

Critical hermeneutics versus positivist approach research paper examples

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Introduction

Hermeneutics refers to a theory of text interpretation that is mainly concerned with interpretation of wisdom literature, as well as philosophical texts. It is an extremely wide field as it is concerned with various disciplines such as verbal, nonverbal and written communication. In the modern world, hermeneutics has become extremely useful. It has become an extremely significant tool in the study of human sciences. It has also had extensive influence to the main languages on earth. However, it has been challenged as most reliable research approach by the existence of other methods such as positivists approach defined as the interpretative research approach. Upon examining each of them, it is easy to understand that critical hermeneutics and the positivists approach remain extremely critical and useful in research despite the sole uniqueness.

Characteristics of hermeneutic approach

Some criticisms usually arise on hermeneutic approach following its conceptual elusiveness. However, it is true that hermeneutics is a proper technique of protection against abuse of a method and not against general methods. Through the conceptual elusiveness of hermeneutics, various people have come up with ideas trying to defend their understanding and definition of the subject. There are various elements that may define hermeneutic approach in a clear manner.

Seeks understanding

The main goal of hermeneutic approach is to find understanding, rather than to extend explanation or provide an authoritative reading or conceptual analysis of a given text. It is only supposed to bring presuppositions in which the modern world already lives. Therefore, it is not meant to achieve a relationship to some issues, as well as cause understanding of a given method.

Also, hermeneutics is entrusted the role of clarifying the interpretive conditions where understanding occurs. However, the event faces exclusive prejudices from individuals who have chosen not to believe in the provisions of approach. However, being a horizon defined by different lines, prejudices are expected but they do not limit the extent of the significance of the approach (Ricoeur, 2008).

Based on exclusive research that has been conducted on behalf of the hermeneutic approach, it is agreeable that understanding takes place only when the interpreter recognizes the importance of various elements that he or she notices as well as recognizes based on how those elements relate with each other.

Situated location of interpretation

Hermeneutics is based on a belief that any form of interpretation is located somewhere. This means that it must have originated from a given place. This is what is known as a view from somewhere, and it eludes a view from nowhere. The hermeneutic approach emphasizes on an extremely critical description of texts and words and the active role played by the developer of

the text. The approach recognizes that different people have different views on how different activities take place. Texts are usually considered critical on the bases of the perception and experience of the researchers involved (Herda, 1999).

The role of language and history

Various hermeneutical thinkers have always argued that language and history are critical conditions as well as limitations to understanding of a given element. However, the two elements may be defined by the uniqueness of the linguistic evolution framework. Linguistic history has been vastly influenced by concerns and practices of users of various languages (Ricoeur, 2008).

Presence of influence of prejudice as a result of historical conditions on an interpretive stances, affirms the significance of critical analysis of these forms of prejudices. Language is a universal medium through which understanding takes place. Understanding takes place through proper interpretation.

Inquiry as conversation

Hermeneutics is a skill to allow things speak that which comes to people in a fixed and petrified form of a text. The interpreter needs to employ modulation through exclusive use of intonation. The translator in a conversation needs to have proper understanding of his task as an interpreter through possession of excellent interpretative skills. In a conversation, the parties involved must find a common language, which is an extremely critical tool that defines proper communication. However, at some

point individuals may not have a common language and they may be required to get a translator. Although, this may be a solution to the conversation challenge a lot of keenness is required while choosing an interpreter since it may also be difficult to get a translator who can understand various languages based on the languages of parties (Ricoeur, 2008).

Comfortable with ambiguity

Hermeneutics are critically formed under ambiguity. It is usually entrusted with all elements that remain unfamiliar to language speakers and strikes them in an extremely significant manner. In textual analysis based on a hermeneutic point of view, a text's meaning is not comparable to an immovable as well as fixed point of view. However, understanding a text means application of a text to users and to understand that even if they must understand it various ways, the content of the text remain the same. There is no interpretation that can be referred as perfect; this is following the evolvement of languages. Therefore, any form of interpretation has to adapt the conditions of the hermeneutical situation to which it belongs. A hermeneutic approach is exposed to the ambiguous nature of textual analysis and it resists the power to bring forth authoritative readings as well as neat reconciliations (Ricoeur, 2008).

Critical dimension of hermeneutic approach

It is critical to note that the above mentioned characteristics form the most significant base of critical hermeneutic approach. Each of them has unique interpretation of what critical hermeneutic approach entails. They assist in

developing the most critical interpretative role that hermeneutics has been entrusted. However, there is a major dimension that offers paramount explanation of critical hermeneutics. This dimension is renowned as the metaxological approach, which defines one way of offering critical hermeneutic approach as qualitative inquiry (Herda, 1999).

The critical potential of hermeneutics

Gadamer who is a philosopher with exclusive influence in the definition of hermeneutics has brought in controversial definition of critical hermeneutics. Herda and Ricoeur criticized Gadamer's work claiming it lacked proper analysis an interpretation of the development process of language. However, they argued that following the exclusive challenges that exist in the definition of critical hermeneutics, theoretical marriages must be considered. This will define uniqueness and development of a common language with unique identity as well as resolve the differences that may exist between the two parties (Ricoeur, 2008).

Critical definition of hermeneutics is based on excellent understanding of one's insight on the connection between any form of interpretation and communication techniques. There must be unique way of interpreting certain language elements without tangle of oppressions (Herda, 1999). This may be defined as the art of saying useful or fundamental things with proper understanding of the complex set of interpretation and communication principles.

Any hermeneutic philosophy must be defined on a wholly fundamental position. Individuals must move away from justification of their interests to

respect of the hermeneutic course, language and communication historical advances and principles.

A metaxological approach

A metaxological approach can be described as an informative critical hermeneutic approach to inquiry. This approach usually defends the critical hermeneutic approach through use of dualities. It acts as an intermediary course between simplistic polarities. Dualities are extremely useful in the definition of feminist epistemology which is of exclusive support to the critical hermeneutics (Herda, 1999).

Positivist Approach

A positivist approach to research is a fundamental tool in social sciences. This approach is based on knowledge gained from positive corroboration of discernible experience rather than intuition or introspection. This knowledge is mainly achieved through experimental testing or scientific methods. The main context of the approach is the modernist movement (Ricoeur, 2008). The positivist approach is based on some presuppositions. The first one is that there is an objective reality. The second is that people can know the reality while the third one dictates that symbols can clearly describe as well as explain the objective reality (Herda, 1999).

Also, the approach is anchored on certain beliefs. It believes on prediction and control. This means that there are certain patterns of cause and effect that can be used as platforms for predicting as well as controlling natural phenomena. The second belief is that there is empirical verification. This dictates that researchers can rely on their perceptions in provision of

accurate data. Also, the approach is believed to be research value-free (Herda, 1999). This means that given that methodological protocol is adhered, research will be free of subjective objectivity and bias will be achieved.

Positivist approaches depend massively on manipulative and experimental methods. These methods make sure there exists a distance between the subjective biases of the researcher as well as the objective reality that he or she studies. This mainly concerns generation of hypothesis as well as testing. Generally, quantitative methods are used in the approach (Ricoeur, 2008).

The positivist approach positions proper research on three major values: validity, reliability and generalization ability.

Analysis

Critical hermeneutics would serve an extremely significant role in the interpretation of certain data in research. As indicated earlier it is mainly concerned with the analysis and interpretation of texts. It has also been defined as a set of methodological ideas that had been developed with the duty of interpreting texts. Hermeneutic has been of exclusive significance in interpretive approach as it has been used in the analysis for various textual elements. Although, hermeneutics was initially designed for interpretation of religious texts, it can now handle all sorts of texts.

Despite having all the above mentioned merits, it does not surpass the positivist approach, which is anchored on knowledge gained from positive justification of visible experiments. The methods mainly used in this approach are defined through exclusive communication technique based on

scientific language. This gives its merit over critical hermeneutics which rely on translator following the challenge of obtaining a common language. The method eliminates all opportunities for prejudices and allows room for clarity of the information being used. Lastly the positivists approach is critical as it is based on key values that make research fundamental: validity, reliability and generalization ability.

Conclusion

Hermeneutics approach and interpretive approaches are some of the most reliable research methods in social sciences. They have been built on critical analysis and definition of fundamental principles. However, the hermeneutics approach appears more critical as it defines textual analysis on the basis of proper communication and translation techniques. Understanding of various languages and their history is an extremely fundamental element for hermeneutic researchers. On the other hand, the positivist approach is anchored to one form of language that is scientifically defined. Also, the manipulative and experimental methods make it unique. The approach represents research through respect for major research elements of validity, reliability and generalization ability. Therefore, the two approaches are equally significant in research.

References

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