Content Analysis in Narrative Studies

ABSTRACT

Content analysis is one of the dominant methodologies employed in narrative research and is widely used in other areas as well. Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis as, "a research technique for making replicable and valid inference from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use". Content analysis produces highly reliable data. It can present events which are not immediately appearing to reader. This method may not tell us very much about the quality of people's relationship. It describes, rather than explains, people's behaviour. It does not tell us what behaviour means to those involved and those watching. Investigation narratives focused attention on how people make the points they do, and it gives access to how they wish to portray themselves, how they give account for their actions and their lives. Shared expression and shared vocabulary and metaphors can tell us a lot about how social groups see themselves and how they account for their experiences. Practical Analytic Activities of Content Analysis of Narrative includes read and re-read the transcript to familiarize yourself with the structure and content, prepare a short, written summary to identify key features content, Look for transitions between themes, take notes\ memos about the ideas you have and use them to highlight, mark any embedded mini-stories, code thematic ideas, to connect the ideas you have develop about the narrative with literature, undertake case-by-case (e.g. thematically). Key words: content analysis, narratives.

INTRODUCTION

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Researchers quantify and analyse the presence meanings and relationship of such words and concepts, then derive inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and the time of which these are a part. Texts can be defined broadly as books. Book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theatre, occurrence of a communicative language.

Meaning of Content Analysis

Manickam,P.S1.(n. d.) has sited the followings:
Berelson(1952) defined content analysis as, "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication". The key to understanding content analysis and performing it competently lies in understanding to the meaning of objective, systematic, quantitative, and manifest content. Walizer and Wienir (1978) defined it as, "any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information". Kerlinger (1973) defined content analysis as, "a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables". Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inference from text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use".

Strength of Content Analysis

Krippendorff (2004) distinguished strength and limitation of content analysis. They are:

1. 1) It is relatively easy to gain access to the broadcast or publication we want to study.
2. It is relatively easy and inexpensive to build a representative sample.

3. It produces highly reliable (usually quantitative) data. Content Analyses are usually easy to repeat ("replicate"). Complex form of social interaction can be quantified using a standardized framework (the content analysis grid) that can be applied across a wide range of media.
4. It can present an objective account of events, themes, issues and so forth that may not be immediately apparent to a reader, viewer or general consumer.
5. It is an unobtrusive method- it doesn't involve the researcher interacting with the people\things being studied. The researcher cannot, therefore, influence the behaviour of the people being studied.

Limitation of Content Analysis

1. May not be as objective as it seems, as the research must select and record data accurately. In some instances (such as a television programme) thee researcher must make choices about how to interpret particular form of behaviour (for example, when a character is acting aggressively). For example, the researcher decides things like: what categories will be used and whether or not everyone is put neatly into a particular category.
2. By attempting to quantify behaviour (such as the relationship between people), this method may not tell us very much about the quality of people's relationship.
3. May be time-consuming (for example, analyzing a range of newspapers or TV Programmes in detail).
4. As with all statistical data, it provides us with a snapshot of people's behaviour at a single moment in their life.
5. It describes, rather than explains, people's behaviour. It does not tell us what behaviour means to those involved and those watching.

Narrative

Narration or story telling is one of the fundamental ways that people organize their understanding of world. In stories they make sense to themselves of their past experience and they share that experience with others, so the careful analysis of topics, content, style, context and the telling of narratives will reveal people's understanding of the meaning of key events in their lives or their communities and cultural contexts in which they live.

Investigation narratives focused attention on how people make the points they do, and it gives access to how they wish to portray themselves, how they give account for their actions and their lives. Shared expression and shared vocabulary and metaphors can tell us a lot about how social groups see themselves and how they account for their experiences.

Practical Analytic Activities of Content Analysis of Narrative:

1. Read and re-read the transcript to familiarize yourself with the structure and content of the narrative or narratives.

   Event- what happened?
   Experiences- image, feeling, reactions, meanings.
   Accounts, explanations, excuses.
   Narrative- the linguistic and rhetorical form of telling events, including how the narrator and audience (the researcher) interact, temporal sequencing, employment and imagery.

2. Prepare a short, written summary to identify key features such as the beginning, the middle and the end of the story.
3. Use the right-hand margin of the transcript to note thematic ideas and structural points. Look for transitions between themes. You can examine text on different kinds of transition such as the move from, for example, professional training to early occupational career. Find text expressive of the particular theme used at specific stages of the biography. For example, is intimate relationship something respondents only mention at certain stages of their life history?
4. Take notes\ memos about the ideas you have and use them to highlight where people give accounts for their actions and to show the overall structure of the story. See if there are episodes that they seem to contradict the themes in terms of content, mood or evaluation by the narrators. One special attitude narrators can take to an issue is to fail to mention it.

5. Mark any embedded mini-stories, or sub-plots.
6. High light or circle emotive language, imagery use of metaphors and passages about the narrator's feeling.
7. Code thematic ideas and develop coding frame. It might be sufficient to use fairly obvious and broad codes like 'childhood', 'professional training', 'early occupational career', 'marriage' , 'parenthood' , 'national service', 'career change', and 'retirement'.
8. Later in your analysis, begin to connect the ideas you have develop about the narrative with the broader theoretical literature.
9. Undertake case-by-case (e.g. thematically). It is like that you will only have a few life histories to deal with in a study. Even so, some case-by-case comparison may be revealing. You might compare different participants views on some event they were all involved with or you could compare how people experience similar transitions in their lives.

Conclusion:

Content analysis is powerful data reduction technique. Its systematic repeating technique for compressing many words of texts into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding. It is useful in dealing large number of volume of data. It has certain limitations also. Practical Analytic Activities of Content Analysis of Narrative provides us all steps for systematic analysis of narratives. Appropriate analysis make easy to the reader to understand whole narration without losing its meaning.

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RINKU BHATIYA
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
P.M.PATEL COLLEGE OF ELECTRONIC & COMMUNICATION, ANAND.