
THE INTERVIEW: FOUNDATIONS OF HERMENEUTICS AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT: This study presents a reflection regarding a methodology of construction and analysis of interview, based on both the hermeneutics of Habermas and Thompson and on Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis. From the conjunction and disjunction of hermeneutics to psychoanalysis, the authors aimed to build a foundation from the deconstruction of interviews and their analysis, showing that it is possible to apply these theories. The results obtained with the practical application of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis in the study were different than initially expected. The convergence of concepts was evidenced, although the authors used different terms. Even the colloquial language, when broadened by the interpretation of the authors, showed that the speeches were supported by the technical referential. The results exceeded expectation, demonstrating the feasibility of the application of these foundations in studies of this nature.

DESCRIPTORS: Interviews. Methodology. Psychoanalysis. Interpretation.

A ENTREVISTA: FUNDAMENTOS DA HERMENÊUTICA E DA PSICANÁLISE

RESUMO: Este trabalho apresenta uma reflexão acerca de uma metodologia de construção e análise de entrevista, baseada, por um lado, na hermenêutica de Habermas e Thompson e, por outro, na psicanálise freudo-laciana. A partir da conjunção e disjunção da hermenêutica com a psicanálise, procurou-se construir uma fundamentação da elaboração de entrevistas e de sua análise, em que se seja possível aplicar tais teorias. Os resultados obtidos com a aplicação prática da hermenêutica e da psicanálise, numa pesquisa, foram diferentes do que, inicialmente, se pensava encontrar. Foi constatada a convergência dos conceitos, ainda que os pesquisados utilizassem diferentes termos. Mesmo a linguagem coloquial, quando aprofundada pela interpretação dos autores, mostrou que as falas estavam sustentadas no referencial técnico. Os resultados ultrapassaram os objetivos, indicando ser viável a aplicação desses fundamentos em pesquisa dessa natureza.

DESCRIPTORES: Entrevista. Metodologia. Psicanálise. Interpretação.

LA ENTREVISTA: FUNDAMENTOS DE LA HERMENÉUTICA Y DEL PSICOANÁLISIS

RESUMEN: El actual trabajo presenta una reflexión sobre la metodología de la construcción y análisis de la entrevista, basada, por una parte en la hermenéutica de Habermas y de Thompson y por parte, en el psicoanálisis freudo-laciano. De la conjunción y de la disjunción de la hermenéutica con el psicoanálisis, procurase construir una fundamentación de la elaboración de entrevistas y de su análisis donde sea posible aplicar tales teorías. Los resultados logrados con el uso práctico de la hermenéutica y del psicoanálisis en una pesquisa habían sido diferentes de lo que, inicialmente, se había pensado encontrar en la investigación, excediendo los objetivos establecidos previamente.

DESCRIPTORES: Entrevista. Metodología. Psicoanálisis. Interpretación.

INTRODUCTION

This article is the result of two doctoral studies from the Federal University of Santa Catarina. One specifically regards the theory of interpretation in psychoanalysis and hermeneutics, whereas the other applied aspects of depth hermeneutics¹ and the hermeneutics of a statement,² as well as some foundations of Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis to support the study method. The first study³ provided the theoretical support, while the second⁴ aimed at applying it in practice, with the criteria as pillars of the method.

The first study presents the trajectory of interpretation from its pillars in hermeneutics, highlighting its journey as a concept of psychoanalysis, which began with the search for meanings, up to and including its current attempt to reach true Lacanian meaning through the intervention introduced by Lacan called '*forçage*', which no longer implicates the relevance of meaning.³

The second study presents a usage proposal of an auditing report in the support of health management, so that this report could instrumentalize the decision-making process. The auditing process in the SHS in Santa Catarina was used as an example. Based on the characteristics and the concept of the service, it was concluded that auditing cannot be standardized, considering that its main object is not standardized either. This journey was supported by the adapted method, used in questioning during the interview and data analysis of the study, which agrees with its functions of listening and interpretation by the auditor.⁴

The study that applied the theory in practice utilized the interview. Since there was no model for this format, the authors aimed to adapt the relationships of a statement² to the steps of depth hermeneutics,¹ in addition to some interpretation procedures of Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis. Depth hermeneutics provides a methodological opening in which "the researcher may analyze the social-historical and space-temporal context that surrounds the studied phenomenon, in addition to undertaking analyses of discourse, content, semiotics or any formal standard that may be necessary".^{5:87}

Hermeneutics and psychoanalysis are generally not grouped together since their directions are different. "Hermeneutics starts from the fact that every object field of study is always also a subject-field, because there is an appropriation of this field in the sociocultural configuration of the

subjectivity".^{6:175} In general terms, hermeneutics is based on the principle that there is truth in the text to be found through interpretation, whereas psychoanalysis, despite seeking to interpret as well, considers this truth to be only an attribution of the subject. Using two theories that take different directions, the authors aimed to build a foundation for the elaboration of interviews and their analysis, one in which it would be possible to apply aspects of both theories. Based on this concept, the study in which the interview was applied used as its method of analysis and elaboration an interpretation based on foundations of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, ultimately demonstrating results that exceeded the previously established goals.

The authors contextualized here the interpretation from the point of view of hermeneutics and Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis and used the descriptive method as their methodological procedure in the construction of this article, aimed at showing that this theoretical procedure may change practice. The descriptive study supposes that its results must promote practice changes.⁷

The results obtained with the second study previously mentioned would be substantially different if the method applied was a different one. The interviewees used several terms to characterize auditing. This fact showed that auditing was not a specific concept, and was not well delimited for the interviewees either. This fact was not confirmed by the analysis of the data collected in the interviews, especially considering that the terms converged upon the same meaning and was, in fact, close to a synonymization. The analysis could only be carried out through the application of this method of open interviews, with analysis based on the proposed theories. The use of a questionnaire, for instance, would not allow this conclusion, because the written text would provide a different interpretation from that expected from the interview. The impossibility of the interpretative amplitude, which listening provides, would lead the analysis of the stated terms in another direction, away from convergence. If data had been obtained only from a written record in which different terms appear, it would not be possible to interpret them in the same direction, because it only became apparent that they had the same meaning during the application of the interview. The spoken language, different from the written one, employs the colloquial style, which depth hermeneutics refer to as routine forms of discourse, or syntactic analysis.¹

The intention was to show that the journey of a study is the most important, since it may lead to results that were not expected previously. It has a personal order, which resides in the expectation of the researcher. It may not agree with what is believed in the studied field or in the objective reality. The application of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis in the foundation of the elaboration and application of the interview, and in the analysis of the data obtained from it, made the difference between what was expected and what was achieved.

HERMENEUTICS

The term hermeneutics, from the Greek word *hermeneuein*, refers to a theory or philosophy of interpretation, making it possible to understand the study object far beyond its simple superficial appearance. The Greek word *hermeios* derives from the god Hermes who, in Greek mythology, was the discoverer of language and writing. Hermes discovered the object used to represent human comprehension, to achieve the meaning of things and transmit it these meanings to one another. The term "hermetic" comes from Hermes and means something hidden or inaccessible.⁸ Hermes performed a function of transmutation in representation: transforming what humans did not understand into something that could be understood through comprehension capability.³

As a methodology, this interpretation is applicable to areas as diverse as history, religion, art, psychology, language studies and psychoanalysis, among others. Its long journey dates back to the efforts of the Greeks to understand their poets, up until the exegesis of the sacred scriptures that required more systematized interpretation, given their eminently metaphorical character. Besides these examples, dream interpretation in ancient times, such as the well-known interpretation of Pharaoh's dream that originated the saying regarding "fat cows and lean cows" designating times of abundance and times of scarcity, are another example. In current times this methodology involves multiple senses and areas, such as psychoanalysis and hermeneutics.⁹

Currently, interpretation in its broad meaning is used in all fields of human knowledge, since it is an integrating part of language. It is common in colloquial language for divergences to be expressed by sentences similar to the statement that says it is a "question of interpretation". It does not seem that it can really be absent from

the lived experience, since there is some comprehension when it is contextualized; in other words, when in a text which implicates reading and, thus, interpretation.⁴

The German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (born in 1900) stated in *Truth and Method* that interpretation, before becoming a method, was the expression of a human situation: the interpreter who approaches a work is already situated in the horizon opened by it. Interpretation is, primarily, the elucidation of the relationship between the interpreter and the tradition from which the interpreted object proceeds.¹⁰

Similar to Freud in his studies regarding dreams, in which interpretation aimed to reveal their meaning, hermeneutics also aims at revealing, discovering and perceiving the deepest meaning of what is presented, in a rough way, in the manifested reality. Its search points out a hidden unmanifested meaning within a text. Therefore, hermeneutics could comprise a study method or tool through which it is possible to really know the human being and the reality in which he lives, as well as his story and his own existence.³

Depth hermeneutics is described as a methodological referential for the analysis of symbolic forms. It is described as a referential that evidences the fact that the object being analyzed is a significant symbolic construction that requires interpretation.¹

PSYCHOANALYSIS

Based on his clinical practice involving listening to patients, Freud was the father of psychoanalysis, aiming to understand/interpret their complaints, symptoms, inhibitions and anxieties.

It is possible to state that psychoanalysis is a theory that emerged from a practice that broke apart from psychiatry, the neurology of the XIX century and, in general terms, the science of that time. It separated itself from the constituted knowledge and has become something stable since its inception. The third great narcissistic wound suffered by western knowledge, through the decentering of knowledge and the conscious mind, as it were, was included in the midst of those wounding pieces of knowledge of human vanity: the planet was no longer the center of creation (as shown by Copernicus), and human beings were close relatives of monkeys (Darwin).¹¹ As for the father of psychoanalysis, he was not the owner of decisive motivations regarding his behavior.¹²

The object of psychoanalysis may be divided into two great axes, one of sexuality and the other of the unconscious. So-called sexual curiosity is known by all, which instigates a search for a piece of knowledge linked to an object, or a piece of knowledge regarding the object. They exist side by side in the unconscious without influencing each other, exempt from contradiction. There is also no place in it for denial, doubts or uncertainties. Nothing is past or forgotten. The processes in this system are timeless, do not alter over time and have no reference to time.¹³

The term “unconscious” preceded Freud. Nevertheless, the use of the same word, in different contexts, does not indicate that they mean the same thing. They may be incompatible, or even opposites, in different contexts. Such is the case with this term, which became the registered mark of psychoanalysis. The Freudian unconscious has no relationship to the “unconscious” before it.¹⁴

HERMENEUTICS AND PSYCHOANALYSIS AS FOUNDATIONS FOR THE ELABORATION OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The art of text comprehension finds a foundation in the theory of Habermas², according to whom “the epistemology is engaged in the relationship between language and reality, whereas the hermeneutics has to be engaged, at the same time, in the triple relationship of a statement that works: as expression of a speaker’s intention; as expression for the establishment of an interpersonal relationship between speaker and listener; as expression regarding something in the world”.^{2:40-41}

Furthermore, it refers to a fourth possibility, “the relationship between a given statement and all other possible statements, in other words a text, is not understood if the reasons the author could have mentioned are not clear”.^{2:40-41}

This understanding of the triple relationship of a statement expresses the idea that the researchers require this comprehension to lead the interviews. The interviews may be applied from an outline of questions with the least amount of structure, consisting of open-ended questions so that the interviewee’s freedom is strengthened and, consequently, the interviewer may redirect subsequent questions. The interviews cannot be structured because they would have to be based on a previous piece of knowledge that has not yet

been obtained and will only be uncovered through this method, whose characteristic is necessarily uncertain.

This apparent bias is purposeful and is intended to collect from the interviewee as much information as possible, with the minimum amount of organization. It is the interpreter’s role to later organize the raw data diluted in the discourse of the interviewees in order to allow some comprehension.

This way of proceeding is not new and has its epistemic base in teachings from philosophy to psychology. Lacan says that in the place of the *docta ignorantia*, which since Socrates has gone through Nicholas of Cusa and Montaigne, restating “all I know is that I know nothing.”¹⁵ This uncertainty is based on the platonic foundation of learned ignorance, which is the acknowledgement of not knowing. This status of not knowing is the starting point, but is not necessarily the destination. The point is to create questions based on this state of unknowing. Based on this, it is necessary to consider that it is not known, and it is not possible to know, what the best question to ask is. This is the reason why the questionnaire must be as unstructured as possible.

In this light, it is possible to conclude that the desire to know the right question to ask is in agreement with the possibility of believing that one knows what the best answer is or, minimally, hopes for a more specific answer – which, under this circumstance, would be a bias.

However, this is not to say that the questions of the interviews do not have their place because the corresponding answers are not known. The answer is always an interpretation of the reality, mediated by the interviewer’s question. The interviewee has an interpretation of the reality; the interviewer has his own. When the interviewer asks a question of the interviewee, what matters most is that the interpretation of the interviewer interferes as little as possible with the answer of the interviewee.⁴

According to these characteristics of the hermeneutic method, it is not necessary to engage in a pilot interview. The pilot interview would be performed for the purpose of adjusting questions and that goes, again, towards structuring the questionnaire, which is contrary to this method.⁴

The relationship between the interviewee and the researcher may be regarded as empathetic, as mentioned by the hermeneutics of Dilthey and

criticized by Habermas, as there is no possibility of neutrality in the language.²

From this perspective, the way of conceiving the world is the way of putting it into words or, in other words, representing it. If words build fact, this depends on the linguistic horizon of the speaker. The way it is described is the construction.⁴

HERMENEUTICS AND PSYCHOANALYSIS AS ANALYSIS FOUNDATIONS

In addition to what has been mentioned by the interviewee, other possibilities that the speech offers but which have not been stated also matter in data analysis- such as what is known as latent or subjective content.

Considering what is expressed explicitly, it is easy to reach an understanding in a more direct way, unless this explicit speech implies something else. Therefore, the explicit is almost synonymous with the objective; on the other hand, what is implicit, alluded to, metaphorized or connotative tends to be seen as subjective.⁴

Subjectivity is often understood as something mystical, deep, esoteric, obscure, and/or hermetic. The task of the method based on hermeneutics aims to seek out the alluded to, referred or connoted, in order to reach what becomes the objectified.⁴ This is the reason why it is important to perform the interview, because only through speech it is possible to express this enormous range of meanings that remain inhibited, unsaid or even restricted in written discourse - this cannot be expected to appear through the use of questionnaires.

Speaking and writing do not share the same structure. Their effects and range also differ. This fact is mentioned in literature by the character of Mário de Andrade, in *Macunaíma*, when he cites in the Letter to the Icamiabas that "on this land, people write in a language and speak in a different one"^{16:66}

Languages are expressive forms that allow some access to reality, as a mediator and as a representative. Speech is text, and comprehension is reading. From the written word it is possible to read, which allows interpretation to take place. At the same time a word relates subject to object, it also separates them. Reading is capable of mediating between subject and object.⁴

In order to proceed to data analysis, based on the theories of hermeneutics and the Freud-

Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is possible to use some methodological steps of Depth Hermeneutics, whose forms are divided into Socio-historical, Formal or Discursive Analysis and regard Interpretation and Re-Interpretation, indicated as ways to analyze the study data using the theory of a statement of Habermas² and aspects of psychoanalysis that were not found in any other authors.

It is an inevitable human characteristic to try to understand all the time. Therefore, in psychoanalysis it is common to refer to the self as a "machine for making sense". This psychic entity cannot withstand experiencing anything that does not provide the possibility of attributing some sense and, therefore, feeling more comfortable and believing itself to be the owner of the situation.

In social research there is a potential feedback, since a study may affect the studied conditions. However, Thompson claims that this is not an undesirable problem, but instead offers the possibility of knowing the socio-historical scope, since human beings are part of the history and not mere observers.^{3:359-360}

The hermeneutics theory of Habermas, despite not providing methodological steps that facilitate its application, allows adaptation of the methodological steps of the depth hermeneutics referential, which consists of socio-historical, formal or discursive analysis, as presented in figure 1:

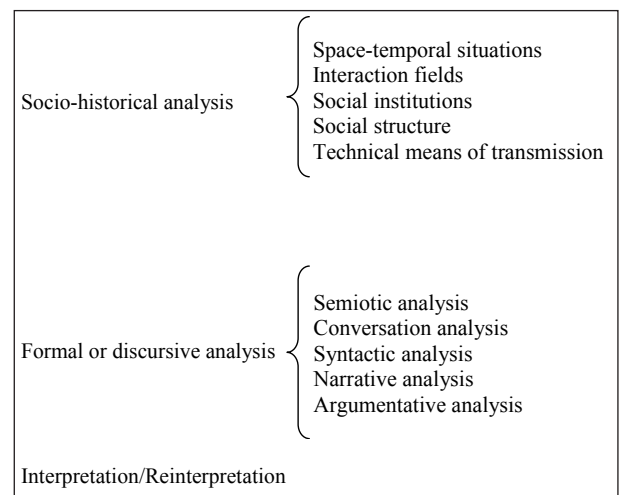


Figure 1 - Referential model of the depth hermeneutics³

These methodological steps may be followed, adapting them to the study's object. For instance, the socio-historical analysis does not need to be performed in all its steps, but can be

performed when the relationship that every subject had or has to the theme influences the meaning construction.

The semiotic analysis searches for the meaning of each concept for each subject. It is seen as "the study of the relationships between the elements that compose the symbolic form, or sign, and the relationships between its elements and those of the broader system to which the symbolic part, or sign, may be part (...) however, this type of analysis is, at best, a partial focus for the study of the symbolic forms. It is first interested in the internal constitution of the symbolic forms, with its distinctive elements and interrelationships".^{1:370-371}

Still regarding the symbolic matter, the conversation analysis refers that "the methodological or key principle of conversation analysis is studying instances of the linguistic interaction in the concrete situations in which they occur, and paying close attention to the way they are organized, highlighting some of the systematic or 'structural' characteristics of the linguistic interaction".^{1:372}

The syntactic analysis mostly agrees with the rhetorical analysis. Rhetorical figures also agree in large part with the syntax structures. Thus, "this type of analysis concerns the practical syntax or the practical grammar - not the grammar of the grammarians, but the grammar or syntax that acts in the everyday discourse".^{1:372} Colloquialism supports this fact.

The narrative analysis "may be considered, in general terms, to be a discourse that narrates a sequence of events".^{1:373} It concerns the telling of a story, presenting the place that each interviewer has in the context of the studied object and showing the way each of them expresses themselves.

The argumentative analysis, the last phase of the formal or discursive analysis, shows the deductive standards that the subject generally uses in this discourse. It concerns the suggested aspects, those that are not expressly stated. They are "discourse forms, as linguistic supra propositional constructions that may comprise thinking chains that may be reconstructed in several ways. These thinking chains are generally not actual valid arguments, in the traditional meaning of formal or syllogistic logic; they are, first of all, built as inference standards that lead from one theme or topic to another, in a more or less convincing, more or less implicit way".^{1:374}

In the speeches or in the discourses, the quality of the argument is a fundamental point

of analysis. Important questions to be raised by the argumentative analysis are whether it was supported adequately and allowed people to be persuaded.

The description of the interviewee's speeches is the first interpretation, made by the interviewer. At a second stage, the analysis of this description is a reinterpretation, indicating that "the methods of the discursive analysis proceed through the analysis; they break, divide, deconstruct, and try to reveal the standards and effects that constitute and operate within a symbolic or discursive symbolic. Interpretation is build upon this analysis, as well as upon the results of the socio-historical analysis. However, the interpretation involves a new way of thinking, developed through synthesis, through the creative construction of possible meanings. (...) as strict and systematic as the methods of the formal or discursive analysis may be, they cannot eradicate the need for the creative construction of the meaning; that is, an interpretative explanation of what is represented or said. (...) located within the referential of the depth hermeneutics, the interpretation process may be mediated by the methods of the socio-historical analysis, as well as by the methods of the formal or discursive analysis".^{1:375}

Once the interviews were concluded, it was possible to proceed to data analysis, presenting the descriptions of the speeches. Some categories that are considered to be relevant for reinterpretation are then selected.

The analysis is performed, using aspects of hermeneutics, not only as meaning interpretation but also aimed at its deconstruction through psychoanalysis. Hermeneutics aims at the search for meaning, whereas psychoanalysis seeks its deconstruction. These two theoretical axes, despite being opposites, provide a foundation for the intended interpretations. In order to deconstruct a meaning, it is first necessary to seek it.

This paradox may be understood in the following way: if on one hand hermeneutics searches for meanings, exemplified since the beginning in the work of Homer, and passes through biblical exegesis towards juridical hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, on the other hand, is based on non-essentialist behavior. In other words, the meanings discovered by chance are taken as attributes by the subject in question, and not as the essence of the objects. Therefore, psychoanalysis considers that attributes are ascribed, since they are not originally in the object.

This approach using both hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, despite representing a paradox, can be used as an instrument to broaden the analysis of speeches. It aims at appropriating what has been found without being actively searched for; in other words, it does not concern what has been previously searched for, since then it would be considered as something pre-conceptualized. It is based on the famous quote taken by Lacan, from Picasso: "I do not search, I found".^{17:149}

The answers serve as a base for the construction and creation of other questions. Its function is to open the possibility for the interviewee to express his/her opinion on the theme, rather than giving a strictly factual answer. This form of interview follows the fundamental principle of psychoanalysis, in which interviews are necessarily non-directional. This absence of focus is useful for research, as it allows the theme orientation to be decided by the experiences of the interviewees, rather than by the interviewer's will.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Hermeneutics, with the help of psychoanalysis, has allowed a clearer form of comprehension regarding interview results that until now have been treated based on the quantitative approach. These results provide direction and new variables, even if individual, allowing for a greater range of comprehension. These points that can be analyzed neither in questionnaires nor in closed interviews bring forth important questions that have not been considered by the researchers.

Although the quantitative question is important, this conjunction and disjunction of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis may fill this gap, regarding both the understanding and accuracy of qualitative questions obtained through interviews that are characteristic of any text.

The use of interviews in research, under this perspective, allows the interpretation of the material provided by the interviewees, either towards a convergence of the same meaning or in the opposite direction, differently from what happens in the use of a questionnaire or any other instrument of written registration. In the case of the study that used the interview, this procedure allowed many terms used in the answers to be understood as designating the same meanings, which significantly modified the study results. It is also easy to conclude that the opposite may happen, since the same term used in different

situations can often connote very distinct, or even opposite, meanings.

The confirmation of the results of the second study mentioned in this article was provided by the use of interpretation through hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, as well as the interview shaped by these methods. An instrument in which the data would be obtained only through the written record would not allow the same results.

The interview, in the collection of data in a study, was considered to be fundamental to show a distorted situation, which provided a different idea from what actually occurred. Initially, the interviewer understood that the interviewees did not differentiate between certain concepts of the object theme of the study. Nevertheless, the analysis of the interviews allowed this idea to change, since this impression was only related to the effects of colloquialism in everyday speech. The situation allowed by the interview process could search out colloquialism in order to interpret it and conclude that the terms used, despite being different on the surface, converged in the same direction.

Finally, the results obtained through interviews with the practical application of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis were different than what was initially expected. The careful interpretation of each datum, from the objective, subjective, stated or unstated statements characterized the richness of the study and its results.

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