Roles, relationships and identity in qualitative interviews

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Aims of talk

• Share views from related disciplines concerning analysis and representation of roles and identity in qualitative interviews concerning teacher talk
• Outline four ‘discourse dilemmas’ (Mann 2011)
• Show how prior relationships are invoked and made relevant by both interviewer and interviewee during educational research interviews and how these prior relationships contribute to the ‘generation’ (Baker, 2004: 163) of data.
The qualitative interview has a growing presence in applied linguistics. Despite this increase, the qualitative interview has, for the most part, been undertheorized in relation to roles, relationships and identity.
Worrying tendencies:

- Selected voices arranged in journalistic tableau
- Bereft of context and methodological detail
- Critical reflective dimension often missing.
The ‘active’ interview

- Holstein and Gubrium’s (1995) contribution to this theorization of the ‘inter-view’ (interviews as unavoidably ‘active’)
- ‘no matter how formalized, restricted, or standardized’ the nature of the interview, there is ‘interaction between the interview participants’. (Holstein and Gubrium 1995: 18)
Discursive psychology

- Antaki et al. (2003) present the concerns of discursive psychology in reference to the interview.
- Concern with the linguistic features of positioning, footing, stake management, and identity work.
Contingent problems

Potter and Hepburn (2005) draw attention to avoidable ‘contingent problems with interviewing:

- the deletion of the interviewer
- problems with the representation of interaction
- the unavailability of the interview set-up
- the failure to consider interviews as interaction.
A greater focus on the interviewer

Research studies need to be more open in their accounting of how membership, roles and relationship can affect the way talk develops (e.g. Roulston, 2001; Rapley, 2001, 2004; Garton and Copland 2010).
Fiona: yes if you could change oh sorry ((phone starts ringing)) anything about your feedback style what would you change?

May: well I think you know the answer to that ((laughs))

Fiona: okay ((laughs))

May: I’m sorry I think that’s my phone and nobody ever rings me I do apologise

Fiona: no no that’s fine that’s fine I’ll have another cake I like this interview I get cakes cakes and cats.  

((May answers phone))

May: sorry ((May sits down)) what was the () oh yes what would I change about my erm feedback style erm () well as I said I’d like to be able to be a little bit more circumspect about some issues I think erm
Garton, S. and Copland, F. 2010. ‘I like this interview: I get cakes and cats!’; the effect of prior relationships on interview talk. *Qualitative Research* Vol. 10 (5), 533-551