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Discourse Analysis

Abstract

This chapter (a) presents discourse analysis as both epistemology and methodology; (b) suggests a sociolinguistic toolkit that could be used as one type of approach to conducting discourse analysis; (c) reviews and points to literature in music education and music therapy that have used such epistemological and methodological tools; and (d) suggests that, by engaging with discourse analysis, we can begin to ask questions about participants and their interactions within environments where music therapists operate and analyze prevailing discourses within structures and systems of music therapy. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

discourse analysis, music education, music therapy, sociolinguistics

Disciplines

Music Therapy

Chapter 46

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Brent C. Talbot

This chapter will (a) present discourse analysis as both epistemology and methodology, (b) suggest a sociolinguistic toolkit that could be used as one type of approach to conducting discourse analysis, (c) review and point to literature in music education and music therapy that have used such epistemological and methodological tools, and (d) suggest that, by engaging with discourse analysis, we can begin to ask questions about participants and their interactions within environments where music therapists operate and analyze prevailing discourses within structures and systems of music therapy.

Overview: Definition and Purpose

Discourse analysis is an approach that considers how meaning is socially, culturally, historically, and politically constructed and mediated through language. Discourse analysis developed from work in linguistic studies, semiotics, and literary criticism. Within critical and sociolinguistic traditions of studying discourse, *discourse* has been defined as *language-in-use*, or *language use as social practice* (Brown & Yule, 1983; de Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; Fairclough, 1992; Hanks, 1996). That is, discourse is never just language alone, but fully power-laden modes of communication that move back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world (Blommaert, 2005). Discourse, from this view, is never neutral. It mediates and constructs our understanding of reality, reflects and shapes who we are, and is always caught up in social, political, economic, racial, sexual, gendered, religious, and cultural formations. Thus, when we communicate, we draw upon language to enact specific social activities and social identities within a specific time, circumstance, and place, making (un)conscious decisions about what to include and not include based on complex relationships of power. Analyzing and interpreting discourse, therefore, requires us to consider the sociocultural components of language and how language is employed; what it does to people, groups, and societies; and how it may privilege or marginalize people in the process of its use.

Applying discourse analysis to musical settings can be a challenging endeavor because there is often very little talk. Cultural objects (e.g., gesture, cues, eye gaze, nonlinguistic symbol systems, instruments, technologies) and concepts (e.g., distinctive ways of thinking, feeling, valuing, and believing) are more commonly used as mediational means. Sites of music therapy include both talk and mediational means; therefore, a robust form of analysis is needed that

examines talk and mediational means separately for later reconstruction in the larger discourse. This chapter draws upon existing research frameworks to define discourse analysis as a process of epistemology and methodology where one:

1. Documents actual and densely contextualized forms in which language occurs.
2. Determines what repertoires are employed by language users to understand what they can and cannot do with language.
3. Explores *mediational means*, that is, how objects or concepts are used and to what extent various participants internalize them as discourse.
4. Traces historical contingencies that orient language and mediational means.
5. Focuses on the positioning of participants in relationship to each other and to the language and mediational means they are using, with the intention to display complex relationships of power. (see Talbot, 2012)

Historical and Epistemological Foundations

Discourse analysis weaves both epistemology and methodology together to fit the needs of the researcher, participants, and their site of engagement. It is important to note that no one person, school of thought, or particular method can stake the definitive claim on the field or describe an absolute approach to conducting discourse analysis. In short, there are many ways and many people. The following historical overview has been written to briefly contextualize a few of the sociolinguistic developments of discourse analysis over the past 50 years. This section is also designed to introduce researchers to some key epistemological terms that can aid in developing a methodological toolkit for conducting discourse analysis in music therapy.

Philosophical Influences: 1970s–1980s

Because discourse is a social phenomenon, researchers who analyze discourse often ground their work in discourse studies related to theories of power and ideology. Foucault's (1971/1972, 1980) orders of discourse and power/knowledge have had a large impact on the development of discourse analysis. Foucault (1971/1972) saw discourse as being "made up of a limited number of statements for which

a group of conditions of existence can be defined" (p. 117). However, discourse was of lesser concern to Foucault than *discursive practices*, which are bodies of "anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area" (p. 117). Foucault's interest was in how discursive practices play out in sociocultural systems, systems in which we operate every day. These include everything from group affiliations with friends, family, and community to employment in a particular field of study and membership in political organizations. Membership and participation in these systems comes with guidelines and tools on how to act, communicate, and operate; this is known as *discursive practice*. Poststructuralists like Foucault are interested in analyzing discursive practices in order to reveal (ab)uses of power and resistance.

Critical Discourse Analysis: 1980s–1990s

Toward the end of the 20th century, an area of research known as *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) developed within discourse analysis (see Billig & Schegloff, 1999; Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Rogers, 2011; Schaffner & Wenden, 1995; van Dijk, 1993, 1997; Wetherell, 1998; Wodak, 1995). The purpose of conducting a critical discourse analysis is to analyze "structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power, and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 1995, p. 204). The goal is to affect society, to empower people to remedy social wrongs, to give voice to those who are marginalized, and to expose power abuse.

Notable in CDA is the work of Ruth Wodak and her associates (Martin & Wodak, 2003; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wodak, 1995), who have developed a discourse-historical method intent on tracing the history of phrases and arguments so that *intertextuality* (the relationship between texts, between languages, and between musics) can be analyzed. This method starts with original documents, augments them with ethnographic research about the past, and proceeds to wide-ranging data collection and analysis of contemporary news reporting, political discourse, and lay beliefs (Blommaert, 2005, p. 28).

Some practitioners of CDA have aimed toward a focused and systematic method based on concepts like *genre*, *field*, and *sociosemantic representation of social actors*. Others have explicitly encouraged and welcomed the diversity of method, drawing upon and adapting research methods from fields such as sociolinguistics and anthropology. Scholars such as Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Slembrouck (1995), and, more recently, Blommaert (2005, 2010, 2013), Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004), and Talbot (2010, 2012, 2013), have emphasized the importance of incorporating visual images as well as music cues, instruments, and notations in concepts of discourse and have moved the field toward broader, multimodal conceptions of *semiosis*.

Recent Developments: 2000–Present

In the 21st century, James Gee and Jan Blommaert have emerged as important contributors to the field of discourse analysis. Significant are Gee's (2005) concepts of *small d* and *big D Discourse*. Expanding on Foucault's concept of *discursive practice*, Gee focuses on how human beings use associations between language and various activities to identify themselves as a member of a group or social network. Gee refers to these associations as *Discourse* with a capital *D* and reserves the word *discourse* with a little *d* to mean language-in-use or stretches of language, such as conversations or stories. He suggests that researchers ask questions that reveal "big D" discourses (see Gee, 2005; Talbot, 2010) in order to expose things about the people involved (identities, culture); the tools being used (materials, activities); the institution in which the activity is being conducted; and the policies, curriculum, and training that influence decision-making.

Blommaert acknowledged that new communication patterns emerge as part of a process of globalization. As such, he developed a theory (see 2005, 2010) produced on globalization in the social sciences and connected it to discursive analysis. In so doing, Blommaert (2005) advocates for a more versatile discourse analysis:

One which takes difference and inequality as points of departure, rather than sharedness, closure of contextual spaces, and familiarity with norms, rules, and their consequences. This kind of discourse analysis questions the macro-levels that often invisibly control discourse work, and it questions them actively, for they matter at the lowest levels of discourse production and exchange. And this questioning is something we can accomplish by drawing on some of the unique methodological instruments¹ we have developed in our fields: close analysis of situated social events, contextualized at a variety of levels and in ways that allow empirical inspection, and supported by a mature theory of meaning as a social process centered on indexicality. (p. 26)

In advocating this new approach, Blommaert shows a departure from mainstream critical discourse analysis of the late 20th century and takes a turn toward ethnography, something Ron Scollon and Suzie Wong Scollon (2003, 2004) also advocated for in the early 21st century. Their works together expand notions of discourse beyond acts of speech and challenge analysts to consider the diversity and complexities within sociolinguistic systems by drawing upon Foucault to articulate a theoretical overture toward history.

A Suggested Methodological Toolkit

The following methodological suggestions draw upon existing research frameworks—specifically, Scollon and Wong Scollon’s recommendations for nexus analysis (2004), along with Blommaert’s theoretical principles² and his concepts of ethnography (2005), globalization (2010), and superdiversity (2013)—to provide researchers a starting point for uncovering systemic practices of power in music therapy. Because discourse analysis is always context-specific, it is important to note that the following methodological toolkit is merely a set of suggestions that have worked in some cases where music has been employed. It should not be taken as a prescriptive method to use in every context, nor am I advocating any form of prescription for conducting a discourse analysis. Researchers must read, borrow, and/or develop ones specific to their sites.

Nexus Analysis

At the heart of conducting a *nexus analysis* is an engagement with ethnography. This helps the researcher to document and analyze local and social practices; for example, using music intervention within a therapeutic relationship is one such social practice. As described earlier in this chapter, discourse analysts are concerned with what language means to its users, and the Scollons expand this notion by emphasizing mediated actions of social practices (Wertsch, 1998) as part of a nexus analysis. They draw upon Foucault’s concepts of *discourse*, *the archive*, and *genealogy* to trace histories of mediational means. As defined earlier, mediational means are cultural objects (e.g., instruments) and concepts (e.g., health diagnoses) used within a social practice (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2004). A nexus analysis includes tracing the histories of use of mediational means, considering such things as how current use is related to the historical use of a particular musical instrument, vocables, and/or musical gesture. Finally, nexus analysis works to uncover how power relationships are complexly woven into the social practices at micro- and macro-levels.

For Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004), “each actor is observed at a site of engagement which is a particular moment of time in a particular place with particular others present ... [and] with characteristic discourses in place. When the social action is routinely taken at a recognizable time and place, we call it a nexus of practice” (p. 14). Synchronic events display the traces of (and can only be understood by referring to) normative complexes of social action, resulting in habituated, *normalized* codes of conduct. These codes, then, are situated in three different areas: (a) individual experience, skills, and capacities (*the historical body*), (b) social space (*discourses in place*), and (c) patterned, ordered, genred interaction (*the interaction order*).

Formulating the Research Focus and Questions

The first problem of any discourse analysis is discovering the social actions and social actors that are crucial in the production of a particular social issue. Researching discourse requires entering into a *zone of identification* with key participants. To begin, it is suggested that researchers identify the social issue they want to study. This could be something close to what they do in their own life. Music therapy researchers may want to look for an issue in one’s own actions and one’s own value systems. They may want to consider what they wish somebody would do something about or what upsets them about current practices in their field. Most importantly, they should start right away and not spend too much time on this stage, because they can never know at the outset what all of the consequences and ramifications of their study will actually be. Additionally, they will often discover later that the *real* issue is not the same as the one initially examined.

Defining and Selecting Participants

Researchers will need to identify who the primary social actors are in the mediated action in which they are interested. They should ask: What are the identities and social roles and what are the individual histories? What social identities are being produced or claimed through the actions? What social statuses do social actors bring into the site of engagement? What are the histories/historical body with particular actions and with the discourses circulating their actions?

Once researchers have identified the crucial social actors, they should begin observing what is typical about the actions and behaviors of the social actors (the interaction order). Are people alone or in groups? What dictates the process of their meeting? What is typical about the behavior of a music therapy intervention? Is this the first time these actors have met, or do they have an established relationship? While the main task of examining and answering these questions occurs later, researchers will find it helpful to spend time locating the central and primary discourses that are intersecting with the interaction order and the historical bodies of the participants and considering how these discourses produce the focal mediated actions of their study (e.g., how an agenda is used to mediate a department meeting, how one knows when to speak in an interview, the history of diagnosing patients, etc.).

As researchers begin their study and engage with their *zone of identification*, they will inevitably be drawn more and more intimately into their work. They will begin to establish relationships with the participants themselves. They should not seek to stay aloof from the social practice. On the contrary, it is important to recognize their own participation in the scene itself and consider themselves as participants.

Collecting Data

Since language is bound to social action, it is suggested that researchers engage in ethnography. However, this is not a simple process; instead, it is often complex, dynamic, and very messy. This is because no single moment of observation can ever capture the system in stasis, in equilibrium. As Blommaert (2013) states, “We always and only observe moments in long sequences of change—a particular moment in a history that cannot be stopped by us, even if we would love it to stop as soon as we finish our analysis” (p. 113). Thus, as researchers engage with their sites, they will want to take into consideration that the moment-in-history being observed always “points backwards to its past, sideways to its syntagmatic position and forward to its future” (p. 114). Because discourses, identities, and histories change, and because change is an essential part of research, researchers will want to take a considerable amount of time to consider what is meant by *data* or *evidence* and what the evidence specifically demonstrates. Short ethnographic studies are not as useful as longitudinal studies in this regard, so researchers should expect to be engaged with their work for many months and perhaps years.

According to Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004), a well-triangulated and carefully comparative study should cover four types of data:

1. *Members' generalizations*: What do participants say they do (normatively)? This is often at variance both with objective observation and with that member's own individual experience.
2. *Neutral (objective) observations*: What does a neutral observer see? Often at variance with the generalizations made about the group or the self.
3. *Individual experience*: What does an individual describe as his or her experience? Often characterized as being different from one's own group.
4. *Interactions with members*: How do participants account for your analysis? This will mostly focus on the resolution of contradictions among the first three types of data. (p. 158)

Researchers should include all four of these kinds of data. They will want to try to discover the types of normative expectations that are held by the participants during their observations. They will want to find out “how they are expressed, how they are encoded, how they are learned, and how they are enforced” (Scollon & Wong Scollon, p. 158). Researchers should collect all four types of data by using as many means as possible (e.g., video, audio, photographs; artifacts such as newspapers, magazines, online material; interviews and field notes; pamphlets, handbills, posters; musical instruments).

Preparing Data

Once the researcher has established the social issue, found the social actors, observed the interaction order, and determined the most significant cycles of discourse, she or he will want to begin a process of mapping the semiotic cycles of people, places, discourses, objects, and concepts in place.³ This does not mean that the researcher needs to map everything, but she or he should at least concentrate on mapping the cycles into and away from the mediated action that was selected as important. To do so, researchers will need to go through and review all of their data multiple times and from multiple angles. During the first review, it is suggested that each video- and audio-recording be reviewed in its entirety and time-coded, noting shifts in language and action. A second review can then identify moments of anticipation, emanation, and transformation as possible indicators of larger cycles of people, places, objects, and concepts. Detailed transcriptions from the recordings of these events should then be taken. In addition to talk, it is suggested that transcriptions account for gestures, cues, eye gaze, objects, and other semiotic systems that correspond with musical sounds and pitches (see various types of conversational analysis or John Austin's [1962] *Speech Act Theory* for suggestions). Following the transcription process, it is helpful to conduct line-by-line coding of the transcripts.

Analyzing Data

Everything suggested above is considered discourse analysis, in the broadest sense of the term, but this section narrows that definition to analyzing language and semiotic systems directly. According to Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004), discourse is present throughout this process of analysis in at least six forms: (a) speech of the participants in mediated actions, (b) texts used as mediational means, (c) images and other semiotic systems (pictures, gestures, manner of dressing, design of spaces, etc.) used as mediational means, (d) submerged in the historical body of the participants in the practices in which they engage, (e) submerged in the design of the built environment and objects, and (f) speech or writing or images (memos, interviews, etc.) of the analysts in conducting the analysis (p. 173). How one approaches analyzing each of these forms will be different and catered for each research study. Researchers will want to interrogate these forms by drawing upon approaches from critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. Inherent in these approaches is an examination of how various interests are produced, privileged, and negotiated among the setting and participants being investigated.

Interpreting Data

Researchers will find it useful to consider asking the following question suggested by Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004): “How did these participants all come to be placed at this moment and in this way to enable or carry out this action?” (p. 160). As mentioned above, the action must be thought of as a moment in time and space in which the historical bodies and the interaction order of people and the discourse-in-place intersect. Then, as the Scollons indicate, “Each of these can be thought of as having a history that leads into that moment and a future that leads away from it in arcs of semiotic cycles of change and transformation” (p. 160).

Researchers should consider the place where actions occur and ask: “What aspects of this place are central or foregrounded as crucial to the action on which I am focusing and what aspects are backgrounded? What supports this place? Is this unusual or customary for this action?” (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2004, p. 162). Researchers will also want to consider that some discourses are overt while others are so internalized as practice that they may not be obvious or foregrounded. To consider this, Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004) suggest asking: “What discourses are *invisible* in this action because they have been submerged in practice? Are any of the participants *teaching* any of the others? What actions or practices are being foregrounded?” (p. 163).

Next, Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004) suggest that researchers explore objects and concepts as mediational means and ask: “How did this object come to be present for this action; that is, through whose agency? What is its history of use? How thoroughly internalized is this mediational means and by which social actors? How widely is a concept shared among the participants? How fully internalized is the concept? Is it internalized equally for all participants? Are objects or concepts the result of a resemiotization?” (p. 165). As Scollon and Wong Scollon point out, “The agenda of a meeting, for example, is normally a printed text that has resemiotized discussions among a few key administrators or managers that is then used as a mediational means for the conduct of the meeting by all participants.” Similarly, “words such as *learning disabled* or *noncompliant* may be used to resemiotize a long history of social interactions” (p. 165).

Finally, Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004) suggest that researchers ask: “How are social power interests produced in this discourse? What hidden discourse and dialogicalities are there? That is, what is not being said, being evaded, or so obvious that it is virtually invisible but nevertheless governing the entire action or activity?” (p. 174). This again includes all the forms of discourse (mentioned above under analyzing data). Lastly, it is suggested that researchers focus on a structure of participation and ask: “What positions and alignments are participants taking up in relationship to each other, to the discourses in which they are involved, to the places in which these discourses occur, and to the mediational

means they are using, and the mediated actions which they are taking?” (p. 174).

Variations of Discourse Analysis in Music

Discourse Analysis in Music Education

Only a few studies in music have approached discourse analysis from the theoretical and methodological framework suggested above. The first is a study by Talbot (2012), which analyzed the discourse of music transmission in the three settings comprising gamelan within one American university. Additionally, a 2-year project on which Talbot worked with Mantie (Talbot & Mantie, 2015) mapped the cycles of people (teachers, professors, accreditors), places (K–12 schools, colleges, and universities), discourses (teacher education, accreditation, standards, alternative licensure), objects (journals, course syllabi, textbooks, degrees), and concepts of the social practice of professional music school teaching.

Several discourse analyses have been done in music education. Mantie (2013) used Blommaert’s (2005) concept of *orders of indexicality* to interrogate discourses of *popular music pedagogy* in order to better understand music education practices generally and specifically in the United States. His dissertation (2009) also drew upon Foucault to trace what *regimes of truth* are fashioned in school music (band) discourse, how they came to be, and what their potential effects are on the subjects. A later article by Mantie (2012b) expanded upon his dissertation to interrogate what he terms the *pedagogical band world* discourse and how it has changed over time.

Other researchers have used Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004) to view discourse as multimodal. Lindgren and Ericsson (2010) examined teaching in schools as discursive practice in order to discuss and problematize the rock band context in music education in Swedish compulsory schools in relation to governance and knowledge formation. In a different context, Jocuns (2007, 2009) used mediated discourse analysis to examine *maguru panggul* pedagogy in two settings of gamelan.

Three studies in music education have used critical discourse analysis. Thompson (2002) used it to show how world music is marginalized as *other* in the curriculum. Talbot advocated for the use of critical discourse analysis in an essay (2010) by using a previous study (2008) to walk researchers through this suggested method. Dobbs (2012) employed CDA to identify the models and discourses invoked in a set of 17 studies published in the *Journal of Research in Music Education* between 1990 and 2011.

A number of studies in music education employ various techniques for conducting an analysis of language and talk of students and teachers in school music settings. These include studies that use conversation analysis (Freer, 2008), discourse analysis (Holmberg, 2007; Talbot, 2007), discourse psychological microanalysis (Ericsson & Lindgren 2011), and

speech act theory (Dobbs, 2005, 2008). Additionally, corpus linguistics (Mantie, 2012a) has been used to compare the discourse of a journal for school band directors with the discourse of 25 adult avocational music-makers.

Discourse Analysis in Music Therapy

Much has been done to examine talk *about* music and talk *in* and *around* music therapy sessions. Wolfe, O'Connell, and Epps (1998) conducted a content analysis of therapists' verbalizations during group music therapy sessions. Pavlicevic (1999) researched music dialogue in music therapy settings. She discussed the synthesis necessary for the creation of meaning in dialogue in the music therapy context and argued for the need to move between these dialogue forms in order to re-create and sustain rich meanings in music therapy practice and discourse and to enrich our personal *inner* talk. Using conversation analysis, Sutton (2002) showed that many devices enabling conversations to take place also were heard in free improvised music. Sutton goes beyond talk to make a case toward different ways of thinking about and listening to silences in a therapy room. Eyre (2007) and Haslbeck (2012) have used narrative as a powerful tool for understanding meaning constructed in and around music therapy.

The word *discourse* in music therapy is often used to refer to talk or a body of knowledge surrounding either a particular part of the field of music therapy or a desire for such a discourse or way of thinking to exist in the field of music therapy. Examples in the literature include musical discourse, therapeutic discourse, academic discourse, community music discourse, global discourse, informing discourse, gender politics, and resource-oriented discourse. We can see how this is used in Rolvsjord's (2010) work, when she notes that several authors (Aasgaard, 2002, 2004; Aigen, 2005; Ansdell, 2003; Kenny, 1982, 1989; Procter, 2002, 2004; Rolvsjord, 2006; Ruud, 1990, 1998; Stige, 2002, 2006a, 2006b) have presented theoretical perspectives that illuminate aspects connected to or in support of a *resource-oriented discourse* about Community Music Therapy and an approach to Community Music Therapy. Rolvsjord (2010) writes: "In the discourse of community music therapy, these authors have emphasized in various ways the cultural context of the client and have pointed to therapeutic endeavors in relation to other resources, such as cultural competences, cultural participation, social networks, and musical and personal strengths" (p. 9). Rolvsjord draws upon this literature in Community Music Therapy in relation to a resource-oriented discourse, but situates it from a viewpoint of music therapy as a psychotherapeutic practice.

Ansdell (1996, 1999, 2002, 2003), whose relevant work on discourse analysis is probably the most well-known, also labels particular ways of thinking, bodies of knowledge, activities, or talk about music therapy as *discourses*. He developed a listening test for the analysis of music discourse in a reflexive metatheoretical study published in 1996 on the

relationship between what he calls *praxis* (what music therapist do), *discourse* (what they say), and *epistemology* (what they know). The study was based on a qualitative study where listeners (with different musical and therapeutic backgrounds) individually described a music therapy improvisation. The procedure followed three steps: (a) an open listening to the improvisation as a whole—free comments, (b) a second listening with stops every time the listener hears something significant or important—specific comments, and (c) a final listening to the whole—additional comments. He recorded all comments, enabling a comparative analysis of stop points (identification of significant moments), and transcribed for the purpose of discourse analysis. This test procedure has been used in cases where the researcher wants to establish trustworthiness by comparing her or his own description, analysis, and interpretation to that of other people (colleagues, laypeople, experts, etc.) or when triangulation of listening perspectives is useful (Ansdell & Pavlicevic, 2005). The procedure also has been used to address what Ansdell (1999) calls *the music therapist's dilemma*: the problems connected with using language to describe music and music knowledge within a more or less consciously chosen verbal discourse. This form of discourse analysis is closely related to procedures developed from conversation analysis and commonly found in many fields at the turn of the century.

Discourse analysis has also been used to reframe oncological findings in music therapy research. In their study, O'Callaghan and McDermott (2007) drew on discourse analysis as a framework for examining how social reality is produced, acknowledging how multiple meanings can emerge through disparate dialogues informing individual life histories—concepts that they borrow from Gee (2005). A discourse analysis on their music therapy research extended the researchers' reflexivity, provided a rationale for discrepant interpretations about music therapy's efficacy, and enabled alternate interpretations of some of the data and findings.

In her book *Music Therapy in Context: Music, Meaning and Relationship*, Pavlicevic (2005) asks, "What does the discipline of music therapy 'do' with perspectives from allied fields?" (p. 7). She examines the different ways that music therapists *speak about* their work and finds a range of discourses that frame the work within a particular set of meaning, but she uses the word *discourse* loosely to describe a set of meanings conveyed by language, as well as the relationship between language and the event. She then advocates that this should be analyzed as *social text* through discourse analysis.

Pavlicevic (2005) suggests that music therapy can learn from the field of semiotics. She writes:

We see that the music therapist herself has access to a system of signs that we might label "music therapy theory." This discourse is language-based, although it is often inspired by nonlinguistic events and, like language, it has

evolved over years of professional development, of thinking about the work, of writing and reading about it. Within this discourse, certain improvisational events are assigned special significance, and when these occur, the “green light” goes on inside the therapist’s mind. Here we might say that the therapist taps into theory in order to make sense of what is going on in the practice. At the same time, however, we see that the therapist is directly affected by the music (the indexical view), and, in addition, we might use Leonard Meyer’s information theory to explain how the inhibition or expectation in the therapist gave rise to her feeling of excitement. (p. 32)

As in Pavlicevic above, recent works in music therapy have combined elements of discourse analysis with other theoretical frameworks to help deepen our understanding of theory and practice. An example is Stuart Wood (2013), who used discourse analysis and *actor network theory* (ANT) as part of a study on the challenges of evaluating Community Music Therapy. He takes an ecological approach to understanding the value of music therapy in a collaboration between a large care home company and a major specialist music charity in the UK. His discussion offers an account of how the materials of Community Music Therapy assemble to create a network in which evaluation is performed and considers why this might be problematic.

Informed by sociological and social psychological theory, proposing that the self develops in social discourses, McCaffrey (2013) used an interpretive phenomenological analysis of transcripts from semistructured interviews with two music therapists to explore how music therapists describe and experience the life-world of the self in clinical improvisation. The findings from this study support the idea of improvisation as a meaning system or discourse in which the intersubjective world of the self and other is played out. Similarly in the vein of sociological approaches, Procter (2013) ethnographically examined the ways in which music therapy gets accomplished as a situated social practice within a community mental health resource center in a UK urban area. Using Goffman’s dramaturgical approach as a broader conceptual framework, Procter examined the *norms* portrayed by dominant professional discourse, with particular attention paid to self-awareness, intimacy, and conviviality as facets of what music therapy has to offer in such a setting. Findings from this study address what it means to be *clinical* in order that a sociological *craft* perspective may be brought to bear within the discipline of music therapy.

Critique of Method: Strengths and Weaknesses

Most music therapy studies that employ discourse analysis seem to focus on discourse as talk and bodies of knowledge

or ways of thinking *in* and *about* music therapy as theory, practice, and the field at large. Some tie discourse to self-, client, and group identity; some take a critical perspective of their own and others’ analyses; and some even advocate for music as a legitimate discourse (McCaffrey, 2013). Nevertheless, there are limitations to these studies because they make social claims based on language used in various interactions but fail to explicitly *trace* the *discursive practice* and situate it within a *historical body* or represent the relationship between actual and densely contextualized forms of linguistic and musical resources used in social practice. Although these studies have proved useful to many in the field of music therapy, very few do the work of fully and multimodally examining power and ideology in order to uncover inequalities. This is not to say that their intentions have not been articulated toward empowering practitioners or clients, but instead it is to say that they do not fully show how individuals and groups within the field of music therapy use language and other semiotic tools (including music) to enact, participate in, and contribute to the practice, theories, and philosophies of music therapy in ways that may cause a “centrality of discourse” (Alvesson, 2002) that results in oppression or marginalization. As Rolvsjord (2010) acknowledges, drawing upon her own work (2006) and Ansdell’s (2003; see also Hadley, 2006; Hadley & Edwards, 2004): “Our practice, theories, and philosophies are not neutral. The discourse we use either contributes to the stabilization and conservation of certain values in the community or else contributes to the destabilization of values and politics by transgressing or challenging others” (p. 36).

Engaging with discourse analysis strengthens our understanding of the field and how we construct and operate within its system. However, it requires doing the type of robust work that Blommaert (2005, 2010, 2013) and Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004) suggest: mapping out the cycles of people, places, discourses, objects, and concepts around a nexus; tracing the histories of use of an ethnographically situated object or concept and exploring it as mediational means; and analyzing how linguistic and musical resources as well as various interests are produced, privileged, and negotiated within a structure of participation. Adaptation of existing research frameworks, such as those offered by Foucault (1971/1972), Fairclough (1992), and Blommaert (2005, 2010, 2013), combined with the toolkits offered in nexus analysis by Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004), offer a potential way forward for music therapy research by providing a multimodal approach to analyzing discourse in sites where music is used.

One major challenge of conducting work like this is the length of time it takes to engage in meaningful and deep ethnography, the kind of ethnography where one can see the variations within the sociolinguistic system we are studying and then examine the various communicative tools, resources, beliefs, and so forth and their historical processes of becoming. Researchers will encounter *different historicities*

and different *speeds of change*. Long histories—the kind of history that shaped *English*, for instance—are blended with shorter histories, such as the one that produced *Hip Hop*. Blommaert calls this “layered simultaneity” (2005, p. 126). At each layer, words have different contextualization, meanings, and uses. Historicity creates recognizability, grounded in indexical attributions within a context. This also applies to higher-order levels such as genres, styles, discourse traditions, and other forms of intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Agha, 2007; Blommaert, 2005). Doing the recognition work for all of these layers is vitally important, yet fully grasping the theoretical tools necessary to accomplish this can require some familiarity with sociolinguistics (see Blommaert, 2005, 2010, 2013).

Every act of communication is a moment in which we synchronize materials that each carry very different historical indexicalities, an effect of the intrinsic polycentricity that characterizes sociolinguistic systems. As Blommaert (2013) points out, “The intrinsic hybridity of utterances is an effect of interactions within a much larger polycentric system” (p. 11). Parsing these utterances out and tracing their histories of use can be challenging, especially when the researcher may not be familiar with the vernacular language or music being used. Lastly, discourse analysis is intended to reveal inequalities and to create voice for those who are marginalized. To do so, researchers must confront power structures within the very systems in which they work. This can have real intended and unintended consequences and may require various ethical considerations.

Conclusion

Discourse analysis is an epistemological and methodological approach that considers how meaning is socially, culturally, historically, and politically constructed and mediated through language. Similar to language, music is “used in tandem with actions, interactions, nonlinguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing” (Gee, 2005, p. 10). As McCaffrey (2013) states,

Whilst separation of music from language, or vice versa, may present as an unwieldy, or perhaps, impossible task, it is apparent that the many shared similarities ... strengthen the argument for music as a valid discourse or meaning system. If music is indeed such a legitimate discourse, then there is a need to consider its possible influences upon the development of self for those who use it, and this is particularly relevant to music therapy practice. (p. 307)

By considering how we use language, music, and other meaning systems, we begin to understand how we position and are positioned as part of larger groups and practices

operating within multiple layers of social, cultural, and historical context.

Blommaert (2005, 2010, 2013) and Scollon and Wong Scollon (2004) make strong cases for needing multimodal toolkits as well as for using ethnography to examine the complexities of our linguistic landscapes. Blommaert teaches us that sociolinguistic systems in which discourse operates are characterized by *mobility* and that, as researchers, we need to be aware of the effects of globalization, examining how well linguistic resources travel. The same is true for musical resources. It is possible that what is highly valued in one setting may be disregarded in another. For example, improvisational discourses that evoke a shared musical expression in a setting in Helsinki may have little effect among those practicing in Lansing, Michigan. Important to conducting this type of research in music therapy is recognizing what people can and cannot actually accomplish with their linguistic and musical tools and resources and how their use is privileged and/or marginalized. Discourse analysis should not be limited to music therapy interactions only, but also should be applied to policy. Some music therapy researchers may want to examine federal and state arts and therapy policies, showing how the texts surrounding policies in music therapy authorize particular worldviews, pathologize certain groups of people, and influence how resources are distributed among practices and schools of music therapy.

By looking at both interaction within settings of music therapy and public policy in music therapy, music therapy researchers can become increasingly more aware that discourse analysis is intended to have effects in society. As O’Callaghan and McDermott (2007) explain:

Discourse analysis highlights how personal and sociohistorical contexts offer important insights into how research data is created and analyzed and how research findings emerge. Arguably, being a professional should incorporate continued reflexive inquiry into one’s gaze as both a clinician and researcher, wherein subjugated knowledges are uncovered, in order to challenge our assumptions and extend our understandings. (p. 407)

In this way, we can understand the practice, theory, and field of music therapy in a more complex and nuanced way, allowing research in music therapy to be central to the process of change, providing voice to those who are marginalized, and creating practices of equity that improve life quality through music.

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1. See Blommaert (2005), Duranti (2007), and Gumperz (1982, 1992) for a deeper understanding of some of the important methodological instruments that Blommaert is referencing. These include *contextualization*, *uptake*, *indexicality*, *intertextuality*, *interdiscursivity*, *genre*, *field*, *repertoires*, *historicities*, *polycentricity*, *semiosis*, and so forth.
 2. See Blommaert's “five principles” in *Discourse* (2005, pp. 14–15) and his “theoretical statements on complexity” in *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes: Chronicles of Complexity* (2013, pp. 10–13) for an extended discussion on the theoretical principles encouraged throughout this chapter.
 3. “Semiotic cycles are the process in which meaning is created and transformed into objects and the historical body through action and, reciprocally, the historical body and objects are transformed through actions into discourse and other semiotic codes” (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2005, p. 112). See also Bernstein, 1990; Blommaert, 2005; Silverstein and Urban, 1996; and Vygotsky, 1980.
 4. Resemiotization is the process of tracing how meaning-making shifts from context to context, practice to practice—essentially, how one form of semiotics is translated into another as social processes unfold.