Chapter Outlines for:
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Chapter 9: Textual Analysis

I. Introduction
- A. **Textual analysis** is the method communication researchers use to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message.
- 1. The purpose of textual analysis is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts.
- 2. The important considerations in textual analysis include selecting the types of texts to be studied, acquiring appropriate texts, and determining which particular approach to employ in analyzing them.
- 3. There are two general categories of texts:
- a. Transcripts of communication (verbatim recordings)
- b. Outputs of communication (messages produced by communicators)
- 4. In terms of acquiring texts, outputs of communication are more readily available than transcripts.
- a. **Archival communication research** involves examining the communication embedded in existing records of human behavior kept in archives.
- b. Acquisition of texts is important as is the representativeness of the texts selected since sampling is typically used.
- c. Another issue is determining how complete and accurate the texts are in order to conduct a sound analysis.

II. Approaches to Textual Analysis
- A. There are four major approaches to textual analysis: rhetorical criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis, and performance studies.
- B. Rhetorical Criticism
- 1. The terms, *rhetoric* and *criticism*, conjure up interesting images.
- a. Rhetoric often carries negative connotations, such as when it is applied to grand, eloquent, bombastic, or verbose discourse.
- b. Andrews believes that criticism is typically associated with tearing down or denigrating comments; despite its function as constructive advice.
- c. For scholars, the word rhetoric is associated with Aristotle's definition: "the available means of persuasion" and criticism is the "systematic process of illuminating and evaluating products of human activity" (Andrews, 1983, p. 4).
- 2. **Rhetorical Criticism**, therefore, is a systematic method for describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating the persuasive force of messages embedded within texts.
- 3. The process serves five important functions (Andrews, 1983) including:
- a. sheds light on the purposes of a persuasive message
- b. can aid in understanding historical, social, and cultural contexts
- c. can be used as a form of social criticism to evaluate society
- d. can contribute to theory building by showing how theories apply to persuasive discourse
- e. serves a pedagogical function by teaching people how persuasion works and what constitutes effective persuasion.
- 4. **Classical rhetoric** examined the characteristics and effect of persuasive public speaking during the Greek and Roman civilizations.
- 5. **Contemporary rhetoric** has expanded to incorporate a wide range of philosophical, theoretical, and methodological perspectives that are used to study the persuasive

impact of many different types of texts and messages.
6. There are four steps to conducting rhetorical criticism
   a. Choosing a text(s) to study
   b. Choosing a specific type of rhetorical criticism
   c. Analyzing the text(s) according to the method chosen
   d. Writing the critical essay
7. There are several types of rhetorical criticism and they may be used to answer a wide range of questions including:
   a. What is the relationship between a text and its context?
   b. How does a text construct reality for an audience?
   c. What does a text suggest about the rhetor?
      i. *Historical Criticism* examines how important past events shape and are shaped by rhetorical messages. Researchers go beyond merely describing and recreating past events from documents to evaluate the reasons why the past events occurred as they did.
      ii. *Oral Histories* investigate spoken, as opposed to written, accounts of personal experiences to understand more fully what happened in the past.
      iii. *Historical Case Studies* examine texts related to a single, salient historical to understand the role played by communication.
      iv. *Biographical Studies* examine public and private texts of prominent, influential, or otherwise remarkable individuals. They analyze how the messages used by these individuals helped them to accomplish what they did.
      v. *Social Movement Studies* examine persuasive strategies used to influence the historical development of specific campaigns and causes.
      vi. *Neo-Aristotelian Criticism* evaluated whether the most appropriate and effective means, as articulated in the specific set of criteria given in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, were used to create the rhetorical text(s) intended to influence a particular audience.
      vii. *Genre Criticism* rejects using a single set of criteria to evaluate all persuasive messages, arguing instead, that standards vary according to the particular type, or *genre* of text being studied.
         (a) *Forensic* Rhetoric deals with the past and concerns issued involving legality and justice.
         (b) *Epideictic* rhetoric concerns the present and is ceremonial.
         © *Deliberative* rhetoric speaks to the future and involves political oratory.
      viii. *Dramatistic Criticism* primarily analyzes texts according to philosopher Kenneth Burke's view that all communication can be seen in terms of five essential elements that comprise a dramatic event.
         (a) Act: A particular message produced by a communicator.
         (b) Purpose: The reason for the message.
         (c) Agent: The person who communicated the message.
         (d) Agency: The medium used to express the message
         (e) *Pentadic Analysis,* as it is called, uses these five elements to isolate essential characteristics of and differences between symbolic acts.
      ix. *Metaphoric Criticism* assumes that we can never know reality directly.
      x. *Narrative Criticism* assumes that many (or all) persuasive messages function as narratives—storied, accounts, or tales.
      xi. *Fantasy Theme Analysis*, based on the work of Ernest Bormann, examines the common images used to portray narrative elements of situations described in a text. Fantasy themes are mythic stories present in communication that involve characters with which people identify.
      xii. *Feminist Criticism* analyzes how conceptions of gender are produced and maintained in persuasive messages.

B. **Content Analysis** is used to identify, enumerate, and analyze occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics embedded in texts.
  1. *Qualitative Content Analysis:* Researchers are more interested in the meanings associated with messages than with the number of times message variables occur.
  2. *Quantitative Content Analysis* is the systematic, step-by-step procedure used to answer research questions and test hypothesis.
  3. Considered an unobtrusive technique because researchers study texts that already exist rather than asking people to produce texts.
  4. Vast majority of content analyses employ quantitative procedures, which involve selecting texts, determining the units to be coded, developing content categories, training observers to code units, and analyzing the data.
    a. Selecting texts: Choosing appropriate texts to study such as, newspapers, magazines, books, public service announcements, and Internet messages, etc.
    b. Determining the unit of analysis: First identify the appropriate message unit to code (unitizing).
  5. There are five units including:
    a. *Physical units* are the space and time devoted to content
    b. *Meaning units*, which the remaining four types reside within, involve symbolic meaning
    c. *Syntactical units* consist of discrete units of language, such as individual words, sentences, and paragraphs
    d. *Referential units*, also called *character units*, involve some physical or temporal unit referred to or alluded to within content
    e. *Thematic units* are topics contained within messages.
  6. Developing content categories into which units can be classified is done through the use of nominal measurement procedures; this is a very creative process; there are an infinite number of categories into which units could potentially be classified.
  7. Analyzing the data, coding units into nominal categories, yields qualitative data in that what is being communicated is determined by the type of category.
C. **Interaction Analysis**: Scholars view interaction as a complex accomplishment that requires much knowledge on the part of individual communicators and the ability to coordinate behavior with others.
  1. To describe interaction, researchers focus on a number of characteristics including:
    a. Linguistic features: Studies range from the analysis of particular words and sentence components (verbs), to nonverbal features (eye contact & touch), to more interpretive aspects of language (powerful vs. powerless speech).
    b. Types of topics that people talk about.
    c. The purposes of specific actions and utterances in an interaction.
  2. Group decision making requires that group members satisfy four fundamental tasks, called functional requisites:
    a. Thorough and accurate understanding of the choice-making situation
    b. Identification of a range of realistic alternative courses of action
    c. Thorough and accurate assessment of the positive qualities or consequences associated with alternative choices
    d. Thorough and accurate assessment of the negative qualities or consequences associated with alternative choices.
  3. Researchers interested in the functional nature of messages exchanged during interaction focus on the purpose of each communicator's moves.
  4. Others analyze the structure of interaction by studying the relationship between conversants' moves.
  5. Relating interaction to other variables: Most interaction analysts go beyond description to study the ways in which interaction is related to significant input and output variables.
    a. How the characteristics of interactants influence their behavior during an interaction

b. The effects of sociodemographic characteristics, such as gender or race

c. Personality traits, such as affective orientation (the tendency to use one's emotions as guiding information)

d. Anxiety

e. Attachment style (the type and quality of relationship one wants to share with another)

f. Attributional confidence (confidence in the ability to predict other people's feelings and behavior

g. Cognitive complexity (the degree of differentiation, articulation, and integration within a cognitive system)

h. Defensiveness; depression; extroversion; empathic ability

i. Locus of control (degree to which people versus the environment are held accountable for enacted behavior)

j. Loneliness; need for privacy

k. Self-efficacy (degree of confidence people have in being able to attain goals)

l. Self-esteem

m. Self-monitoring (the extent to which people pay attention to their verbal and nonverbal behaviors)

n. Tolerance for disagreement.

6. Conducting Interaction Analysis: Conducting interaction analysis involves two general tasks: Obtaining a sample of interaction, and analyzing that sample.

   a. In gathering a *sample of interaction*, researchers make choices that affect both the type and the quality of the data obtained, including the type of interactional data required, the desired location of the interaction, and the appropriate means for gathering the data.

      i. Type: Will it be any interaction or a specific interaction? natural and unstructured or structured? Real or hypothetical?

      ii. Location: Will it be in a laboratory, in interactants' homes or offices, or in some publicly accessible place.

      iii. Means for gathering data: Audiotaping, videotaping, observational notes taken by researchers and questionnaires answered by respondents.

   b. Analyzing the *sample of interaction:* Specific analysis depends on whether the goal is to describe interaction or relate it to other variables. It also depends on the form the data take.

D. **Performance Studies**: "the process of dialogic engagement with one's own and others' aesthetic communication through the means of performance."

   1. Researchers interpret texts as a method of inquiry that enables them and audiences of performances to interpret the aesthetic richness of those texts.

   2. There are six steps in generating and reporting insights in performance studies.

      a. Selecting: Identifying the communication act or text they wish to examine

      b. Playing: Trying on different vocal and bodily behaviors

      c. Testing: Establishes the range of legitimate understandings

      d. Choosing: Question of selecting those valid interpretations to isolate one possible understanding to pursue.

         i. Sets in motion a *performance vision*, a reading that the performance researcher attempts to enact.

      e. Repeating: Sets and refines the researchers chosen interpretation.

      f. Presenting: Report of what has been discovered through public performance; puts on a display for others' consideration what the performance researcher has come to understand.

III. Conclusion

A. A famous industrialist once said, "a person's language, as a rule, is an index of his or her mind." This suggests that examining word choices can provide insights into people'

characters.

B. The essence of this message is also a basic premise of textual analysts. Their mission is understanding how people think, and consequently act, by studying patterns displayed in their discourse, broadly defined.