

Analysis of Broadcast News

Conversational Analysis

Based on Ian Hutchby and Martin Montgomery's books

Overview

- Brief review of studies approaches on broadcast media.
- Conversation Analysis and its application on broadcast studies.
- Broadcast news talk, structure and features.
- Interviews as the paradigm of conversation on radio and TV.
- Discussion: the critical opposition

The importance of talk in TV and radio programmes



Absence of sound of conversation implies there's "something wrong" going on the programme.

The Conversational Approach (CA) focuses on talk in so far as its performance is considered a type of social interaction.

CA then, is a linguistic and social approach.

Different approaches for broadcasting analysis

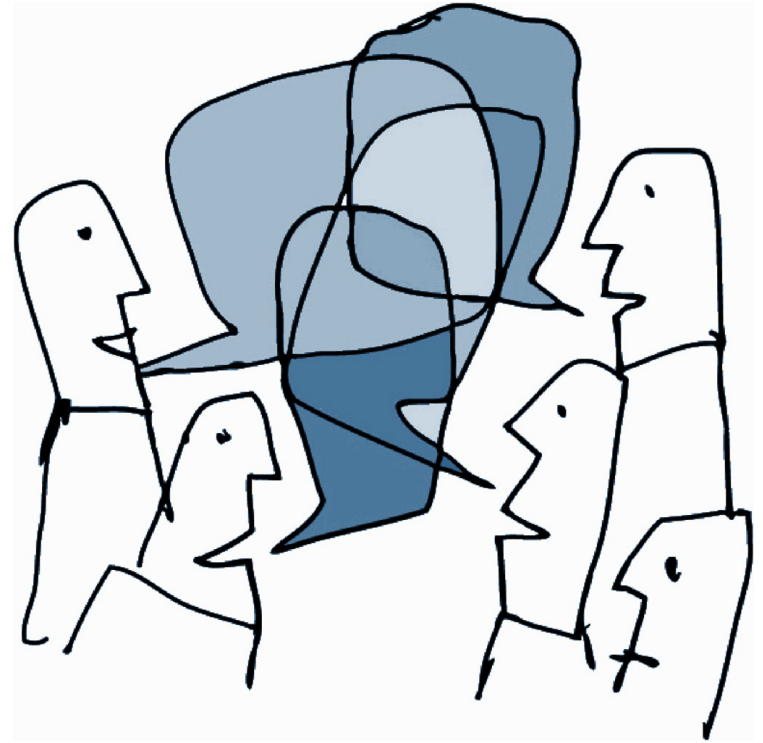
- The effects research and the gratifications approach tended to adopt a behaviouristic standpoint and their model of audiences stood for a mass unconscious of the way it consumes media (Mass communication research, Frankfurt School, 1970's).
- The screen theory argued that media products could be seen as texts prone to be interpreted. Considered the existence of meanings given in the process of production with hidden ideological content (CCCS, 70's-80's).

- The encoding/decoding model understood media as a circuit of communication and considered audiences (not mass) could set their own position regarding media (Hall, 1980).
- More contemporary reception research tries to get insights of the interpretative work of audience members (90's-00's).
- The talk studies focus on the discourse practices and their structures (Scannell, 80's-90's-00's).

Conversation Analysis (CA)

- Emerged as a critique to the textual approach. Scannell considered discourse practices tended to vanish in that kind of studies.
- One of its main tools is detailed transcripts of talk occurred in radio and TV, which help identifying special features, besides comparing with other forms of talk.
- The focus on sequences and turn-taking system in conversations is key for this approach.

- CA views members of society as knowledgeable agents actively involved in the intersubjective construction of their shared social worlds that takes place through discourse.



Broadcast News

- Journalism, by its sheer discursive system can be considered a knowledge producing institution as important as science or religion.
- The central output of journalism is the “news” and its dominant platform is still broadcasting.
- Studies on broadcast news tend to center on their production structure, the reception or the relationships, interests and ideologies behind.



- News discourse studies tend to focus on the print editions, but radio and TV draw upon a set of very different verbal practices.
- Broadcast news discourse is delivered through talk and audiences can experience it as live communication.
- There's a temporal broadcasting flow that it's not under audiences control.

- Broadcast talk is a form of talk in public oriented towards an approximation of the conditions of common interpersonal communication.
- It crosses boundaries between the private and the public.
- The communicative ethos (Scannell, 1989) in which broadcast talk is immersed seeks to instill sense of familiarity, inclusiveness and sociability in the audience. It's not natural, but certain aspects of the casual conversation are imported and modified.

Broadcast News Institutional Talk

- In the turn-taking system of conversation on broadcast news, the range of possibilities is reduced.
- The news bulletin structure is organized in a coherent sequence based on the exchange of utterances. This sequential development is an interpretive resource for making sense of one another's actions.

Ext. 2.1.1

1 PAXMAN: so the the choice at this election
2 between you and Mr Blair is between (.)

3 a leader who supports a war (.)

4 and has sway in the White House (.)

5 and a leader who supported the war

6 and has no sway in the White House (.)

7 HOWARD: I would have (.) a perfectly good working relationship

8 with with President Bush

9 PAXMAN: [they won't even let you in through the door=

10 HOWARD: =look if I'm the Prime Minister of this country

Ext. 2.1.2

- 1 PAXMAN: given the fact that
2 the White House was closed to you on a recent visit to Washington
3 if you became Prime Minister
4 what kind of working relationship
5 would you have with President Bush?
6 HOWARD: I would have (.) a perfectly good working relationship
7 with with President Bush
8 PAXMAN: [they won't even let you in through the door=

Coherent conversation sequence, coherent structure

- Broadcast news elements are defined in part by their place in sequence. The movement from one element to another needs a deliberate discursive work to bring about the transition.
- Broadcast news discourse is composed of interrelated genres and subgenres associated with elements within a temporally unfolding whole.
- News structure has not always been the same, but there's a standard format that consists of an opening with signature, followed by headlines, the succession of news items and concludes with a signing off from the presenter.

Complex production formats and participation roles



“A change of footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance.” (Goffman)

- The growing dual anchor format result in a news message that is being generated in and through the production of talk interaction.
- Talk shapes and constrains the very content.
- It becomes more difficult to distinguish between the structure and content of the journalistic message.



Broadcast news interview

- Is the perfect example of a formal institutional speech exchange system on broadcasting.
- The interaction is embodied in its form, the turn-taking dynamic, this is the question-answers sequences.
- The co-participants produce a context by consciously organizing their conduct according to their understanding of the normative conventions of the interview on radio or TV.
- The purpose of this conversation is to produce talk for the overhearing audience.

CA has been subject of criticism by media discourse researches because it is thought it doesn't pay attention to the "macro" levels of sociological variables such as class, gender, power, ideologies, culture, values and so on.



Discussion/Conclusion

Is the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach enough to understand the discourse dynamics on broadcasting media?

Is the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) “better” somehow?