What is discursive practice?

- Originating in anthropology and social theory, Practice is the construction and reflection of social realities through actions which invoke identity, ideology, belief, and power.
- Practice is performance in context.
- Context is the network of physical, spatial, temporal, social, interactional, institutional, political, and historical circumstances in which participants do a practice.
- The aim of discursive practice is to describe both the global context of action and the communicative resources that participants employ in local action. When the context of a practice is known and the configuration of communicative resources is described, the ultimate aim of Practice Theory is to explain the ways in which the global context affects the local employment of resources and vice versa.

“Practicing speaking” in a high school Spanish class. Based on Hall (2004)

1 T: Ok aquí tenemos Coca Cola tenemos Pepsi Cola tenemos Fresca cómo se llaman
   (Ok. Here we have Coca Cola. We have Pepsi Cola. We have Fresca. What are they called?)
2 S1: Budweiser
3 T: Refresco refresco si se llaman refrescos sí y aquí hay refresco. Rápidamente qué es esto
   (Soft drink soft drink, yes they’re called soft drinks. Yes, and here there is a soft drink. Quickly, what is this?)
4 S2: O::u
5 S1: Uhum ice cream.
6 T: Helado muy bien señor el helado
   (Ice cream, very good, Sir. Ice cream.)
7 S1: Helado
   (Ice cream.)
8 T: Clase qué es esto aquí
   (Class, what is this here?)
9 S3: Papas fritas
   (French fries.)
10 T: Papas fritas muy bien señorita aquí clase
    (French fries. Very good, Miss. Here, class.)
11 S4: Kweso
12 T: Muy bien queso queso hay queso aquí
    (Very good. Cheese, cheese. There is cheese here.)
13 S3: Mantequilla
    (Butter)
14 S2: Uh mantequilla
    (Butter)
A needs analysis. From Iwai et al. (1998-1999)

Please read each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree as follows: A = Strongly Agree, B = Agree, C = No Opinion, D = Disagree, E = Strongly Disagree

At the end of the 2-year Japanese language program at UHM, I WANT TO BE ABLE TO perform the following IN HAWAI‘I:

17) Engage in classroom discussion on current events and social issues.

23) Assist Japanese customers in a retail store (e.g., making suggestions, handling money, helping with lost and found items, giving directions)

At the end of the 2-year Japanese language program at UHM, I WANT TO BE ABLE TO perform the following IN JAPAN:

36) Take a taxi (e.g., giving directions)

51) Go to see a doctor/dentist (e.g., describing symptoms)

Teaching objectives based on learners’ needs. From Saslow & Collins (2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace Skills</th>
<th>Lifeskills</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Social Language</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Offers service</td>
<td>• Talks about clothes, colors, and sizes</td>
<td>• The simple present tense</td>
<td>How to express likes and dislikes</td>
<td>• Clothing, sizes, and colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responds to customer requests</td>
<td>• Asks for refunds and</td>
<td>• This, that, these, and</td>
<td>• state wants and needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apologizes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes customer orders</td>
<td>Complains about merchandize</td>
<td>Fills out a merchandize return form</td>
<td>apologizes</td>
<td>accept an offer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Presentation of verbal and cultural resources in a dialogue. From Saslow & Collins (2001).**

Customer: Hi, I need some help. I need to return this microwave oven. It’s too large.
You: I’m sorry. ... Well, no problem. Do you have the receipt?
Customer: Yes, I do. Here it is. Do you have any small microwaves?
You: Yes, I think so.
Customer: Oh, that’s good. Where are they?
You: They’re across from the coffee makers.
Customer: Great, thanks.

**Discursive practice and interactional competence**

By standing outside of interactive practices that are of significance to the group(s) whose language is being learned, and analyzing the conventional ways that verbal resources get used, the movement that occurs between their conventional meanings and their individual uses, and the consequences that are engendered by the various uses, we can develop a far greater understanding both of ourselves and of those in whose practices we aspire to become participants. (Hall, 1999, p. 144)

[Interactional] competence involves such context-specific knowledge as (1) the goals of the interactive practice, the roles of the participants, and the topics and themes considered pertinent; (2) the optional linguistic action patterns along which the practice may unfold, their conventional meanings, and the expected participation structures; (3) the amount of flexibility one has in rearranging and changing the expected uses of the practice’s linguistic resources when exercising these options and the likely consequences engendered by the various uses; and (4) the skill to mindfully and efficiently recognize situations where the patterns apply and to use them when participating in new experiences to help make sense of the unknown. (Hall, 1999, p. 137)

**Systemic-theoretical instruction (культурно-историческая психология) a.k.a. Concept-based instruction**

In systemic-theoretical instruction, students acquire a general method to construct a concrete orientation basis to solve any specific problem in a given subject domain. Such
a general method involves a theoretical analysis of objects, phenomena, or events in various subject domains. The main feature of the analysis is that it reveals the ‘genesis’ and the general structure of objects or phenomena (the general make-up of things). In such analysis, students learn to distinguish essential characteristics of different objects and phenomena, to form theoretical concepts on this basis, and use them as cognitive tools in further problem solving. (Arievitch & Stetsenko, 2000, p. 77)

**Lack of conceptual knowledge in study abroad: The consequences**

From Beatrice’s journal, March 11, 2003: “Something absolutely unbelievable happened today that has managed to alienate me from every single French person I know. Today, Olivia asked our French teacher very politely if she could miss class next week to go with her parents to the beaches in Normandy—as her grandfather fought there during WW2. She would have to miss his class in particular because that was the only day tours of the USA beaches were offered in English/ and her parents only speak English. Well our teacher flipped out on her basically telling her it was completely out of the question and how dare she ask something like that. It was by far the rudest thing I have ever witnessed. She’s better than I am because if I had been she, I would have said something to the effect of “listen you asshole, he was fighting for you and without people like our grandfathers you would be German now”. Olivia however said nothing but I told her to go anyway and I think she is going to. Well when I told my French family—they said it was a bit rude of her to ask that. Are you kidding me. The double standard of this is that guys in our class skip and come late to class everyday and our prof. says absolutely nothing. But Olivia, in trying to be polite is reprimanded and her actions are considered rude. You have to be joking. I do not see what is so wrong with going to the Normandy beaches and without the Americans on those beaches that fought for them, the French would have become German. (Kinginger, 2008, p. 71)

**Critical pedagogy**

Everything in the classroom, from how we teach, what we teach, how we respond to students, to the materials we use and the way we assess the students, needs to be seen as social and cultural practices that have broader implication than just pieces of classroom interaction. (Pennycook, 2001, p. 139)

“I have to depend on my son for everything.” From Miller (2009)

1 Edwin: 有無其他方式你學得會喎方法易啲有啲嘅可以幫助你既埋？
Is there any method that you think might help you, that can make it easier?
Peng: Oh! People say to me, ‘Listen more. Speak more. Dare to speak. Dare to try.’

When I am at work, sometimes people don’t understand.

Sometimes when I speak to someone, they get a different meaning of what I am saying.

Finally, I just give up what I wanted to say and I just say, ‘okay okay.’

You know? Because my pronunciation is no good.

Yes, yes, I understand. How long are you going to take English lessons? How long are you going to continue English lessons?

Well, I must continue to learn, go on and on.

So like the saying goes, ‘There is no end to study.’ You will never stop learning.

Never, never. Be- because now my English is so, so, so bad! Now I have to depend on my son for everything. So, ...

I see.
Sexual identities in language education

From Nelson (2004)

Speculations and Conclusions

Directions: For each situation below, think of 3 or 4 different possibilities to explain what is occurring.

Example: Those boys are hitting each other!
    They must be fighting.
    They could be playing around.
    They might be pretending to hit each other.

1. She is talking so loudly to that man.
2. I saw my friend José hugging a strange woman on the sidewalk last night.
3. Those two women are walking arm in arm.

From Benesch (1999)

Midway through a semester-long academic reading class, Benesch chose to have her class read a newspaper article about the murder in 1998 of Matthew Shepard, an openly gay 21-year-old student at the University of Wyoming, who was fatally attacked near Laramie and subsequently died from head injuries. Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney were convicted of kidnapping Shephard and murdering him. Benesch’s motivation for introducing this topic with her students was explicitly ideological: “I am committed to fighting injustice and inequality in society and the classroom,” she wrote. “Therefore, when this hate crime was reported, I felt compelled to raise it with my students” (p. 577). Benesch provided a brief description of the class discussion that ensued after students had read the newspaper article about Shephard’s murder. The description is designed to exemplify what Benesch terms dialogic critical thinking, which she defines as “expanding students’ understanding beyond what they may have already considered to promote tolerance and social justice” (p. 573).

In the first intervention, I asked the students to question the assumptions on which many of their contributions seemed to be based: that homosexuals are primarily interested in making sexual overtures to and converting heterosexuals. […] My other challenge was to ask the students to consider the social origin of their fears as well as alternatives to killing or beating up someone as a way of dealing with those fears. (Benesch, 1999, p. 578)

Pedagogical safe houses

One must not talk about what is forbidden until it is annulled in reality; what is inexistent has no right to show itself, even in the order of speech where its inexistence is
declared; and that which one must keep silent about is banished from reality as the thing that is tabooed above all else. (Foucault, 1978, p. 84)

Social and intellectual spaces where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understandings, temporary protection from legacies of oppression” (Pratt, 1991, p. 40)

References


