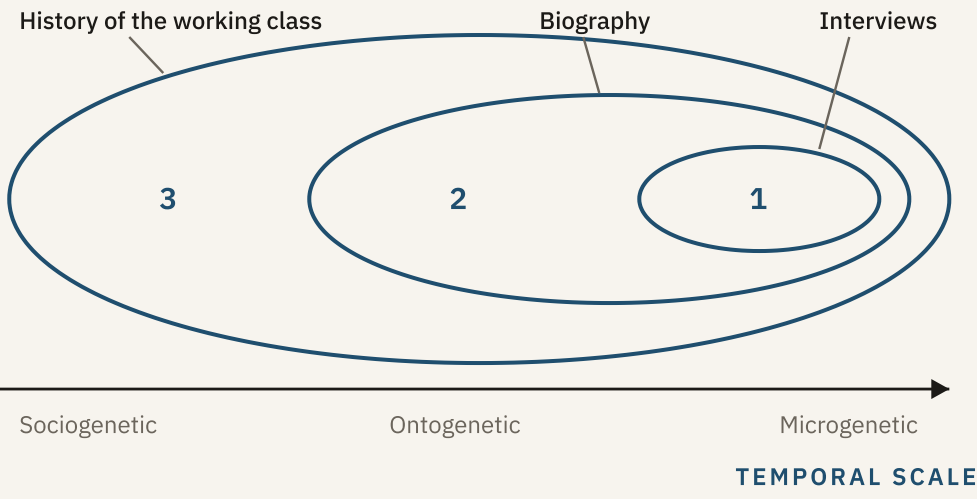


# Nesting forms of biographical discourse within the history of class struggle

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## QUESTIONS

- How the experience of belonging to social classes impact subjectivity?
- What is the effect of the recent history of classes in Chile on the identity and self-narrative of people?
- Which kind of discursive operations should we analyse in concrete speech to study the subjectivization of social division and political conflict?
- How can a former peasant political activist from the mid XXth century integrate his painful social destiny into a meaningful life story?

## AIM

To get a detailed description of discourse microprocesses people use to articulate biographical and historical scales of their lives during interviews. To make a zoom into how social conflict and subjective tension are entwined through discursive (inter)action.

## ARGUMENT

**Premise** Identity is supported jointly by memory and group processes (Haye, 2012). According to Reconstructive memory theory (Bartlett, 1932), memory is a reconstruction from the present of a social context.

**Assumption** Social interaction enters in language production, as reported speech (Voloshinov, 1929/1986) and into subjective life, as internalized forms of communication practices (Vygotsky, 1934/1999).

**Implication** Biographical recollections retrospectively nest the narrative of one's own life within a larger narrative, the history of a family, a social class or one's society (Halbwachs, 1925/1992).

**Problem** However, few developments of these classical theories (Andrews, 2004; Hammack, 2008) make a zoom into the verbal micro-operations by which people nest different levels of their life process (ontogenetic and sociogenetic scales).

**Focus** Discourse analysis of the nesting of sociogenetic and ontogenetic dimensions within the microgenesis of biographical discourse.

## THEORY

Dialogical discourse theory (Bakhtin, 1929/1986): Social life is "refracted" in biographical discourse by "quoting" social voices and taking an evaluative position within a field of positions.

- Narrative = enunciation acts, performative activity (not only descriptive or referential!)
- Intertextuality, polyphony, interlocution
- Discourse (utterance) as valorative and ideological position taking

## METHODS

Nesting operations were explored in a single case study, based on recurrent biographical interviews to a Chilean man (H.O.) of 90 years old, a political refugee in the UK from 1975 after the military coup.

From his biographical elaboration, the story of his life is crossed by the history of the workers struggles along XXth century capitalism, specifically of Chile's peasants.

Analytical variables (and concepts) from dialogical discourse theory to account for the nesting of and positioning toward reported discourses within the social interaction involved in biographical interviews:

- Uses of referred discourse (intertextuality, double-voicedness)
- Stylization (intonation, accent)
- Narrator's perspective changes (author-character)

## RESULTS · THREE NESTING SEQUENCES FROM THE INTERVIEWS

### SEQUENCE A

**First level – Speaker's voice:** In this level the speaker takes a position held in the past, that is sought to be confirmed by a referred discourse.

**Second level – Allende's voice:** Confirmation to the voice of the speaker by referring to Allende's voice by means of referred discourse, in which Allende's discourse acts as a point of view that confirm and gives force to the speech of the speaker.

**Third level – Alessandri's and Allende's Government:** This level of discourse which is an example of the way that Alessandri's and Allende's Governments worked, giving a context to the previous referred discourse.

**First level – Speaker's voice:** The speaker takes a new position, that respond to the previous one (in the first level), having confirmed the previously held position by means of the use of referred discourse.

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | the future..., look, I told you from the start, that no government grants anything, Allende said:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | I have never seen, in all my earlier career and in the present, a government grant anything, or a boss having granted anything, no, that's what I'm telling you about., that they didn't want a government in Latin America |
| 2 | it's the workers who have to make the revolution, and I was elected under a constitution m, and I can't break the constitution, what I can do is speed things up, yes, help you, but it's up to you to make the revolution.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3 | So Allende's government only did what the people asked of it, eee the agrarian reform had been done by Jorge Alessandri, he did something else, with that same reform law, so that things would no longer be foreign, ee he nationalised the banks, put the banks under the state, as we'd say, the bank passed to the state, credit, he did the reform of large industry and nationalised copper, at the request of the classes, |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### SEQUENCE B

**First level – communists' voice:** Temporal distance using reported speech, referring to that voice as a position held in the past. Ideological distance using stylization.

**Second level – critical voice against the communists:** Using reported speech to refer to the communists, whose political struggle is pictured as pre-revolutionary. Subjectivation using plural pronouns. Anticipation of an ideological critique of the second voice using stylization.

**Third level – present times and critique to traditional politics:** Forgetting and missing realities in the present resounds the forgetting of the communists in the first level. Critique to second voice by taking distance using reported speech. Critique to first and second voice, taking political distance of traditional and legitimated ways of doing politics.

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | They hated me only for what I said in a, in my political speech when I was, a candidate for deputy, warning the communists, that Videla had driven them underground, and when he opened the door for them to become a party again... He put conditions on them m, and they accepted the condition, and those who had been in prison got out alive, managed to receive a few pesos, because of the condition, so the communists didn't even want to remember that business. I said, ee, it's true, that this government has given the people a part, because it's in me, I consider myself the first peasant candidate for deputy m, a man without appeal, but I want to remind you that when the socialis, the communists were seeking, more freedom for their people, they fought, we fought in those days, to get out of the sackcloth shirt into a better shirt, for demands, a slightly better little wage, the women comrades wanted to get away from the pot hung like this over some embers underneath, to a proper stove, some men wanted to get out of the sandal into the shoe. And let's think hard about what González Videla did m, how he killed them on the trip to Pisagua, what the treatment in the prisons was like, the torture, the disappearances.   |  |
| 2 | The communist comrades have to keep very much in mind, and I stand on this, today we don't want to get out of the sandal into the shoe, today we want the land, today we want industry, which is in, run by foreign capital, the land even from the latifundio, we fought for the state takeover of the banks, we fought for the nationalisation of copper. The government didn't just do it on its own, it was we who demanded the nationalisation, the wealth of our territories, and the agrarian reform, we ask that it be carried out as Alessandri left it m. That speech they say is kept, they say the mapucistas Jorge Ruiz Tagle has it in Valdivia. M, those are the struggles, now we want everything, we want class equality, we want to take part in the universities, the worker wants to take part in the universities, wants to educate himself, we want a developed country, with a small equality of classes, slow but we want it. And how do you think the coup d'état will be, how we need unity to defend them from those coups m,                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| 3 | it wasn't even considered by the Communist Party [sighs]. It seemed this was never going to come, and it came a thousand times crueller than I thought m. So, to return to this past, I've had to make an effort because my mind was already stuck, I'll say it again, that when you said you would come, my, right at this time, I doubted it and it seemed to me I was dreaming. And when I saw you, I knew you'd arrived, and you told me I'll come on Monday I think you said, you came on a Friday, Friday I think it was, that you came to talk, and I see you appear at the door, it seemed to me I was dreaming. My mind was completely dark by then, from time, as if lost in time and space, as if it were conveniente, but it isn't conveniente, for realities to be lost [sighs]. Ee it isn't conveniente either, to believe the situation is going to change slowly, no, today being eighty-six years old and the boss never grants anything, nor do the political tendencies grant anything, nor do governments grant anything, everything takes a struggle m, and if serious men are needed, very, very thoughtful men are needed. So I, like, what I'm telling you now is like a return, to what I thou, to what the reality lived in Chile was, a return. |  |

### SEQUENCE C

**First level – Speaker's voice:** The speaker holds position about the events in the future.

**Second level – Interpellation to future generations:** Anticipation to the future struggle that the new generations will face.

**Third level – Use of the recorder:** The recording device is represented as the means by which the speaker "talks" to the future generations.

**Second level – Interpellation to future generations:** As the speaker gives a "weapon" to the future generation, he urge them to take a particular attitude to future struggles.

|   |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                  |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | the future..., look, I told you from the start, that no government grants anything, Allende said: |                                                                                                                  |
| 2 | I warn the young, I do, friends I'm talking with about Chile,                                     | so if you risk your skin, risk it, with people who take risks, don't trust those tendencies that shout and shout |
| 3 | and I'm talking by means of a cassette, that's what I'm telling you,                              |                                                                                                                  |

## CONCLUSIONS

- Discourse analyses enable us to describe concrete forms in which social and personal histories are entwined in biographical trajectories.
- In particular, H.O. articulates his bodily and damaged individuality with the broken and defeated sociality through inter-discursive nesting operations.
- Several discursive operations help H.O. to nest the finitude and failure of personal life within history of the working class and peasants struggle, beyond Chile, subjectively surpassing the temporal scale of personal life.

## DISCUSSION

- Biographical discourse should be analyzed at different historical scales and discursive strata since it is essentially "layered".
- Analyzing discursive operations through which speakers nest, embed, or envelope micro, onto, and sociogenetic levels help understand the subjectivization of social division and political conflict.
- Emphasizing and communicating collective life, social identities, group membership, and historical involvement could help counteracting individualistic limitations of people's meaning-making means.

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