

# **Discourse:** Does this Influence our Attempts to Prevent and Control HCAI?

Dr Mark Cole  
Senior Lecturer

Hosted by Martin Kiernan  
martin@webbertraining.com

# Objectives

- To understand the way discourse can be used to privilege some positions while downplaying others
- Appreciate, through practical examples, the way discourse is used in Infection Prevention and Control Policy
- Reflect on the merits and demerits of Infection Prevention and Control Policy discourse.

# Discourse

- A piece of extended language, written or spoken, that has unity, meaning and purpose
- A neutral, transparent medium that simply conveys the nature of the world through people thoughts, impressions and opinions?

**Or**

- A powerful tool that constructs the world by building objects, worlds, minds and social relations?

# Discourse Analysis

- A research method to study written or spoken language in relation to its social context.
- Aims to understand language in real life situations.
- When you conduct DA, you might focus on:
- The purposes and effects of different types of language
- How language use relates to its social, political and historical context.
- Cultural rules and conventions in communication
- How values, beliefs and assumptions are communicated

# Policy Discourse

- Policies are an important part of the way institutional risk is managed and therefore can have an uncritical acceptance
- In certain situations, participants are obliged to be recipients of the discourse
- Recipients tend to accept a discourse from authoritative, trustworthy, credible sources
- Recipients do not have the knowledge or inclination to challenge the discourse
- No alternate beliefs are available.

# Hand Hygiene Research

- A Discourse Analysis of Hand Hygiene Policy in the NHS
- Fused Corpus Linguistics (quantitative) with Critical Discourse Analysis (qualitative) to examine:
- 359 Hand Hygiene Policies of all NHS Trusts in England
- Over 1,000,000 words.

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword	Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
18	5,742	17,954.371	Should	159	798	2,763.316	Impact
25	4,904	16,055.772	Must	165	909	2,715.174	Reduce
27	3,799	14,943.722	Training	167	568	2,713.301	Governance
28	5,824	14,914.358	All	171	664	2,696.666	Manager
32	2,828	12,834.309	Prevention	174	762	2,640.405	Workers
46	2,217	9,068.879	Ensure	182	609	2,503.127	Recommended
48	1,944	8,949.186	Compliance	186	573	2,443.953	Responsibilities
49	4,240	8,915.269	Will	191	1,056	2,365.950	Good
56	2,210	7,647.102	Risk	200	620	2,321.948	Advice
64	1,542	6,931.180	Audit	214	588	2,141.845	Adequate
70	1,779	6,683.299	Effective	236	433	1,868.118	Performing
100	991	4,572.734	Thoroughly	250	429	1,788.336	Attendance
101	978	4,511.053	Managers	254	407	1,744.899	Vigorously
106	1,221	2,987.022	Required	257	577	1,733.394	Essential
108	1,056	3,909.003	Responsible	261	790	1,709.563	Evidence
112	1,241	3,784.099	Appropriate	280	944	1,625.480	Important
122	797	3,581.403	Ensuring	559	359	1,573.752	Monitored
125	924	3,453.019	Safety	503	503	1,543.644	Correct
132	1,019	3,287.595	Responsibility	336	485	1,322.488	Easily
134	978	3,229.843	Assessment	352	352	1,276.564	Requirements
136	845	3,193.224	Monitoring	379	602	1,168.999	Single
141	733	3,058.641	Mandatory	387	691	1,132.658	Individual
149	686	2,871.046	Approved	392	235	1,122.581	Matrons
153	634	2,840.175	Visitors	433	433	1,116.980	Quality
156	591	2,808.598	Audits	378	378	1,107.499	Immediately

# Deontic Logic

- Deontic logic is the investigation of normative concepts, especially:
- Obligation
- Permission
- Prohibition.



# Zero Tolerance

- First introduced to the NHS as a method of addressing workplace violence
- Its application to IPC became an international movement around 2010
- Examples:
  - “This Zero Tolerance Hand Hygiene Policy”
  - “has a zero tolerance approach to HCAs”

# Modality

- Modality is concerned with a speaker's or writer's attitude towards the world. An individual can express certainty, possibility, willingness, obligation, necessity and ability by using modal words and expressions.
- In policy documents modality is often conferred using modal verbs to describe certainty and obligation
- Modal verbs, therefore, become an important part of how authority is articulated, legitimated and expressed.

# Must Vs Should

- Must indicates a much stronger obligation than should.
  - Must infers that something is necessary, whereas should often falls between expressing obligation and giving advice.
- 
- |          |            |
|----------|------------|
| • Should | 5742 hits  |
| • Must   | 4904 hits  |
| • May    | 2237 hits. |

# Examples of Modal Verbs

- “Hands **must** be decontaminated immediately before each episode of patient contact”
- “Hands **should** be washed systematically rubbing all parts together”
- “Clinical staff **must** be bare below the elbows”
- “Alcohol Gel **should** be available for use at the point of care”
- “Hands **may** become contaminated during patient care”.

# Compliance and Adherence

- Compliance is a more paternalistic, passive behaviour that mandates people “do as they are told”
- Adherence is a behaviour that is more proactive which retains some sense of autonomy and choice
- Compliance    1,194 hits
- Adherence    168 hits
- Reasonably Practicable    0 hits.

# Accountability and Responsibility

- Each practitioner is **personally accountable** for their hand hygiene practice
- Personal **responsibility** and **accountability** for compliance with infection control is embedded with job descriptions
- Staff must act as **role models** and be able to demonstrate commitment to hand hygiene
- All staff must report **breaches** or non-compliance with IPC.

# Audit

- “Hand hygiene **audits** are to be undertaken on a weekly basis and collected monthly until a score of 100% has been recorded for 3 consecutive months”
- “Standards of 80-95% should be reported to Matron and the **audit** reported daily until 95% or higher is reached for 3 consecutive months”.

# Disciplinary Action

- “The Trust has a zero-tolerance approach to non-compliance with correct hand hygiene and the failure of staff to follow hand hygiene policy may result in **disciplinary action**”
- “Staff failing to comply with this policy will be **disciplined**”.



# Merits of Policy Language

- Policies are aspirations to a possible future reality
- Policy language is couched in the obvious and unquestionable.
- The hallmark of a good policy is its non refutability
- Risk Management Vs Rule Compliance.

# Demerits of Policy Language

- Is policy an aspiration, an educational tool, or a vehicle for performance management?
- A just organisation will hold individuals to account but will also recognise the importance of system failure
- It will acknowledge the difference between intentional rule violation and enforced violation because the policy lacks utility.

# Conclusion

- A good policy helps manage institutional risk by defining what is, and what is not, acceptable in an organization.
- But the choice of language in those policies can make that organization look an unjust.
- Policy makers need to appreciate that enforced non-compliance, because the policy lacks utility, does little for morale or practice.

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