoretical and Methodological
Contributions from a Discursive
Psychological Approach to Issue
Framing**

Art Dewulf, Greet François, René Bouwen
and Tharsi Taillieu

EURODIV PAPER 36.2006

DECEMBER 2006

KTHC - Knowledge, Technology, Human Capital

Art Dewulf, Greet François, René Bouwen and Tharsi Taillieu, *Center for Organizational and
Personnel Psychology (K.U.Leuven)*

This paper can be downloaded without charge at:

The Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei Series Index:
<http://www.feem.it/Feem/Pub/Publications/EURODIVpapers/default.htm>

The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the position of
Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei
Corso Magenta, 63, 20123 Milano (I), web site: www.feem.it, e-mail: working.papers@feem.it

The special issue on *Cultural Diversity* collects a selection of papers presented at the multidisciplinary and multinational Marie Curie project on “Cultural diversity in Europe: A series of Conferences” (EURODIV).

EURODIV focuses on cultural diversity in Europe and aims to understand the ways of dealing with diversity and its dynamics in the globalisation era. Its primary objective is to provide top-level training opportunities to researchers in the first years of their research career. EURODIV is a four-year project (2006-2009) co-ordinated by Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei (FEEM) and supported by the European Commission, Sixth Framework Programme, Marie Curie Conferences and Training Courses (contract no. MSCF-CT-2004-516670).

Schedule of Conferences:

- **First Conference “Understanding diversity: Mapping and measuring”**, 26-27 January 2006, FEEM, Milano, Italy. Contact person: Valeria Papponetti, valeria.papponetti@feem.it
- **Second Conference “Qualitative diversity research: Looking ahead”**, 19-20 September 2006, K.U.Leuven, Leuven, Belgium. Contact person: Maddy Janssens, maddy.janssens@econ.kuleuven.ac.be, and Patrizia Zanoni, patrizia.zanoni@kuleuven.ac.be
- **Third Conference “Diversity in cities: Visible and invisible walls”**, 11-12 September 2007, UCL, London, UK. Contact person: Valeria Papponetti, valeria.papponetti@feem.it
- **Fourth Conference “Diversity in cities: New models of governance”**, 16-17 September 2008, IPRS, Rome, Italy. Contact person: Raffaele Bracalenti, iprs.it@iprs.it
- **Fifth Conference “Dynamics of diversity in the globalisation era”**, 15-16 September 2009, FEEM, Milan, Italy. Contact person: Valeria Papponetti, valeria.papponetti@feem.it

EURODIV goes in parallel with SUS.DIV, the Network of Excellence on sustainable development in a diverse world. For further information on EURODIV and SUS.DIV, please visit the web site: www.ebos.com.cy/susdiv.

This batch of papers has been presented at the Second EURODIV Conference “Qualitative diversity research: Looking ahead”

Diversity as Interactive Practice: Theoretical and Methodological Contributions from a Discursive Psychological Approach to Issue Framing

Summary

We conceptualize organizational diversity situations as contexts where people with different backgrounds are interdependent in performing their tasks or achieving their goals. We use the concept of frames and we focus on dealing with differences in issue framing in order to capture diversity at the level where it takes the form of divergent views on the issues at hand. For researching the interactive process of issue framing and reframing, the qualitative research approach of discourse and conversation analysis proves very useful. This methodological approach allows capturing what happens with divergent frames throughout the process of interaction, in which issues are negotiated through formulating and reformulating them. Theoretically, a discursive psychological approach to frame diversity moves away from an essentialist approach to diversity in terms of individual or group properties, towards a view where diversity is continuously enacted and dealt with in discursive practices between people from different backgrounds who work on specific tasks or issues.

Keywords: Framing, Diversity, Interaction

Address for correspondence:

Art Dewulf
Centre for Organizational and Personnel Psychology
Tiensestraat 102
BE-3000 Leuven
Belgium
Phone: +32 16 326064
Fax: +32 16 326055
E-mail: Art.Dewulf@psy.kuleuven.be

1 Diversity

Diversity in its many facets has important consequences for organizing. Our approach to the study of diversity is in line with those who argue that diversity research should go beyond the number of different identity group affiliations on the payroll. Thomas & Ely (1996: 80) understand diversity as “the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring”. Different groups bring specific knowledge about how to go about the work: “how to design processes, reach goals, frame tasks, create effective teams, communicate ideas, and lead” (Thomas & Ely, 1996: 80). They argue that organizational practices that are able to incorporate employees' diverse perspectives into the main work of the organization can improve effectiveness by rethinking tasks, redefining markets and products, reformulating strategies or redesigning business practices. In inter-organizational or multi-actor settings, diversity in views, interests and competences provides the basis for innovation and constructive integration of differences (Vansina & Taillieu, 1997).

Diversity is at the same time a big challenge in contemporary work contexts and in other realms of society. Achieving the benefits of constructively dealing with diversity, as formulated above, seems very hard. As Zanoni & Janssens (2004) showed, diversity discourse as used by HR managers can itself be deployed to reaffirm existing power relations. When genuine efforts are made to bridge boundaries, new distinctions seem to arise at the same time (Craps et al., 2004), in a paradoxical process of including and excluding that reminds us of Bourdieu's (1979) “La distinction” – where social subjects continuously distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make in their tastes in a process of creating and legitimating social differences.

As a contribution to the thorny field of diversity, we will present a view on diversity as enacted in a network of interactive practices. Diversity then appears as continuous mix of creating and undoing, valuing and discriminating, using and abusing differences. We will illustrate how differences are enacted in a multi-actor project context through the various ways issues (problems, tasks, plans, ...) get framed and how these difference are dealt with. In this paper, we will focus on how a discourse and conversation analytic methodology provides the necessary means for studying these processes. Discourse and conversation analysis allow the study of interactive practices as they unfold from utterance to utterance. In these consecutive conversational steps, differences emerge and are dealt with through the way participants use language to make sense of the situation for themselves and others.

2 Diversity as interactive practice

We conceptualize organizational diversity situations as contexts where people with different backgrounds are interdependent in performing their tasks or achieving their goals. We use the concept of frames and we focus on differences in issue framing in order to capture diversity at the level where it takes the form of divergent views on the issues at hand. When people from different backgrounds work together, they tend to make sense of the issues at hand in very different ways. An important part of what they do while interacting with each other can be called issue framing, defining "what this is all about". That different actors use different frames has been shown, but our main question is: what happens with this frame diversity when different people start working together?

Dewulf, Craps and Dercon (2004) have outlined a discursive approach to issue framing. They stress its interactive rather than individual character, since the enactment of a certain frame depends on the reactions of others to establish its meaning (Gray and Donnellon, 1990; Drake and Donohue, 1996). Starting from the general observation that people talk differently about certain issues depending on whom they are talking to, they stress the communicative aspects of framing, rather than cognitive processes, concluding that people use frames that serve their current interactional concerns in a conversation (Aarts, Van Woerkum, & Vermunt, 2003; Benford and Snow, 2000). Finally they stress the constructive rather than representative characteristics of issue framing, which are based on the possibilities of linguistic choices to generate alternative descriptive versions of events with very different implications (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards, 1997). We want to build on this concept for an investigation of how differences in issue framing emerge during multi-actor interaction moments where the definition of issues and the delimitation of a common problem domain are at stake.

This interactive and discursive approach to issue framing allows analyzing the various kinds of diversity involved in a specific context (professional, ethnic, gender, discipline, ...) at the point where these are translated into enacted and task-relevant frame differences. Also, at this level dealing constructively with the differences and achieving interdependency is probably more feasible than at the level of 'essentialized' identities. We will discuss how the methodological approach of discourse and conversation analysis can be used for studying interactive organizational practices. Afterwards, we present illustrations from a study on issue framing between multiple actors.

3 Researching interactive organizational practices

Researching interactive organizational practices constitutes quite a challenge. Interaction is sometimes considered too messy to study. When the usual research methods, like surveys, interviews or field observations, are used for studying interaction, they often miss the sequential back-and-forth nature of interaction, by summarizing large stretches of conversations with a few qualifiers. We will argue that the qualitative research approach of discourse and conversation analysis proves very useful for analyzing organizational interaction. This methodological approach allows capturing what happens with differences throughout the process of interaction, in which issues are negotiated through formulating and reformulating them. Theoretically, a discursive psychological approach to diversity moves away from an essentialist approach to diversity in terms of individual or group properties, towards a view where diversity is continuously enacted and dealt with in discursive practices between people from different backgrounds who work on specific tasks or issues.

3.1 *Collecting data about organizational interaction*

3.1.1 Data collection strategies

Decisions about the sort of sample to be selected in discourse analysis are similar to those in other research, in that the sample should be relevant to or representative of the phenomenon of interest (Wood & Kroger, 2000). However, the discourse analytic preference for faithful recording of naturally occurring interaction has some implications for how to go about data collection. The unit of analysis is not people, projects or

organizations as such; rather units of interaction discourse are sampled. Depending on the research question, these units may consist of sentences, utterances or interacts, interaction sequences or entire interaction moments, although the requirement of detailed analysis of transcripts will make interaction moments as units of analysis almost unfeasible. It is in terms of this discursive unit of analysis that the sample size should be judged. If the structure of turn-taking is what the researcher is after, a single conversation may yield more than sufficient instances of turn-taking (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 161). In this specific example, using a single conversation might be questioned from a concern about variability rather than sample size, since discourse analysis also differs from other approaches in its emphasis on variability. From a concern for mapping out the studied phenomenon in discursive terms as completely as possible, the data collection strategy aims at sampling the relevant variety with respect to the phenomenon under study (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 79). How well this can be done depends to some extent on the pre-existing insights of the researcher into potentially variable aspects of the phenomenon, either from familiarity with the context or from going through already collected data.

The notion of *theoretical sampling* (Charmaz, 2000) from grounded theory may be of help here, although in a more limited sense, we would argue. As in grounded theory, sampling in discourse analysis is not at random, but rather aimed at sampling the relevant variety of an interactional phenomenon. Accordingly, these samples cannot be used for assessing frequencies of certain types of phenomena. In grounded theory, theoretical sampling is both a data collection and a data analysis strategy: it is used for further developing emerging categories by iteratively sampling new data that are relevant at specific points in the analysis. It often implies going back to selected respondents of earlier interviews. In discourse analysis, the logic of theoretical rather than random sampling is equally relevant, but the use of theoretical sampling as an iterative data collection and analysis strategy is less relevant. If the data used are first hand registrations of the phenomenon of interest, inquiring further into the phenomenon doesn't involve collecting more second hand data but taking another look at the original data. One could of course try to extend sampling to include new aspects or further variants of the phenomenon, but the labor-intensive nature of discourse transcription and analysis often limits possibilities for doing so. Rather, in discourse analysis, this may take the form of doing one study and then another, while assuring that both studies are thorough enough to develop an argument that can stand on its own.

3.1.2 Collecting data on naturally occurring organizational interaction

As we argued before, some kind of recording is needed for collecting data on naturally occurring organizational interaction. Naturally occurring here means discourse that is not produced through the instigation of the researcher. As Edwards (1997) notes, any interactional phenomenon can be naturalized through treating it as natural, e.g. when treating an interview as naturally occurring interview discourse.

Recording naturally occurring interaction is not always straightforward, especially since the recording required for discourse analysis needs to be of sufficient quality to allow for a detailed transcript. Recording might even affect the naturalness of the interaction if the speakers are aware that their discourse is being taped. Awareness is not the same as being informed (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Some speakers may become aware that a tape is being made, although they were not so informed beforehand; others may have been informed, while not being very much aware of the recording during the interaction itself.

The orientation of the speakers to the process of recording can vary over time, between participants and depending of the nature of the situation.

A number of factors can reduce the impact of recording on the naturalness of the interaction: the use of an unobtrusive recording device, which may be more feasible with audio than with video recording; recording frequently so the participants become used to it; the familiarity of the participants with the researcher and the practice of recording; and trust on the part of the participants that the recordings will not be used against them (see below on the role of the researcher). As Wood and Kroger (2000: 59) note however, “there is no clear way to eliminate or assess the effects of recording on discourse”.

As an objection to discourse data, the importance of nonverbal aspects of interaction is often stressed. Sometimes this objection stems from an artificial distinction between nonverbal behavior as action and verbal behavior as just talk. That language-in-use *is* action in many respects has been sufficiently demonstrated. Attention for nonverbal behavior is important, however, because it may help to create the meaning of the interact. As will be explicated below, the transcription conventions in discourse analysis, allow for analyzing not only the content of what is said, but also the way it is said, the specific formulations used and various paralinguistic aspects of the way the talk is delivered, including speed, loudness, emphasis and pauses. Although video recordings allow for more than audio recordings in this respect, discourse analysis uses the original recordings, with the nonverbal information they contain, as much as the transcripts for the analysis.

This is also the reason why digital or digitalized recordings can facilitate discourse analysis considerably. If recordings are available as computer files that allow for random access (as opposed to traditional tapes), every bit of data is easily available for scrutiny. Some computer programs for qualitative data analysis (e.g. Atlas-ti and Transana) even allow for linking the recording directly to the transcript.

3.1.3 Context data or data in context?

Literally context refers to what is “with” the “text”, to what occurs before and after the interaction in the relevant environment (Wood & Kroger, 2000). The relation between micro-interaction and context raises a number of thorny issues, like the impact of one on the other, the relative importance of structure or agency, or whether it is possible to study the one without the other. These and related issues have a lot to do with the analytical separation between interaction and context. Reifying the context on a meso or macro level, tends to grant it an existence of its own, outside of concrete interaction between people and groups. The structural properties of a certain context, however, do only exist as regularities that are enacted through a variety of micro-social practices (Orlikowski, 2000; Giddens, 1984).

Discourse analysis in general “avoids trading on analysts prior assumptions about what might be called ethnographic particulars (e.g. participants' status, the nature of the context, the goals of the participants), preferring to see these as things that are worked up, attended to and made relevant in interaction rather than being external determinants.” (Potter, 1997: 158). Heritage (1997: 162) makes a similar point, but with respect to the conversational analysis of institutional or organizational interaction, where context plays a major role:

“In fact, CA embodies a theory which argues that sequences of actions are a major part of what we mean by context, that the meaning of an action is heavily shaped by the sequence of previous actions from which it emerges, and that social context is a dynamically created thing that is expressed in and through the sequential organization of interaction.”

This approach to context thus tries to analyze how context is invoked and oriented to in micro-interactions, because it is “through interaction that institutional imperatives originating from outside the interaction are evidenced and made real and enforceable for the participants” (Heritage, 1997).

There is another sense in which context is an important issue in discourse analysis, which is seldom discussed. The importance of context becomes clear when one tries to study discourse from a cultural context different from one’s own, in another language, on unfamiliar topics or the like. The ability to follow the development of a conversation or the line of argument in a written text is presupposed for doing discourse analysis. If this is not the case, one can engage in collecting and analyzing more data of an *intertextual* kind, trying to get a sense of the interaction patterns and discursive repertoires available in the given context. For historical analyses, for example, this may be the only way to improve the analyst’s understanding of the original text. If possible, the more efficient way to achieve this improved understanding is a longer or more profound involvement of the researcher in the studied context. In this way, the researcher learns to attend to what is relevant in that context, mostly it in an implicit way, just as the people functioning in that context have learned to attend to what is relevant through their socialization. A good albeit somewhat strict criterion we would like to suggest for assessing the degree of understanding on the part of researcher necessary for doing the analysis is if the researcher him- or herself would be capable of producing meaningful discourse in that context.

3.2 *Analyzing organizational interaction discourse*

After carefully sampling organizational interaction discourse in the variability that is theoretically relevant for the phenomenon of interest, how do we go about the analysis? Wood and Kroger (2000: 95) provide a general description of the analysis process, inspired by Potter and Wetherell (1987).

“The overall goal of the analysis is to explain what is being done in the discourse and how this is accomplished, that is, how the discourse is structured or organized to perform various function and achieve various effects or consequences. It requires the identification and interpretation of patterns in the discourse, that is, of systematic variability or similarity in content and structure, and the formation and checking of claims ... about functions and effects through a search for evidence in the discourse”.

3.2.1 Data preparation

As a first step in data preparation, any analogue audio or video recordings can be converted to digital format. That will allow them to be easily and randomly accessed during the analysis. They can also be imported in software programs for qualitative data analysis that can handle digital audio and video files.

Not all recorded interactions will in their entirety consist of valuable data with respect to research question, which makes a selection of relevant parts necessary – these can consist of parts of interacts, entire interacts or interaction sequences of varying length,

depending on the unit of analysis. Furthermore, the level of detail required by discourse analysis makes it impossible to analyze very large texts, so selection is crucial. Selection can also be done after transcription, but time will be gained if it is possible to select pieces of discourse on the audio or video recordings. Software like Atlas-ti or Transana can offer valuable help here in allowing sections to be marked off on the digitalized recordings and giving the possibility to code them if necessary – as different from other qualitative analysis methods like grounded theory, data selection is the only stage in discourse analysis where coding may have an important role. Sometimes a try-out or a pilot analysis will be necessary for determining how the selection of discursive units of analysis is best carried out.

Once the relevant pieces of data are selected, these can be transcribed. The transcription has to reflect as exactly as possible the recording, which is achieved through the use of additional punctuation symbols, apart from those commonly used in writing texts. These symbols serve to describe aspects of speech like relative loudness, pauses, speed and interruptions, which allow the inclusion of these non-verbal aspects in analyses. Different systems for transcription exist, most of them based on the Jefferson system (see Wood & Kroger, 193-194). The level of detail can be adapted to the research question at hand, although a more detailed transcription is generally the safer option.

3.2.2 Data analysis

The data analysis consists primarily of the detailed study of the available interaction transcripts, informed by relevant context data.

As already noted, context data are of secondary importance in discourse analysis, but they deserve nevertheless a systematic approach. The context data from related interaction moments, participant observation, documents and interviews can be analyzed in order to obtain a short case description. Especially for organizational interaction, the case description should include the identification of the involved participants with their organizational memberships and roles and a reconstruction of relevant events and interactions prior to the analyzed interaction. These short case descriptions can provide both the analyst and the reader with sufficient information to be able to situate the interaction sequence in its relevant context and to be able to follow the line of discussion.

Wood and Kroger (2000: 91-95) offer a series of general guidelines for doing discourse analytic research, a number of which are worth mentioning here: (1) try to identify the meaning to and for the participants, (2) do not ignore the obvious but try to explain it, (3) concentrate on what the speaker is doing through the talk, (4) explore the consequences of slightly different versions of the text through thought experiments, (5) look carefully at how the text is structured, (6) be alert for multiple functions of discourse, (6) adopt a comparative stance, (7) question the taken-for-granted, and (8) pay attention to grammar (e.g. passive versus active formulations).

The same authors also mention concrete interpretation strategies. One of them is called substitution and involves asking which utterance could reasonably be substituted for the utterance at issue. This can help to identify in what sense functions of utterances are similar or different to others. A variant of this strategy can be applied to non-verbal signs, where the non-verbal sign is substituted for different verbal utterances in order to get a better grasp of its function in the discourse. Another interpretation strategy is focusing on the meaning of utterances for participants, not by asking the participant about it, but by analyzing the immediate discursive context, especially the next

utterances. The meaning of a specific utterance will be established by the way other participants supplement it in their efforts to make sense of what is going on.

Edwards (2003) has outlined some analytical rules of thumb for the practical work of discourse analysis, specifically in discursive psychology, which are given hereafter.

- Ask not what state of mind the talk/text expresses, nor what state of the world it reflects, but what *action* is being done by saying things that way.
- Look for *participants' concerns*: their categories, concepts, the things they are dealing with. For any issue that you, as the analyst, might want to bring to the data, try seeing to what extent it is something that the participants themselves (in their discourse) handle or deal with in some way.
- Focus on *subject-object relations* (mind-world relations). Look for how descriptions of persons and their mental states are tied to, or implied by, descriptions of actions, events, and objects in the external world.
- Look at how the current speaker/writer attends reflexively to their own subject-object issues: their grounds for knowing things, how they deal with the possibility of not being believed, or of being considered biased, or emotionally involved, and so on.
- For any content of talk, ask *how*, not why it is said. Ask 'what does it do, and how does it do it?'
- Analyze *rhetorically*. Ask 'what is being denied, countered, forestalled, etc., in talking that way?'
- Analyze *semiotically*. This means asking, 'what is not being said here, that could have been said, by using closely similar words or expressions?' The principle is that language is a 'system of differences', such that all words, all details, have meanings because there are alternatives. The selection of a particular word or expression is crucial, and you can get to it analytically by imagining plausible alternatives, as well as by looking at the data to see what alternative descriptions may actually be in play.
- Analyze *sequentially*. For any stretch of talk, look at the immediately prior and subsequent talk, or turns at talk, to see what the content of the current turn is dealing with and making relevant. What we are analyzing is not a collection of speakers' thoughts being put into words, like quotations lifted from an interview, but a sequence of actions being performed in a sequentially relevant way.

- When you find recurrent patterns in how things are said and done, look for *deviant cases*, which are examples that do not seem to fit the developing analysis, and see if the analysis needs to be changed, or the phenomenon re-defined.

Discourse analysis is mainly inductive in giving priority to the data rather than to theoretical preconceptions. In this sense, some elements from grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2000) as another important inductive research approach can also be useful for discourse analysis. The main activity in grounded theory, namely coding, is not very relevant for discourse analysis however. Grounded theory starts from the mostly textual data through a process of *open coding*, in which the analyst labels units of meaning while staying as close as possible to the data. At this stage coding may take the form of *in vivo* coding, when categories from the participants themselves are used as labels. From this very open start, codes are then progressively clustered into bigger chunks of meaning or higher level codes, especially when recurring patterns of meaning can be identified. A subset of codes can then be selected to recode the data set in a more systematic way (i.e. *selective coding*) to focus on a particular concept, process or problem. In this way chunks of (mostly interview) discourse are aggregated into larger and larger meaning categories. If one wants to study the sequential unfolding of interaction on the basis of transcripts, however, this doesn't make much sense, since the chunks of discourse would be aggregated irrespective of their place in an interaction sequence. The further steps of grounded theory do offer help for discourse analysis as well. An important analytical tool is *constant comparison*, which consists of exploring meaning by comparing different instances – in the case of discourse analysis the instances to be compared are not so much people or codes, but pieces of discursive interaction. An important tool for theory development in the later stages is writing *memos*, which contain the theoretical writing up of ideas about the data. Memos combine different elements into more general reflections and are thus an important link between data and theory. Discourse analysts are usually somewhat weary with respect to building theory, since this easily leads to postulating all kinds of non-discursive entities that have to explain the discourse, while they often were derived from the discourse in the first place. We would argue, however, that by making claims about how interaction works discourse analysts are developing theory, but theory that stays close to the analyzed phenomena.

Grounded theory and discourse analysis alike have been criticized for over-emphasizing the *inductive* character of qualitative research. In its purest form, the assumption is that the researcher is an empty page and works only from the participants' understanding of the context or process. Critics have argued that researchers inevitably draw on their own understandings, both personal and theoretical, and that these are even crucial for the researcher to be able to meaningfully interact with the participants and engage in an analysis. Others have proposed the use of *sensitizing concepts* (Charmaz, 2000; Hoonard, 1997). These are understandings that researchers build from their education and experience – the more and more varied sensitizing concepts one has available, the more different aspects of the data one can pick up, analyze and develop into new concepts or theories. This approach, which is not purely inductive or deductive, is maybe best understood as *abduction* (Eco, 1984). This can be understood as a constant interplay between (existing and newly developed) theoretical concepts and the data in a search for those concepts that render the data most intelligible.

3.3 *Role of the researcher*

Texts about discourse analysis are usually silent about the role of the researcher in the researched context, or more generally about the relation between researcher and those whose discourse is researched. The role of the researcher often is minimal, as when a new phenomenon is analyzed on an existing data set – although even that data set has been collected by a researcher at an earlier time. When studying naturally occurring interaction in its organizational context, the relation between researcher and researched becomes a more prominent issue. In order to understand the specific language and expression used in an organizational context, some kind of involvement of the researcher in that context is usually necessary. Also for gaining access to relevant data, the organizations involved and the specific participants whose discourse is recorded need to be convinced that the researcher is working (also) for their benefit, or at least will not harm their interests.

For exploring this issue, another strand of qualitative research can offer important contributions, namely *action research*. The role of the researcher in action research is very different from that of a disengaged and invisible experimenter or observer. Action research has put into focus the issue of the relation between researcher and researched, and proposes a relation of transparency and active engagement in a real life context. The researcher is at the same time an interventionist, trying to bring about change together with the researched. The role of the people involved in the research also changes in important ways. They are expected to engage in what Elden & Levin (1991) call a co-generative dialogue, in which a connection is sought between insiders' and outsiders' perspectives so as to generate a new framework – something like a practical theory of the local situation. Elden & Levin (1991) “aim at a partnership in which insiders become more theoretical about their practice and outsiders more practical about their theory” (p. 133). Ideally, researcher and participants work together in all the different steps of an action research process, including the design of interventions, defining ways of monitoring process and results, implementing actions, evaluating, analyzing and interpreting data, discussing conclusions and so forth.

One of the important contributions of action research has been to make researchers aware of the relation they develop with the participants in the research, also outside of action research. Bouwen (1994) argued that research is always an intervention of some kind in a social context and that this affects the research process and results. The familiarity of the researcher with the context or the association with specific actors within that context (e.g. for gaining access) can influence what participants are willing to tell. The perceived role of the researcher, like documenting, controlling or helping, can influence the kind of relation that develops between researcher and researched. Action research opts for dealing with these challenges by including active intervention and the definition of the role of the researcher as part of the whole research endeavor. As a result, the researcher becomes an important actor in the context he or she is researching.

Discourse analysis and action research are not obvious to combine, for several reasons. The practical application of research results has not been a major concern for discourse analysis, let alone active intervention by the researcher him or herself. Engaging participants in the detailed analyses themselves is probably more than one can ask for in a busy organizational context. Only presenting the results is equally problematic, since the studied discursive processes will probably not make much sense to the participants without considerable attention for the data and method used.

We would conclude that in discourse analysis the weight of the researcher compared to that of the participants will almost always be bigger. But this doesn't mean that there are no interesting combinations possible. Pomerantz (2005) argues for working with video stimulated comments, whereby participants in the original interaction episode view the regarded interaction and are asked to comment on what was happening or which junctures of interaction are worth analyzing in more detail. This kind of additional data can then be used for corroborating ongoing analyses or guiding further analyses.

A combination of roles over the course of a research project is also possible. A researcher can take an interventionist role at one point in the process, e.g. through engaging with the participants in reflection about what is going on and designing a specific intervention with them, and take an observer role at another point, e.g. when registering and analyzing how the designed intervention turns out in practice, and using the results as input for a joint reflection. In this way the relation between researcher and participants can develop into one of mutual trust and support, which is important for being able to study relevant and real life organizational interaction.

3.4 Ensuring quality in discourse analytic research on organizational interaction

When it comes to ensuring and warranting quality in discourse analytic research, one runs into problems when trying to apply the traditional criteria of reliability and validity. These criteria were developed in the context of measurements. When one uses a quantified dimension of a phenomenon as the only data that will be further processed and analyzed, the relation between the measurement and the phenomenon becomes a crucial concern.

In psychological tests, this translates as the relation between a test score and an underlying psychological construct. In classical test theory, it is assumed that a test item score is the sum of a real score and a random error component. Reliability is then defined as the correlation between the true score (the phenomenon of interest) and the measured score (the index used), and can be assessed by quantifying the level of consistency in measurement between items, over test occasions or between methods. Validity refers to the question if the test measures what it is supposed to measure and can be assessed by analyzing the content of test items (content validity) or by relating the measurements of one phenomenon of interest to measurements of other, theoretically related phenomena, at a given moment or over time (criterion related validity). The main point here is that discourse analysis does not rely on indirect indices (e.g. test scores, questionnaire ratings or interview statements) for making claims about a more or less distant phenomenon of interest (e.g. a psychological process, a behavior or an organizational practice).

Furthermore, discourse analysis differs also from measurements or categorizations of observational data. Observational data are usually the closest to the phenomenon of interest. In analyzing these data, however, traditional methods rely on the resulting numbers or codes *only*, while discourse analysis uses faithful transcripts of language-as-it-is-used, in its full complexity, throughout the entire analysis.

Of course this has to do with what it is that one wants to get at: indirect indices are inevitable when studying phenomena that are not directly accessible. In conversation analysis, interaction transcripts are studied with the aim of making claims about how interaction works, nothing more and nothing less. What comes closest to the idea of

reliability in conversation analysis is the relation between the interaction phenomenon of interest and the transcript that is used for analysis. According to Perakyla (1997), conversation analysis “claims part of its justification on the basis of being free of many shortcomings in reliability characteristic of other forms of qualitative research, especially ethnography” (p. 203). In this sense, the quality of tapes and transcripts – an issue we discussed earlier - has important implications for what could be called the reliability of conversation analytic research.

Surely there are more aspects to consider with respect to ensuring quality in discourse analytic research besides the faithfulness of transcriptions. Two discourse analytic principles of validation can be applied in the recursive process of substantiating the findings. A first principle has been called *grounding* (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 112) and is characterized by a concern for participant orientation. Participants are said to orient towards particular features of the discourse when they demonstrate through their interactions that those features are procedurally consequential for the particular aspect of talk that is the focus of the analysis. In other words, the analysis has to demonstrate on the basis of the discourse that the features identified through interpretation have consequences in and for the ongoing interaction.

A second principle is called *deviant case analysis*, which permits a process of interpretation checking. Deviant case analysis involves a search through the data for exceptions to interpretations, also called counterinstances. Deviant case analysis is a powerful tool for checking interpretations and suggesting better ones.

Wood and Kroger (2000) propose a series of quality criteria that are specifically applicable to ensuring and warranting quality in discourse analysis, grouped under the heading *trustworthiness* and *soundness*. In general trustworthiness refers to the systematic and thorough way in which claims are arrived at, while soundness refers to the solidity and credibility of those claims.

The following criteria for trustworthiness are proposed:

- *Orderliness* and *documentation*: the clarity of the way in which the research in all its aspects was conducted, recorded and reported, so as to provide a context for understanding the claims
- *Audits*: to permit external researchers to examine the processes whereby the data were collected and analyzed

For soundness, the following criteria are proposed:

- *Demonstration*: to show the argument through presenting the steps involved in the analysis of extracts rather than simply telling the reader about the argument
- *Coherence* of the set of analytical claims made about the discourse
- *Plausibility*: whether or not a set of claims is acceptable in the light of previous research

- *Fruitfulness*: the scope of analytic schemes to make sense of new kinds of discourse and to generate novel explanations

These criteria guarantee that the different steps in the research, from data gathering to the final analytic results are as transparent as possible, allowing the reader to evaluate the line of argument leading to the analytical results, and if necessary indicate at which point another line of argument could be pursued (that might be more coherent, plausible or fruitful). As Wood & Kroger (2000) argue, demonstration and fruitfulness are among the most crucial criteria. Demonstration requires that reports of discourse analytic work include actual pieces of data and analysis, which makes it possible for others to audit the research – an important criterion of trustworthiness. Fruitfulness is the most overarching criterion and is important in the sense that discourse analysis does not assume that there is a single best analysis for each piece of data. Different and equally valid analyses of the same data set are possible if they all satisfy the preceding criteria. Each analysis will develop a specific way of looking at the data and its fruitfulness should be evaluated in terms of what new phenomena it allows us to see or how it allows seeing existing phenomena in a new way.

Antaki et al. (2003) have discussed quality in discourse analysis from another perspective, by critiquing six types of analytic shortcomings that are to be avoided. They identified the following ways of treating talk and textual data that fall short of discourse analysis:

- (1) *Under-analysis through summary*. Summarizing the themes of what participants say in an interaction typically does not involve any analysis of the discourse that they are using. It can even impede analysis, if it presents the speakers as being more consistent and smoother than they might have been.
- (2) *Under-analysis through taking sides*. This can occur when the analyst substitutes sympathy or scolding for detailed examination of what the speakers are saying.
- (3) *Under-analysis through over-quotation or isolated quotation*. This occurs when the analyst fails to get beyond the text or texts and does little more than compiling a list of quotations from the data.
- (4) *The circular discovery of (a) discourses and (b) mental constructs*. To interpret discourse as the expression of some underlying realm of (a) discourse or ideology, or (b) beliefs, attitudes or opinions, where the nature of those underlying discourses or mental constructs is derived from the talk itself.
- (5) *Under-analysis through false survey*. Treating one's findings as if they were true of all members of the (demographic, professional, gender, ...) category with which one has described a speaker.
- (6) *Under-analysis through spotting*. The mere recognition of already known conversational and rhetorical features in the text.

Antaki et al. (2003) prefer to identify pitfalls rather than prescribing one right way to do discourse analysis, because they want to allow maximum variety of directions in which analysis can go. They do assert that “discourse analysis means a close engagement with one's text or transcripts, and the illumination of their meaning and significance through insightful and technically sophisticated work”.

In sum, while being an interpretive methodology, discourse analysis offers clear guidelines for conducting empirical research. As Alvesson and Kärreman (2000a) point

out: "To describe the language use in a specific interaction ... in some detail, is certainly not unproblematic, but may still be a more rigorous enterprise than any attempt to study people's beliefs about the world or their actions. A relatively high degree of 'empirical accuracy' may be said to characterize this sort of research." (p. 22).

4 A research example: issue framing in three conversational steps

To illustrate the potential of a discourse and conversation analytic approach to studying diversity as interactive practice, we present some results from Dewulf (2006) on dealing with differences in issue framing. With discourse and conversation analysis as a methodological approach, we analyzed interaction sequences in the context of multi-organizational development projects. Local authorities, non-governmental organizations, farmers, irrigation organizations and university centers play important roles in these projects, which all have something to do with natural resources management in the Southern Andes of Ecuador. We specifically looked at how people representing different groups interact with each other and co-construct a problem domain through the way they use language to deal with the issues and each other. Specific analysis questions focus on how frames are constructed in interaction, how the differences in issue framing emerge and how actors deal with those differences.

To present an overview of the interactive process of issue framing, we will use the structure of three conversational steps.

- (1) The first conversational step consists of person A intervening at a certain point in a multi-actor conversation and framing the issues in a specific way. Under this heading we will discuss general insights about how issues framing works in conversations, including relational implications.
- (2) The second conversational step consists of person B reacting to this and framing the issues in an incompatible way, whereby a difference in issue framing emerges. Here we will discuss the characteristics of difference initiating turns within the interactional contexts we studied.
- (3) The third conversational step consists of person A intervening again and enacting a specific interaction patterns for dealing with the difference that emerged. Here we will discuss the identified interaction patterns, discuss reframing in view of other theories, analyze how the interaction patterns can be assembled into gatekeeping or facilitative discourse and consider the legitimacy implications of the interaction patterns.

4.1 Step 1: Framing issues

In order to illustrate the different conversational steps, we will present simplified transcripts of an interaction sequence from an interaction moment between university engineers and representatives of an Ecuadorian irrigation organization. This comes from the *irrigation management* case, where the focus was on the hydraulic management of an irrigation system. The university engineering center had implemented a computer model for simulating the water flow in the 30 km main canal of an irrigation system administered by an indigenous organization. In this interaction moment, the hydraulic model presentation, the university engineers present a hydraulic model of the irrigation system and its possible applications to representatives of the indigenous organization.

Extract 4-1. Hydraulic model presentation, S2: 3-37 (simplified transcript)

E: I told you that in the year 2000 we conducted an experiment. What did that consist of? Well we were a group of about 6 or 7 people, and well, using the valves for manipulating the canal, we carried out the following activity. From the main valve we produced some variations of the flow rate ... Here we can see in this graph, this is 6 am 8 am 10 am until 6 pm. This experiment had this span of time, approximately from 7 am until 4 pm. What we see here is the flow rate, I will explain, at 7 am the main valve or let's say the outlet the flow rate was around 400 liters per second, we read at the valve that the flow rate is close to 400, 375 exactly we read at the valve. What we did is close the valve in a very small time span, in less than 5 minutes we closed the valve and we lowered the flow rate to 150 liters per second, and further, after a period of half an hour or almost an hour, we came back and closed the valve more, almost until making the canal dry ... almost to 0 liters per second, this also in a short time span.

P: This depends on what?

E: Well this here, let's say, was only with the goal of obtaining data for us, for calibrating our model, which is what I will explain later on.

In Extract 4-1, the university engineer (E) is giving the presentation about the possibilities of the mathematical model of the water flow in the main irrigation canal, which has been developed at the university. He is giving the presentation to representatives of the irrigation organization (the president, P, and the irrigation technician, T) administering that irrigation system, and both actors are exploring possibilities for a common project. At this point, E is explaining how they did the field experiments to calibrate the mathematical model. In his explanation the most important issue elements are the physical parts of the irrigation system (canal, valves, outlet), flow rates and variations, and time, with 'obtaining data' as the focus and 'calibration of the model' as the overarching issue element. While giving this explanation, certain aspects of the situation are thus selected and assembled into a meaningful whole.

4.1.1 Cues and frames: selecting, focusing and embedding

What we have studied as issue framing relies on establishing a relation between a cue and a frame. According to Weick (1995), "A cue in a frame is what makes sense, not the cue alone or the frame alone". The cue then is what gets framed, and the frame is what is connected to the cue for make sensing of it. Ambiguity or the phenomenon that multiple possible frames that can be connected to a cue is at the core of issue framing. It is this malleability of cues to different frames, or the malleability of frames to different cues, that makes issue framing possible and which makes differences a central concern in issue framing.

Throughout this work, we have analyzed a number of mechanisms that are involved in issue framing. The connection between cues and frames can start on either side. When confronted with an ambiguous complex situation, framing *simplifies* it by selecting certain cues for attention and drawing boundaries. This is the photographer in the midst of the action, picking a standpoint, zooming in, focusing and shooting the picture. When confronted with an ambiguous indication, framing *extends* it by embedding the cue in a larger meaningful whole. This is the photographer positioning the subject, choosing a

background, adjusting the lighting and shooting the picture. In both cases, the connection between cues and frames is what makes sense, and the result consists of meaningfully framed cues.

In establishing a specific issue framing, *specific* cues are embedded in a *specific* frame. It is important to note here that not only specific frames are at issue for given cues, or specific cues for a given frame – both the relevant cues and the relevant frame can be at issue at the same time. In this way issue framing accomplishes a number of things:

1. By *selecting* both cues and frames, it includes and it excludes certain aspects or meanings, and thus establishes *boundaries*.
2. Within the selected cues, some get the *focus* of attention and become foreground, while others are relegated to the periphery and become background.
3. By the process of *embedding*, some aspects become *part* and others become *whole*.

When translating this to issue framing as assembling issue elements into meaningful wholes, each of these aspects can give rise to differences in issue framing:

1. People can differ in the way they draw boundaries around an issue by including or excluding certain issue elements. The difference here is one of boundaries.
2. People can differ in the issue element(s) they put into the focus of attention. The difference here is one of priority.
3. People can differ in which issue elements they use as encompassing and which they use as constituent elements. The difference here is as to what overarches what.

These mechanisms work together to establish specific ways of framing issues. This is done through discourse in interaction, by managing relevant implications for issues, relationships and the ongoing interaction.

4.1.2 The co-construction of issues in discourse

Selecting and arranging issue elements into cues and frames does not happen in an abstract universe but at the level of discourse or language-in-use, in the way issue frames are forged out of language and the way issue elements are linguistically formulated. We have tried to integrate insights from the literature on framing (Putnam & Holmer, 1992) with insights from the conversation analytic study of *formulations* (Heritage & Watson, 1979) and the discursive psychological study of *descriptions* (Edwards, 1997) to develop a viable theoretical and methodological approach to studying issue framing as it unfolds in interactive practices.

Formulating what the discussion is about and describing situations or events are common conversational phenomena and they are both relevant to issue framing. Studies on *descriptions* in conversations show that these are usually designed and structured rhetorically so as to hedge themselves against relevant alternative *versions* of the description and against possible unfavorable implications (about the situation or the

speaker) that might otherwise be drawn from the description. In a similar vein, *formulations* have been shown to be selective in that they underline certain elements while omitting or transforming others. These formulations are constructive by proposing what is essential, or currently relevant, what is to be taken as jointly understood, and as a basis on which to proceed. In this way formulations and descriptions of issue elements manage implications of importance, priority, givenness, inclusiveness, causality, ... and so forth.

4.2 Step 2: Emerging differences

To start the discussion of the second conversational step, namely emerging differences, we go back to the interaction sequence we have presented, to the point where a difference in issue framing emerges.

Extract 4-2. Hydraulic model presentation, S2: 39-56 (simplified transcript)

P: There we have seen a little bit already, that's where the practice comes in. Perhaps that flow rate ... what goes down after closing the valves, doesn't perhaps also influence there the infiltrations in the canal? Because recently we have detected a loss of more than 60 liters, no? It amounts almost to 70 liters of loss, I mean, no more than km 3, isn't it?

T: More or less

P: In that part there is a serious problem. This could affect or even vary, I would say, the results that have been reached, because of these situations in the physical part. I don't know how could they be detected practically?

In their reaction to the explanation of the engineer in Extract 4-1, the irrigation organization president (P) and technician (T) frame the issues differently. P puts a new issue element ('infiltration') into focus, which might influence the results of the experiment. Infiltration, which refers to water infiltrating into the porous parts of the irrigation canal (which is not coated), becomes here the focal element of a difference, which is further clarified with concrete numbers about the water losses (confirmed by T). Towards the end of the intervention, P upgrades his formulations ("serious problem" that could "vary the results") and adds the practical question as to how these situations could be "practically detected". With these interventions a difference emerges, which rearranges some of the issue elements mentioned by the engineer (e.g. canal, flow rate, valves, ...), putting a new issue element into focus ('infiltration') and subsuming this under the category of 'practical problems'.

Drawing on a theoretical discussion of issue framing and disagreement in conversations, we define a difference in issue framing as a discursively constructed incompatibility between two or more issue elements, which is relationally significant. Since issue framing can be understood as selecting, focusing and embedding issue elements, a difference in issue framing can emerge when the previous utterance is challenged by (1) including or excluding different issue elements, (2) putting a different issue element into focus, (3) embedding issue elements differently, or a combination of these.

The analysis of 8 difference emergence episodes helped us understand an issue frame in these conversations as a conversational constellation of issue elements around the

relevant cue or focal element, and of a difference in issue framing as a focal challenge embedded in a different constellation of issue elements, as illustrated in Figure 4-1.

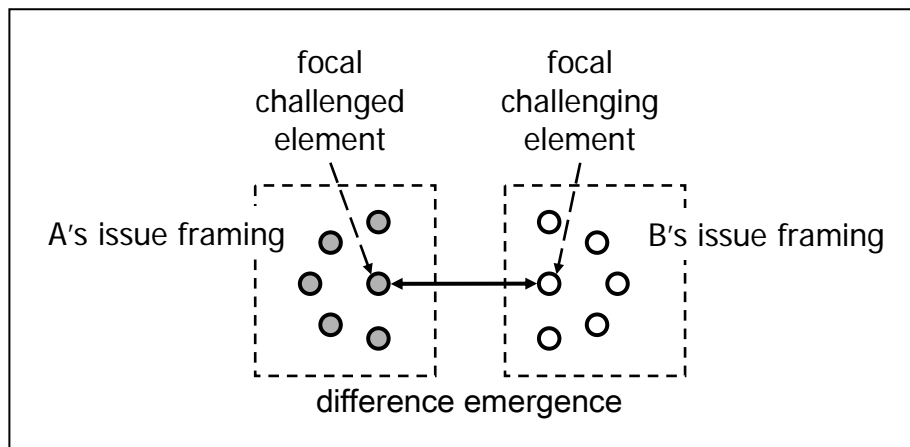


Figure 4-1. Difference emergence

We showed that the discursive structure of the difference-initiating speaking turns is *multi-layered*. The differences emerge by working cautiously towards a specific but clear challenge and then adding further challenging layers of implications. This double movement can be understood as oriented to two competing concerns: (1) participants initiating a difference orient to producing a clear and specific challenge, and (2) through adding layers of implication they stress the importance of the challenge. While these concerns are clearly divergent, both are oriented to simultaneously. Through producing only a clear and specific challenge one risks to be interpreted as making fuss about unimportant details. Making only vague claims about issues of general importance, one risks to be interpreted as irrelevantly talking off topic. Orienting to both specificity and generality can counter both risks and promote an interpretation of what one is doing as simultaneously to the point (by producing a clear and specific challenge between focal elements) and of broad relevance (by adding layers of implications to the focal difference).

As was the case in 4 of the studied difference emergence episodes, this multi-layered structure can be exploited by interrupting a divergent movement in order to *prevent* the emergence of a difference. In this way the divergent movement, which is likely to result in the emergence of a difference, is stopped before it becomes too important. It is mainly accomplished by interrupting or early turn-taking during interventions where differences are being built up.

Finally, the *interaction contexts* in which the differences emerge can be characterized as asymmetrical, since the engineers contribute most of the content and structure of the meetings and the other actors are in the role of public during large parts of the interaction. In this kind of interaction context, the smooth and unproblematic proceeding of the interaction moment consists of one actor delivering information and the other actors asking questions for clarification, answering specific queries or responding positively to the suggestions. Questioning the contributions of the engineers or responding negatively to them, interrupts the smooth flow of the meeting format. By shaping the speaking turns in which they initiate a difference as dispreferred, the other actors help to enact this interaction context. At the same time, their being in a reactive

position puts the risky business of doing differences primarily as a burden on their shoulders – they have to cause the trouble of starting a difference sequence if they want to put different issues on the table, or put issues on the table in a different way. We observed how the other actors generally proceeded very prudently and produced generally weak signals of difference, which may be important to pick up in the context of projects where the professional development agents – often against their honest intentions - easily dominate the discourse in their interaction with target groups that generally haven't had much formal schooling.

These analyses, as the one by Depperman (2000) about the semantic shifts that a central concept (“freedom”) underwent in a debate, suggest that issue framing is an important way of disagreeing, as different from disagreeing through direct denial or argumentation. If participants are constructing the building blocks of a discussion in very different ways, this can explain why certain discussions do not seem to make progress and remain elusive, even to the participants themselves. Rather than errors of reasoning or lack of information, what these participants face are break-ups in the way they interactively make sense of reality (Salipante and Bouwen, 1995). The approach we developed allows analyzing these often subtle differences while they are still ambiguous. Dealing with these differences is likely to be easier at this stage as compared to the stage where differences are magnified into open conflict.

4.3 Step 3: Frame interaction patterns for the risky business of doing differences

For starting the discussion about different ways of dealing with differences in issue framing, we proceed to the third conversational step in the interaction sequence we are presenting. The engineer now has the opportunity to react to the difference that the irrigation organization representatives created by putting forward infiltration as being in tension with the model figures and asking how these infiltrations could be practically detected.

Extract 4-3. Hydraulic model presentation, S2: 60-68 (simplified transcript)

E: Because precisely with this experiment we also have detected that this infiltration problem exists. In this case ... how is it ... that we obtained these data? But I want you to focus that this here simply served us for obtaining data for calibrating our model, so that the model represents the system in the best way.

In his reaction, the engineer deals with the difference by doing something with the infiltration issue element. He addresses this aspect by stating ‘that they have detected it also’. He thereby reformulates the issue element of ‘infiltration as a practical problem’ into ‘infiltration as a parameter in the model’ and in this way *incorporates* a downgraded formulation of infiltration in his own issue framing. The use of the same word 'detecting' however, contributes to making the reformulated element still recognizable for the others, although in a different meaning context. In the second part of his intervention, he stresses that ‘but I want you to focus that this simply served us’ – thereby *disconnecting* other meanings or implications of infiltration (namely detecting infiltration practically) from the current conversation (because we're only talking about calibrating the model now).

Figure 4-2 gives a visual representation of the *frame interaction patterns* that we identified in our analyses (including the patterns *incorporating* and *disconnecting*, which were illustrated above).

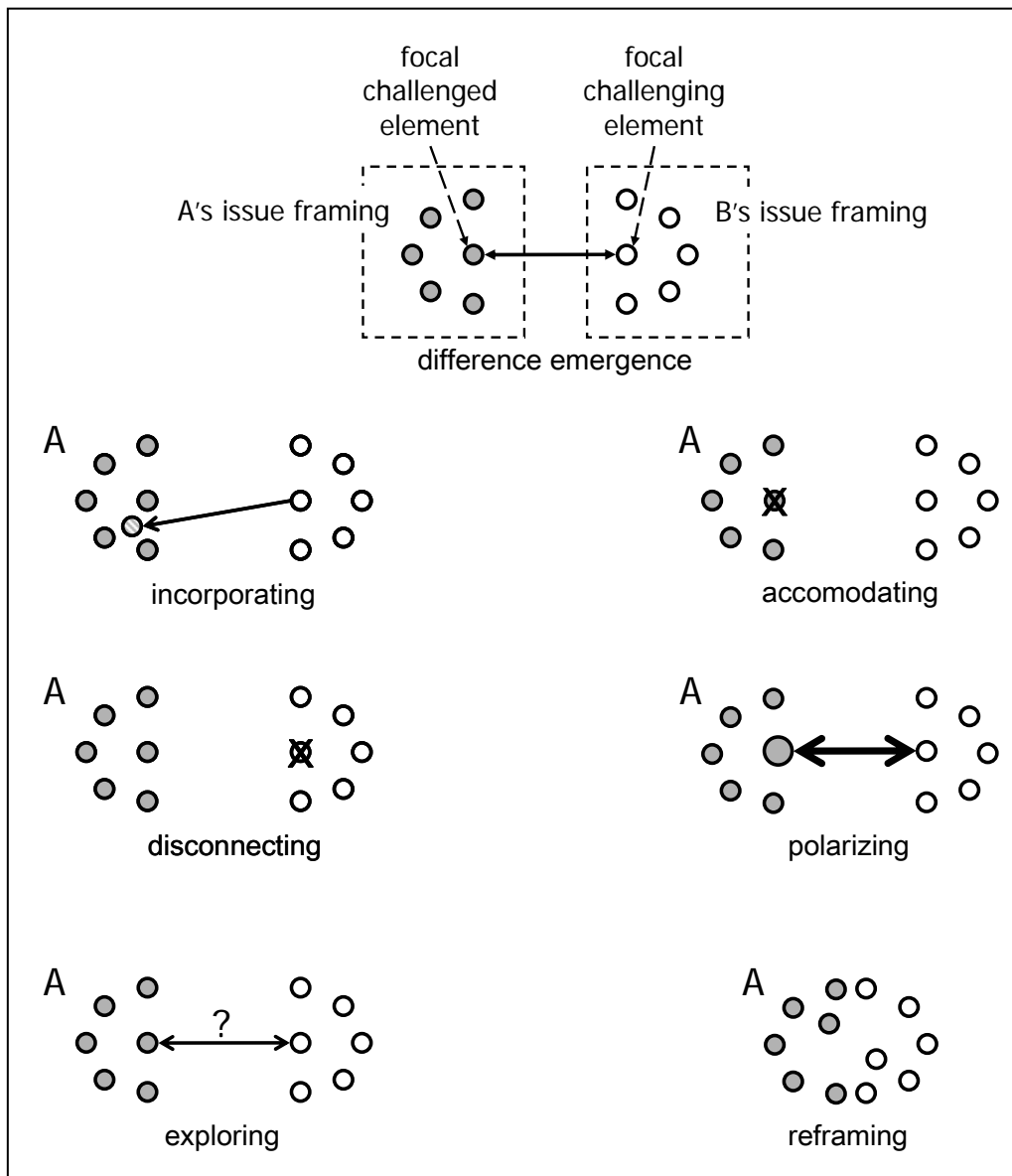


Figure 4-2. Interaction patterns for dealing with differences in issue framing

Edwards (2003) argues that accounts or descriptions lend themselves for evaluative inferences about what the speaker is doing, in terms of the fairness, justice or accuracy with which the events are reported, or the motives for doing so. He showed how complaining can be risky, for example, since the complainer may not be heard as simply reporting factual and complainable matters, but as “moaning, whining, ranting, biased, prone to complaining, paranoid, invested, over-reacting, over-sensitive, or whatever other vernacular category might apply” (p. 5). In this sense, the complainer faces a double challenge: producing a serious complaint and avoiding the implication that the complainer – rather than the one who’s complained about – is responsible for the complaint. Complaining thus is risky business for complainers, and, as we have showed, dealing with differences in issue framing can also be analyzed as risky business in the often ambiguous context of multi-actor conversations.

For each frame interaction pattern, we can analyze the multiple concerns to which the participants orient, the possible favorable or unfavorable implications they manage, and the discursive devices or strategies they deploy. When *incorporating* a challenging issue element through reformulating it in a downgraded way, participants shape their intervention such that it fits their own issue framing while at the same keeping it recognizable (as the same element) for the other. *Disconnecting* in some form dismisses the challenging element but at the same time maintains the stance of taking seriously what the other has said. *Polarizing* combines reaffirming one's own issue framing with avoiding to repeat yourself and involves mostly an upgraded formulation of one's own issue elements. *Accommodating* orients at making your own issue framing acceptable for the other, while maintaining the coherence in your own framing. The example of *exploring* in our data involved open questioning and self-dialogue, combining questioning both sides with valuing both sides. Finally, *reframing* faces the double challenge of taking one's own and the challenging issue framing simultaneously serious and finding a workable relation between them.

The discursive and interactional approach to we developed tries to capture issue framing alignments and re-alignments as analyzable variability, in situations where other approaches would maybe only capture the usual issue frames – something like the average frame per actor. This interactive process of framing and reframing between multiple actors shapes a jointly crafted path or a trajectory at the borders between different ways of framing the issues. Drawing on very different metaphors the trajectory can be like the frontline between moving armies anticipating each others strategies, or like the path of dancers engaged in a joint improvisation.

We also showed the consequences of enacting these interaction patterns for the definition of the problem domain. In the *hydraulic model* interaction moment a diverging path was enacted by which the issue frames of different sides became more and more disconnected and no common ground for a joint project was discovered. In the *coordination workshop* interaction moment a collaborative path was enacted by which the issue frames became connected, despite of the important differences. In sum, the interactive issue framing trajectories that the actors create through enacting different ways of *doing differences* have important consequences for the collaboration potential between the actors, since they may be constructing either diverging paths or a collaborative path on their way through the problem domain.

5 Conclusions

In this paper, we have tried to illustrate some theoretical and methodological contributions to the study of diversity from a discursive psychological approach to issue framing. Discursive psychology analyzes person and event descriptions in talk and text. According to Edwards and Potter (2005), discursive psychology “examines how factual descriptions are assembled, how they are built as solidly grounded or undermined as false, and how they handle the rational accountability (or otherwise) of actors and speakers”. Interaction data are the starting point and conversation analysis is used as a methodological approach to analyze how people produce meaning in their ongoing conversations through the way they use language.

Theoretically, an interactive approach to dealing with differences in issue framing allows the study of differences in-the-making, while they are still subtle and often ambiguous. Dealing with these differences is likely to be easier at this stage as compared to the stage

where differences are magnified into open conflict. It also gives a prominent place to the enactment part of the sensemaking cycle (Weick, 1995), by focusing on relationally relevant differences as they are produced and dealt with in conversations. Our research has focused on differences in issue framing specifically. Although this can be seen as a limitation in the light of the wealth of relevant diversity dimensions, we want to propose the level of differences in issue framing as a potentially fruitful one for studying diversity as interactive practice in general. In a work-related context, the issue or task level is a prominent and visible level. It is often at this level that the diversity of backgrounds translates into differences which need to be dealt with in one way or another.

Methodologically, we have showed how a discourse and conversation-analytic approach allows studying differences as enacted in interactive practices. As different from the Balesian tradition, in the conversation analytic approach, the primary objects of study are the structures and practices of naturally occurring social interaction (Perakyla, 2004). The research is done in a qualitative way, from a mainly inductive logic and aims at studying specific interactional phenomena. The analysis focuses on the reflexive construction of the meaning of actions: the meaning of a single act gets defined by the interacting partners themselves through the larger sequence of acts that a single action is part of. Especially in cases where multiple meanings, ambiguity or subtle variations in meaning are important for the topic under study, a conversation analytic approach offers advantages over a Balesian coding and counting approach. This is because the latter will usually be limited to a small number of categories which are typically mutually exclusive. The requirement for reliable coding can also hinder the analysis of multiple meanings or differences, because, as some researchers in group interaction and conflict have observed (Overlaet, 1989), when one limits the analysis to those categories that can be reliably coded one risks throwing away the most interesting parts of the data. An approach like conversation analysis is better equipped to analyze situations where participants struggle with multiple meanings because of its attention to language and the detailed level of analysis.

When we consider the implications of this approach for practice, a first general guideline that can be formulated is to pay attention to the process of interaction that is going on in the here-and-now. On the one hand, in contexts where multiple actors are enacting a conflictive relation, merely documenting the different views of the different actors risks to underline the differences and the immutable aspects of the conflict. Zooming in on the level of how they interact and deal with each others views and positions, may help to identify those aspects on which movement is still apparent or possible. On the other hand, looking at the sometimes subtle dynamics at the interactional level also helps to clarify why any methodology for participation, exchange or consensus seeking can be enacted in such a way as to ruin its potential. The proof of the pudding is in the enactment, one could conclude. Intervention methodologies and techniques certainly have their use in setting the necessary boundary conditions and guiding the path of interaction in a certain direction. Without sensitivity for how the interaction process is unfolding, however, their success is doubtful.

The conversational level of analysis provides leverages for the practice of (inter)group *facilitation*. Facilitating can be cast in a different light by understanding it in its most basic form as intervening in and changing the on-going conversation. It is indeed at this level that facilitation intervenes, by working with people through interaction. The

identified interaction patterns can be useful conceptual tools for a facilitator, in trying to keep an eye on developing issues and relations in a group discussion.

6 References

- Aarts, N., van Woerkum, C., & Vermunt, B. (2003). Framing planning in regional innovation networks in the Dutch countryside. In P. Hibbert (Ed.), *Co-creating Emergent Insight. Proceedings of the 10th Conference on Multi-organizational Partnerships, Alliances and Networks*, Glasgow, June 26-28.
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2000). Taking the linguistic turn in organizational research: challenges, responses, consequences. *Journal of Applied Behavioural Sciences*, *36*, 136-158.
- Antaki, C., Billig, M., Edwards, D., Potter, J. (2003). Discourse Analysis Means Doing Analysis: A Critique Of Six Analytic Shortcomings. *Discourse Analysis Online*, *1*(1). Retrieved from <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/daol/current/>
- Benford, R., & Snow, D. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: an Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *26*, 611–39.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Bouwen, R. (1994). Onderzoek als interventie en interventie als onderzoek: een sociaal-constructionistische methodologie voor organisatieverandering [Research as intervention and intervention as research: a social-constructionist methodology for organizational change]. *Gedrag en organisatie*, *7*, 367-387.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: objectivist and constructivist methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln, *Handbook of qualitative research (2nd ed.)*. London: Sage.
- Craps, M., Dewulf, A., Mancero, M., Santos, E., & Bouwen, R. (2004). Constructing common ground and re-creating differences between professional and indigenous communities in the Andes. *Journal of community and applied social psychology*, *14*, 378 - 393.
- Depperman, A. (2000). Semantic shifts in argumentative processes: a step beyond the 'fallacy of equivocation'. *Argumentation*, *14*, 17–30.
- Dewulf, A. (2006). *Issue framing in multi-actor contexts: how people make sense of issues by negotiating meaning, enacting discourse and doing differences*. Doctoral dissertation, Faculteit Psychologie en Pedagogische Wetenschappen, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.
- Dewulf, A. Craps, M. & G. Dercon (2004). How issues get framed and reframed when different communities meet. A multi-level analysis of a collaborative soil conservation initiative in the Ecuadorian Andes. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, *14*, 177-192.
- Drake, L., & Donohue, W. (1996). Communicative Framing theory in conflict resolution. *Communication Research*, *23*, 297-322.
- Eco, U. (1984). *Semiotics and the philosophy of language*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Edwards, D. (1997). *Discourse and cognition*. London: Sage.
- Edwards, D. (2003). Moaning, whinging and laughing: the subjective side of complaints. *Discourse Studies*, *7*(1): 5–29.
- Edwards, D. & Potter, J. (2005). Discursive Psychology, Mental States And Descriptions. In H. te Molder & J. Potter (Eds.), *Conversation and Cognition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Elden, M. & Levin, M. (1991). Cogenerative learning: bringing participation into action research. In W.F. Whyte (Ed.), *Participatory Action Research*. London: Sage.

- Giddens, A. (1984). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structure*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Gray, B. & Donnellon, A. (1990). *An interactive theory of reframing in negotiation*. Unpublished manuscript. Pennsylvania State University, College of Business Administration.
- Heritage, J. (1997). Conversation analysis and institutional talk: analysing data. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: theory, method and practice* (pp.144-160). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Heritage, J., & Watson, D. (1979). Formulations as conversational objects. In G. Psathas (Ed.), *Everyday language: studies in ethnomethodology*. New York: Irvington.
- Orlikowski, W. (2000). Using technology and constituting structures: a practice lens for studying technology in organizations. *Organization science*, 11(4), 404-428.
- Overlaet, B. (1989). Interactie-analyse: zinloos zodra de communicatie zinvol wordt. In H. Vertommen, G. Cluckers, & G. Lietaer, *De relatie in therapie* (pp. 237-255). Leuven: Leuvense Universitaire Pers.
- Perakyla, A. (2004). Two traditions of interaction research. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 43, 1–20.
- Pomerantz, A. (2005). Using participants' video-stimulated comments to complement analyses of interactional practices. In H. te Molder & J. Potter (Eds.) *Conversation and Cognition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Potter, J. (1997). Discourse analysis as a way of analysing naturally occurring talk. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: theory, method and practice*, pp.144-160. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Putnam, L. L., & Holmer, M. (1992). Framing, reframing and issue development. In L. Putnam & M. Roloff, *Communication and negotiation*. London: Sage.
- Salipante, P., & Bouwen, R. (1995). The social construction of grievances. In D.M. Hosking, H.P. Dachler, & K. Gergen (Eds.), *Management and organization: relational alternatives to individualism*, pp. 71-97. Avebury: Aldershot.
- Thomas & Ely (1996). Making differences matter: a new paradigm for managing diversity. *Harvard Business Review*, 1996, Sept-Oct, 79-90.
- Vansina, L., & Taillieu, T. (1997). Diversity in collaborative task systems. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 6(2), 183-199.
- Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Wood, L. & Kroger, R. (2000). *Doing Discourse Analysis: methods for studying action in talk and text*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Zanoni, P., & Janssens, M. (2004). Deconstructing difference: the rhetoric of human resource managers' diversity discourses. *Organization Studies*, 25(1), 55–74.